



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 344
Transportation – Vision Zero Advisory Commission – Establishment

This bill will further the implementation of Maryland's Vision Zero law, which was enacted in 2019 and sets a goal of no roadway fatalities or serious injuries by 2030.

This bill establishes a Vision Zero Advisory Commission to advise the Governor and state agencies on traffic safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Additionally, the commission will:

- identify state and local laws, policies, and regulations that hinder the development and implementation of Vision Zero; and
- review safety deficiencies at crash hotspots (intersections and corridors), including the results of infrastructure reviews. MDOT is required under current law to publish these reviews within 6 months of any pedestrian or bicyclist fatality on a state roadway.

The commission will be comprised of:

- Designees from the Departments of Transportation, Health, Planning, Aging, Disabilities, and Education as well as the State Police
- Members from each MDOT branch, including the Motor Vehicle Administration's Maryland Highway Safety Office, which coordinates Vision Zero
- Members appointed by the Governor, including representatives from local government, law enforcement agencies, higher education, transportation planning organizations, pedestrian and bicyclist advocacy groups, and the trucking industry

Commission members are unpaid but are allowed to have their travel expenses reimbursed for meetings, as is the case for other state commissions and work groups. Any findings and recommendations from the commission will be published in the Maryland Department of Transportation's Vision Zero report, which is required by current law to be published annually.

Background

Vision Zero aims to make our roads safer for everyone who uses them, regardless of their mode of transportation.

In 2022, 564 people were killed in crashes in Maryland. Of these fatalities, 62% were motorists, 23% were pedestrians, 13% were motorcyclists, and 2% were bicyclists.¹

Nationally, pedestrian fatalities are growing relative to other traffic deaths. From 2010 to 2021, pedestrian fatalities increased by 77 percent.² In Maryland, there were 2.16 pedestrian fatalities per 100,000 people in 2021; this is a fatality rate that is higher than two-thirds of other states. An estimated 92% of pedestrian-involved crashes in Maryland result in injury or death.¹

Rather than continue to accept the status quo that traffic deaths are inevitable, Vision Zero challenges traffic engineers, planners, law enforcement, and others to view traffic deaths as preventable and to plan roads that account for failures in human behavior. Vision Zero can be accomplished by a variety of means, depending on local conditions, resources, and needs. Combinations of engineering, enforcement, and education are the potential tools in the toolbox.

Vision Zero originated in Sweden in 1997. The data from Sweden shows that Vision Zero works: pedestrian fatalities have fallen by almost half in the past five years. Washington state—which was the first state in the U.S. to adopt a goal of Vision Zero—went from having the 11th highest traffic fatality rate in 2005 to the 8th lowest in 2021.³

Three U.S. states (WA, NC, and ND) and numerous American cities and counties are also pursuing Vision Zero, including Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Montgomery Counties and the cities of Rockville and Salisbury.

¹ Maryland Highway Safety Office. <https://zerodeathsmd.gov/highway-safety-office/>

² Governors Highway Safety Association, 2022 data.

³ National Safety Council