

# **Senate Comments on HB 612, Highways – Maximum Spee**

Uploaded by: Dan Reed

Position: FAV



Chair William C. Smith, Jr.  
and Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

March 27, 2024

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings 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 or installing speed cameras.

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 passengers<sup>1</sup>. 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 Judicial Proceedings 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

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<sup>1</sup> <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.

# 2024-HB612-SpeedLimitReduction-Senate.pdf

Uploaded by: John Kline

Position: FAV



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

FAVORABLE

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 27, 2024

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, 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 local bill HB 612 as passed by the House of Delegates and ask for a Favorable committee vote.

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."** HB 612 would also allow for speed-monitoring for enforcement, not sooner than a year after a limit is lowered.

**An engineering and traffic investigation is no longer for Montgomery County speed-limit reductions needed given the county's 2021 adoption of a Complete Streets Design Guide as well as the development of functional master plans, notably Montgomery County's Pedestrian Master Plan.** These plans provide analysis, design, and engineering guidance that is equivalent to the investigation required by current state code.

There is a precedent for your advancing HB 612 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 2023 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

# **SENATE\_UPDATED\_Position Statement\_HB 0612 - Montgo**

Uploaded by: Jordan BaucumColbert

Position: FAV



## **POSITION STATEMENT**

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

**Position:** Supports

**Date:** March 27, 2024

**Contact:** Debra Borden, General Counsel

Jordan Baucum Colbert, Government Affairs Liaison

Dear Chair William C. Smith Jr. and Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher,

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC or “the Commission”) initially voted to support this bill with amendments. The sponsor has since amended the bill to reflect the Board’s recommendations. Therefore, the Commission respectfully requests that the Judicial Proceedings Committee consider this information and include it in the record.

**What this Bill Does.** This bill as amended 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. This bill also authorizes 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 **not earlier than one year after the implementation of the decrease in the speed limit.**

**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. The Commission’s recommendation that the bill be amended to allow for implementation of new speed monitoring systems **one year after the speed limit has been decreased** has been included within the language of this bill. This amendment was necessary to allow sufficient time for drivers to adjust to the new speed but also allow for enforcement that will promote safer roadways.

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

**HB 612 - MoCo\_Morningstar\_FAV (Senate) (GA 24).pdf**

Uploaded by: Sara Morningstar

Position: FAV





# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

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**HB 612**

**DATE: March 27, 2024**

**SPONSOR: Montgomery County Delegation**

**ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings**

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

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

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### 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. Additionally, after one year from when the speed limit has been reduced, the bill allows for the deployment of automated speed monitoring systems on those portions of roadways.

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.

# **HB 612 MoCo Highways - Speed Limits**

Uploaded by: Senator Ben Kramer

Position: FAV

BENJAMIN F. KRAMER  
CHAIR

ARIANA KELLY  
VICE CHAIR



BRIAN J. FELDMAN  
KATIE FRY HESTER  
CHERYL C. KAGAN  
NANCY J. KING  
WILLIAM C. SMITH, JR.  
JEFF WALDSTREICHER  
CRAIG J. ZUCKER

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY DELEGATION

March 19, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland

**RE: HB 612 Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits MC 10-24**

Dear Chair Smith:

This letter is to officially inform Judicial Proceedings Committee that the above-referenced legislation was voted on in our Senate delegation. By a unanimous vote, HB 612 passed Favorable as Amended.

It is our understanding that your Committee will be hearing this bill on March 27. We ask for a Favorable report on HB 612 Montgomery County – Highways – Maximum Speed Limits.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Benjamin F. Kramer".

Benjamin F. Kramer

# 2024-HB612-SpeedLimitReduction-Senate.pdf

Uploaded by: Seth Grimes

Position: FAV



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

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 27, 2024

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

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

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

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV



# CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

**Support House Bill 612 – Montgomery County - Speed Monitoring Systems - High-Risk  
Highways MC 15-24  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
March 27, 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 as amended and urges a favorable committee vote.