

GGWash Comments on HB 963.pdf

Uploaded by: Dan Reed

Position: FAV



Chair Marc Korman
and Members, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 20, 2025

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 963**, which would allow transportation officials to lower speed limits in Montgomery County without a traffic study.

Research shows that the risk of severe or fatal injury increases dramatically with higher speed¹. In my testimony for last year's version of this bill, I shared a story about a fatal crash near the intersection of Sligo Avenue and Piney Branch Road in Silver Spring, which is one block from my house. On December 23, 2022, a 22-year-old driver lost control and crashed, killing himself and injuring his two passengers². Until it was recently repaired, my dog and I walked by the demolished brick retaining wall where the driver crashed almost daily, a reminder of the risk we faced as well.

County transportation officials have the tools to make our streets safer, but excessive study and review requirements mean that they don't get to use them. Following the December 2022 crash—and others that followed—my neighbors and I spent a long, frustrating year fighting for safety improvements, including a three-way stop and curb extensions. But a MCDOT speed study concluded that we weren't eligible for anything else. That response is not only insufficient, but it puts lives at risk. A lower speed limit is just the first step to making a street safer, but it is an important one. We ask the Environment and Transportation Committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

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

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director

¹ <https://www.iihs.org/topics/speed>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/12/24/fatal-car-crash-silver-spring/>

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

HB 963 - MoCo_Morningstar_FAV (GA 25).pdf

Uploaded by: Sara Morningstar

Position: FAV



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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HB 963

DATE: February 20, 2025

SPONSOR: Montgomery County Delegation

ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation

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

POSITION: SUPPORT

Montgomery County – Highways – Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25

House Bill 963 authorizes a local authority in Montgomery County to decrease the maximum speed limit on a highway without performing an engineering and traffic study.

The legislation represents a small step forward in Montgomery County's continuing commitment to eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries through its Vision Zero plan. The bill does not impact the County's authority to perform such studies. A similar measure passed the House in 2024 that included a provision to allow after one year the deployment of automated traffic enforcement (ATE) on roads with reduced speed limits. House Bill 963 does not include any ATE provision.

The County supports House Bill 963 and would urge a favorable report from the Committee.

2025-HB 963-SpeedLimitReduction-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Seth Grimes

Position: FAV



HB 963 – Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Washington Area Bicyclist Association – FAVORABLE

February 20, 2025

Chair Korman and Committee Members,

WABA supports bill HB 963, which would allow speed-limit reduction to 15 MPH in Montgomery County without an engineering and traffic investigation.

Need

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 by an even larger percentage at higher speeds.

Justification

Planning documents adopted by the Montgomery County Council including the county's Complete Streets Design Guide, Pedestrian Master Plan, and Master Plan of Highways and Transitways provide analysis, design, and engineering guidance that is equivalent to the engineering and traffic investigation currently required by Maryland Transportation Code. The Cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg have independent planning authority, however the county's design guide would be applicable to city owned streets and would fill gaps in city planning artifacts.

HB 963 would enable these jurisdictions to respond to local conditions on locally owned roads faster and at lower cost, by eliminating a redundant requirement, enabling them to make local streets safer.

Precedent

There is a precedent for HB 963. 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 963 would extend Baltimore's exemption to Montgomery County jurisdictions based on their equivalent programs.

Montgomery County Policy

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 963 responds directly to a recommendation adopted by the Montgomery Planning Board and Council.

Summary

Reduction benefits are incontrovertible. Yet we have this lingering requirement for an investigation on a road-by-road basis, which is expensive and onerous. Please update code to eliminate a redundant requirement by advancing HB 963. WABA urges a favorable committee reading.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

advocacy@waba.org

HB0963_ Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Spe

Uploaded by: Steve Ashurst

Position: FAV

February 18, 2025

HB0963: Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25

Chair Korman and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I support HB0963, which allows a reduction of the maximum speed limit in Montgomery County on a highway without performing an engineering and traffic investigation.

We know that reducing the speed of vehicles results in the reduction of injuries and fatalities, with the IIHS¹ having a quick summary. Unfortunately, the time it takes to implement changes where identified needs exist today is too long. In this common sense update, we are allowing the local DOT to make the changes needed to ensure all road users have a better chance of survival and reduced injury. Any crash interaction between a motor vehicle and vulnerable road user would ultimately be reduced outright due to everyone having longer reaction times.

As a frequent pedestrian and bicyclist, I know what it feels like to be hit while walking, buzzed by motor vehicles at or above the speed limit on a 35 mph road while I ride an inadequate 4-ft shoulder. I also drive and know that when I drive even a couple MPH below the speed limit on a 35 mph posted road, for example, I have much more time to react, and I'm much more likely to slow down and wait for pedestrians to cross roads.

If a section of road needs adjusting to better align with the design guidance offered from the local Complete Streets Design Guide or the Pedestrian Master Plan, then Montgomery County would be able to make those changes in a timely manner with this bill.

Anything we can do to help save lives for people navigating our roads in a motor vehicle, bicycle, scooter, wheel chair, or on foot is a step in the right direction.

I urge a favorable reading from the committee so that it can be brought to the House floor for a vote.

Sincerely,

Steve Ashurst
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¹ <https://www.iihs.org/topics/speed>

Takoma Park 2025 - HB 963 FAV - Maximum Speed Limi

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

Support House Bill 963 – Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 20, 2025

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of House Bill 963, 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 the authority to reduce speed limits on local streets to Montgomery County and its local jurisdictions.

The City of Takoma Park is a densely developed, municipality of almost 18,000 people living within 2.4 square miles in Montgomery County which borders Washington DC. Due to our location and increased traffic flow in the area, many of our municipal streets are used as cut-throughs for drivers attempting to avoid traffic on major roads. This results in an increase in traffic volume and speeding through our residential neighborhoods. We do not have sidewalks on both sides of all the City's streets. Vehicle speed, therefore, is a concern with so many of our residents, especially school children, walking, biking, scooting, and waiting for a school 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 to be beyond our city's budget and staff capacity. Our police department is intimately familiar with the locations where speeding is a concern, and where lower speed limits are practical and appropriate. Removing the engineering study requirement would support our city's goals of creating a safer community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

In sum, the City of Takoma Park supports bill House Bill 963 as amended and urges a favorable committee vote.

AAA Mid-Atlantic Testimony in OPPOSITION to HB 963

Uploaded by: Ragina Ali

Position: UNF



AAA Mid-Atlantic's Testimony in OPPOSITION to HB 963 Montgomery County - Highways - Maximum Speed Limits MC 1-25

Sponsors: Montgomery County Delegation

- AAA recognizes the importance of selecting appropriate and enforceable speed limits.
- When maximum speed limits are correctly set and applied, they mitigate collision severity and improve mobility, motorist safety, and respect for the law.
- While we recognize the dangers of speeding, we are not in favor of decreasing or increasing maximum speed limits on a highway without performing an engineering and traffic investigation.
- AAA urges states and jurisdictions to use engineering and traffic surveys when setting maximum speed limits and to adopt limits that will not have a significant adverse effect on highway safety.
- Traffic surveys should include, at a minimum: prevailing speeds as determined by traffic engineering measurements; crash records; highway, traffic, vehicle, and roadside development characteristics; and the presence of vulnerable road users, including pedestrians and bicyclists.
- AAA Mid-Atlantic remains committed to the safety of all road users and safe speeds on our roadways.
- Because this bill would lower speed limits without conducting an engineering or traffic study, we urge an **unfavorable report for HB 963**.

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