

ACT Testimony_HB0612_Speed Limit Reduction Bill.pdf

Uploaded by: Amy Frieder

Position: FAV



Montgomery County's Advocates for Better Transportation

P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring MD 20907 • admin@actfortransit.org

February 12, 2024

SUPPORT for the Montgomery County Speed-Limit Reduction Bill of 2024 HB 612/MC 10-24 (Del. L. Charkoudian, D. Moon, and J. Wilkins)

My name is Jake Goodman, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Action Committee for Transit. We strongly support the Montgomery County Speed-Limit Reduction Bill of 2024 and the need for other speed reducing measures countywide. Time and time again, crashes due to speeding in Montgomery County have proven to be fatal. By having a higher maximum speed limit on secondary and even primary roads that are not considered highways or freeways, the likelihood that someone would ignore such suggestions increases, along with the speed of their vehicle. Reducing speed limits can be beneficial to pedestrians who don't have to worry about possibly getting hit by a car speeding near an intersection that doesn't have adequate crosswalks.

One of the key components of the bill is that it would create the mechanism for speed limits to be lowered without the need for a comprehensive traffic study by the county government. In 2023, while the number of traffic and speeding related deaths went down nationwide, in Maryland there were [600 such deaths](#), the highest in roughly 20 years. With that being said, we would encourage speed limit reductions throughout Maryland and to introduce other ways to make wide stroads throughout Montgomery County more walkable and pedestrian friendly.

The need for reducing speed limits does not just apply to suburban or rural secondary roads. It also applies to urban and suburban stroads, where pedestrian speeding related deaths have been equally as prominent. In 2023, Governor Wes Moore got to observe firsthand the problems pedestrians face every day [by walking along Georgia Ave](#) in Wheaton with Montgomery County Councilmember Natali Fani-González. Councilmember Fani-González referred to Georgia Ave as "one of the most dangerous roads in the state." Already [MDOT](#) along with [state](#) and [county officials](#) have taken initiative to lower speed limits in parts of Montgomery and Prince George's counties, but it is not enough. We strongly urge you to vote yes on the [Montgomery County Speed-Limit Reduction Bill of 2024 \(HB 612\)](#).

Sincerely,

Jake M. Goodman,
On behalf of the Action Committee for Transit

HB612 (MC10-24) final.pdf

Uploaded by: Bee Ditzler

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

HB 612 (MC 10-24) Montgomery County – Highways – Maximum Speed Limits

Position: Support

By: Susan Albertine, LWVMC President

Date: February 29, 2024

We urge the General Assembly to instruct the state to **allow a local authority in Montgomery County to decide speed limits on certain state highways in the county** using an engineering and traffic investigation to change the maximum speed limit on those roads.

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC) has counted about 33 state highways in the county. **It makes sense that reasonable, safe conditions on any part of a highway within the county should determine a maximum speed limit for that part of the highway.** This will improve pedestrian, bicycle and motorist safety and might save dollars that could be used in other ways.

Nationally, the trend in 2023 was toward fewer road deaths, but Maryland saw an increase. Fatalities were up 6% from 2022 to 600 roadway deaths statewide – the most in nearly 20 years. This indicates that the county should be given the authority to change speed limits where populations live and accidents occur because the county understands these areas best and can respond accordingly.

Unfortunately, Montgomery County – and all the other counties in Maryland – has extremely limited authority to change these speed limits. Meanwhile, speeding traffic on roadways is a threat to pedestrians and bicyclists, not to mention motorists. At lower speeds, drivers have a wider field of vision and are more likely to notice other road users. We need to monitor speed limits – especially near schools – to make it possible for students to walk safely to school rather than going by car or bus. And while we encourage transit use, please remember that people must still cross roadways to get to bus stops and metro stations. They should be able to cross roads safely; their lives depend on it.

The League of Women Voters' positions back this legislation. We support local concerns being incorporated into transportation plans and believe there should be a partnership between local and state agencies in order to achieve better planning. We believe in building and enhancing walkability options as an alternative to vehicles since we encourage safe transit, biking and walking. This bill directly affects living in Montgomery County and its walking, biking and use of transit as well as vehicle use.

The LWVMC urges the Maryland legislature to support HB 612.

Takoma Park 2024 - HB 612 FAV - Max Speed Limits -

Uploaded by: Cindy Dyballa

Position: FAV



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

**Support House Bill 612 – Montgomery County - Speed Monitoring Systems - High-Risk
Highways MC 15-24
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 29, 2024**

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of this bill, which removes a requirement for a full engineering and traffic investigation before a local authority in Montgomery County can decrease the maximum speed limit on a local road. This is an amendment to the bill that gave local authorities in Montgomery County authority to reduce speeds on local streets.

The City of Takoma Park is a densely developed, largely residential municipality of almost 18,000 people living within 2.4 square miles in Montgomery County. Many of our municipal streets also function as vehicle cut-throughs in our residential neighborhoods. We do not have sidewalks on both sides of all local streets. Vehicle speed is a concern with so many of our residents, especially school children, walking, biking, scooting, and waiting for a bus on our local streets.

We thank the State Legislature for the original bill allowing municipalities the authority to decrease speed limits on city streets. But our City has found the cost of formal engineering and traffic studies for this simple change on a local street to be beyond our city budget and local staff capacity. Our local police are intimately familiar with the locations where vehicle speeding is a concern, and where lower speed limits are practical and appropriate. Removing this requirement would support our city goals of creating a safer community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

In sum, the City of Takoma Park supports bill HB 612 and urges a favorable committee vote.

Comments on HB 612, Highways – Maximum Speed Limit

Uploaded by: Dan Reed

Position: FAV



Chair Marc Korman
and Members, Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 29, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

My name is Dan Reed and I serve as the Regional Policy Director for [Greater Greater Washington](#), a nonprofit that works to advance racial, economic, and environmental justice in land use, transportation, and housing throughout Greater Washington. GGWash supports House Bill 612, which will remove the requirement for an engineering and traffic study before reducing speed limits.

I live near the intersection of Sligo Avenue and Piney Branch Road in Silver Spring. Almost a year ago, on December 23, 2022, a 22-year-old driver lost control and crashed, killing himself and injuring his two passengers¹. I cross these streets multiple times a day with my dog, and each time I walk past the demolished brick retaining wall that the car crashed into. It's a reminder that one day I could be next. I know lots of places like this, where someone, occasionally someone I know personally, was injured or lost their life due to their actions or the actions of someone else behind the wheel of a car.

Requiring a study in order to reduce a speed limit will only increase the likelihood that another tragedy occurs. This bill will ensure that we can respond quickly. A lower speed limit is just the first step to making a street safer, but an important one. We ask the Environment and Transportation Committee to give this bill a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dan Reed'.

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director
Greater Greater Washington

¹ <https://www.sourceofthespring.com/silver-spring-news/2801415/police-investigating-piney-branch-rd-fatal-collision/>

The Washington, DC region is great and it can be greater.

HB612Amendment.pdf

Uploaded by: Delegate David Moon

Position: FAV



HB0612/173027/1

AMENDMENTS
PREPARED
BY THE
DEPT. OF LEGISLATIVE
SERVICES

05 FEB 24
13:20:27

BY: Montgomery County Delegation
(To be offered in the Environment and Transportation Committee)

AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 612
(First Reading File Bill)

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in line 6, after “highway;” insert “authorizing a local authority in Montgomery County to implement new speed monitoring systems on a portion of highway for which the speed limit has been decreased only after a certain period of time after the decrease in the speed limit is implemented;”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 2, in line 15, strike “not”; in line 16, strike “any” and substitute “A”; and in line 17, after “paragraph” insert “NOT EARLIER THAN 1 YEAR AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECREASE IN THE SPEED LIMIT”.

Supporting HB0612.pdf

Uploaded by: Sogand Karbalaieali

Position: FAV

As a resident of Rockville, I wholeheartedly endorse HB0612, Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits. This measure is crucial for our community's safety and well-being. Let's come together to ensure safer roads for all. Please join me in supporting this important bill.

Thanks

Sogand Karbalaieali, PhD, PE

UPDATED_Position Statement_HB 0612 Montgomery Coun

Uploaded by: Jordan BaucumColbert

Position: FWA



POSITION STATEMENT

Bill: HB 0612 Montgomery County – Highways – Maximum Speed Limits (MC 10-24)

Position: Supports with amendments

Date: February 29, 2024

Contact: Debra Borden, General Counsel

Jordan Baucum Colbert, Government Affairs Liaison

Dear Chair Marc Korman and Vice Chair Regina T. Boyce,

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC or “the Commission”) has voted to support this bill with amendments. The Commission respectfully requests that the Environment and Transportation committee consider this information and include it in the record.

What this Bill Does. This bill seeks to repeal the requirement that a local authority in Montgomery County perform an engineering and traffic investigation before decreasing the maximum speed limit on a highway.

Restraints on Implementation of New Speed Monitoring System. The Commission supports the intent of this legislation as it would allow the County to expedite reduced speed limits. However, the Commission recommends that Bill be amended to allow for implementation of new speed monitoring systems **one year after the speed limit has been decreased** (adding language to Section 21-803(a)(4)(iii)). This will allow sufficient time for drivers to adjust to the new speed but allow for enforcement that will promote safer roadways, which is the ultimate intent. Without this amendment, it will be difficult to increase safety.

For these reasons, the Commission requests a favorable vote in support of HB 0612 with amendments.

HB 612 - MoCo_Morningstar_FWA (GA 24).pdf

Uploaded by: Sara Morningstar

Position: FWA



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

HB 612

DATE: February 29, 2024

SPONSOR: Montgomery County Delegation

ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (Sara.Morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

Montgomery County – Highways- Maximum Speed Limits – MC 10-24

House Bill 612 repeals the requirement that Montgomery County and municipalities in the County perform an engineering and traffic investigation before exercising the authority to decrease a maximum speed limit on a highway. The bill was amended by the Montgomery County Delegation to allow deployment after one year of new speed monitoring systems on portions of roadways for which the speed limit has been decreased. Montgomery County supports House Bill 612, as amended.

Reducing maximum speed limits on Montgomery County roads has been an important step in advancing local Vision Zero goals, and House Bill 612 promotes that objective. Moreover, by allowing the use of automated traffic enforcement units after one year on roads posted with lower speed limits, roadway safety and driver compliance will improve without having to rely on enforcement from potentially dangerous officer-initiated traffic stops.

For these reasons, Montgomery County urges the Committee to adopt a favorable report on House Bill 612, as amended.

2024-HB612-SpeedLimitReduction-FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Seth Grimes

Position: FWA



HB 612 – Montgomery County – Highways – Maximum Speed Limits MC 10-24
Washington Area Bicyclist Association
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT

February 29, 2024

Chairs Korman and Committee Members,

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) is an advocacy organization with 1,200 Maryland members that is active in Montgomery County. We support bill HB 612 with amendment to allow speed camera placement after a waiting period.

Speed kills. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), "Studies clearly show that higher speeds result in greater impact at the time of a crash, which leads to more severe injuries and fatalities." For instance, a 2011 technical report published by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, "Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death," found that the average risk of severe injury to a pedestrian increased with vehicle speed from 10% at 16 MPH, 25% at 23 MPH, 50% at 31 MPH, and higher at higher speeds.

In response, **HB 612 would strike eight no-longer-needed words from Maryland's Transportation Article, the stipulation that Montgomery County and county municipalities may lower speed limits "only after performing an engineering and traffic investigation." This requirement is no longer needed given the county's 2021 adoption of a Complete Streets Design Guide as well as the development of functional master plans such as the Pedestrian Master Plan, which was adopted earlier this fall.**

These plans provide analysis, design, and engineering guidance that is equivalent to the current law's investigation. There is a precedent for your advancing MC 10-24 on this basis. Transportation Article § 21-803 (5) states "Baltimore City may, without performing an engineering and traffic investigation, decrease the maximum speed limit on a highway under its jurisdiction." The reason for this exemption is that Baltimore City adopted a Complete Streets program, in 2018. HB 612 would extend Baltimore's exemption to Montgomery County and county municipalities.

Gaithersburg and Rockville, which have their own planning authority, and other county municipalities may apply the county's Complete Streets Design Guide to city-owned streets.

The county's Complete Streets Design Guide was developed by Montgomery Planning and enacted by the Montgomery County Council. It is county policy. It designates a Target Speed of 20 MPH for Downtown Streets, Neighborhood Connectors, Neighborhood Streets, Neighborhood Yield Streets, and certain Country Roads, in particular for stretches where they "operate as neighborhood streets for short segments."

Recommendation P-9 of Montgomery County's Pedestrian Master Plan, adopted in October by the County Council, is "Comprehensively lower speed limits countywide." The text explains, "*Higher traffic speeds are directly linked to crash severity. In pursuit of Vision Zero, the county should continue efforts to lower speed limits in neighborhoods and along major roadways, with a goal of having the roadway's posted speed limit match the target speed outlined in the CSDG [Complete Streets Design Guide].*"

Montgomery County has been inhibited from reducing speed limits in accordance with county policy by the current engineering and traffic investigation requirement.

That's why we have Recommendation P-9a, to "Support state legislation to allow jurisdiction-wide speed limit reduction." The detail text reads, "*Montgomery County's ability to lower the posted and statutory speed limit along residential streets is limited by state law... The county should support all legislation that offers local agencies more flexibility in setting speed limits in line with county goals.*"

HB 612 responds directly to a recommendation adopted by the Montgomery County Council. The bill and the proposed amendment to allow speed camera placement are supported by the Montgomery County Delegation.

Speed-reduction benefits are incontrovertible. Yet we have this lingering requirement for an investigation on a road-by-road basis, which is expensive and onerous and no longer needed given Montgomery County's planning and engineering efforts. You can modernize code and boost Montgomery County road safety by advancing HB 612.

WABA therefore urges HB 612 amendment and a Favorable committee report and General Assembly enactment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

Seth Grimes, WABA Maryland organizer
seth.grimes@waba.org