

# **CSG SB 424- 5 MPH reduction (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Cheryl Cort

Position: FAV

Testimony on SB 424  
Urban State Highways - Speed Limits - Exceptions - 5 MPH decrease in maximum speed limit  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Maryland State Senate  
by Cheryl Cort

Date: January 29, 2025

Position: **Support**

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading non-profit organization in the D.C. region, including suburban Maryland, advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We wish to express our support for SB 424, which proposes to permit Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to lower the maximum speed limit by 5 MPH on urban state highways without an engineering and traffic investigation.

This change is appropriate and important to give the state another tool to address traffic safety and achieve the state's Vision Zero goals of no traffic deaths.

Lowering speed limits can be a quick action tool to help SHA better respond to traffic safety needs. Given Maryland state roads' continued high level of fatalities and severe injuries, we welcome another tactic to help strengthen our response. According to the [Federal Highway Administration](#):

Addressing speed is fundamental to the Safe System Approach to making streets safer, and a growing body of research shows that **speed limit changes alone can lead to measurable declines in speeds and crashes.** [emphasis added]

Posted speed limits, along with clear signage, equitable enforcement, other deterrence measures, and retrofitting and redesigning roadways to lower design speeds, are all tools to ensure safer use of Maryland's public rights of way. This bill supports SHA's "context driven" approach and Vision Zero goals for state roads. Lower speed roadways are fundamental to creating safer conditions for all travelers which foster vibrant communities and economic development.

We ask for a favorable report. Thank you.

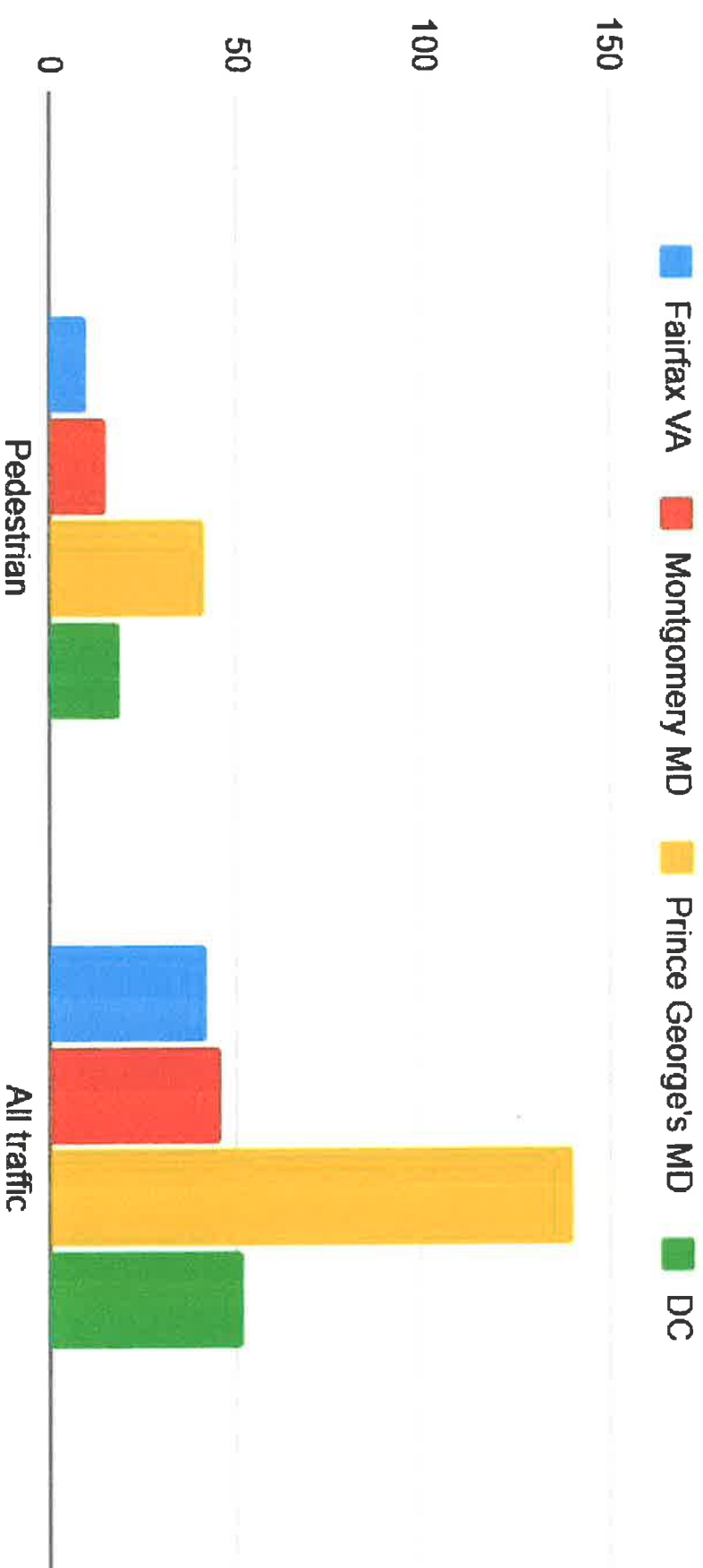
## **SB424 Coalition for Smarter Growth**

Uploaded by: Cheryl Cort

Position: FAV

# 2023 Regional Traffic Fatalities

Source: 2024 MWCOC Street Smart Factsheet



2023 Regional Traffic Fatalities,

# **SB424-2025SubmitTestimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michael Jackson

Position: FAV

MICHAEL A. JACKSON  
Legislative District 27  
Calvert, Charles and  
Prince George's Counties

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Pensions

Public Safety, Transportation, and  
Environment



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***TESTIMONY - SENATE BILL 424***  
***URBAN STATE HIGHWAYS – SPEED LIMITS – EXCEPTIONS***  
***JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE***  
***JANUARY 31, 2025***

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Committee Members:

Senate Bill 424 is a very straightforward bill that simply authorizes the Maryland State Highway Administration to reduce the speed limit on an Urban Highway by up to 5 miles per hour without a traffic or engineering study.

This piece of legislation is a part of the State Highway Administration's Vision Zero initiative which holds the noble aim of eliminating pedestrian and traffic fatalities. Presently, traffic studies are required to reduce speed limits and it often takes quite some time and that time could be a matter of life and death in certain circumstances where highway uses (and particularly speed limits) no longer correspond with the amount of vehicle and pedestrian traffic that they handle.

It's common knowledge that vehicle speed is directly related to crash severity and this bill just aims to give MDOT another tool in their toolbox to help save lives on our highways.

**For the reasons listed above, I ask for a favorable report of Senate Bill 424.**

# **MGA 2025 Testimony Bill SB0424 (Urban State Highwa**

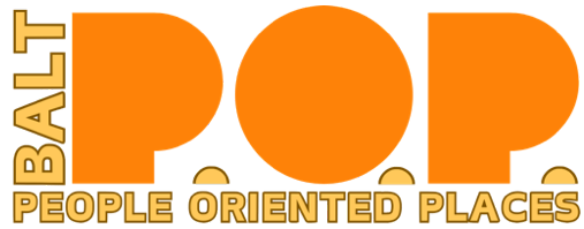
Uploaded by: Michael Scepaniak

Position: FAV

Bill: SB0424

Bill Title: Urban State Highways - Speed Limits - Exceptions

Position: **Favorable**



Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

As a group which advocates for a built environment which is safe and convenient for all people, whether they are moving through that environment on foot, on a bicycle, in a wheelchair, via public transit, or in an automobile, we support SB0424.

Maryland's roadways are not safe, especially for vulnerable road users (VRUs). Despite the Vision Zero efforts of the past several years, those roadways have actually gotten less safe - for everyone.

Specific to the Baltimore region, the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB), on an annual basis, tracks five performance/safety measures to carry out the Federal Highway Administration's Highway Safety Improvement Program. The last of those five measures is "Number of Non-motorized Fatalities & Serious Injuries". The numbers for this measure are abysmal.

The 2023 number for this measure was **410**, which is a **41% increase** over the 2005-2009 baseline number of **290**. The Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT's) current target for this measure is **294 by 2030**. [1] In terms of VRU deaths and serious injuries, MDOT is hoping to basically get us back to where we were 20 years ago. That's not progress - that's standing still.

But, breaking the horrible upward trendline of VRU deaths and serious injuries we are suffering through is a critical first step. Some of the recent actions MDOT has taken in this space, including their revamped Complete Streets policy and quick build initiatives, are very encouraging. But, they need more tools made available to them. The capability that will be afforded to them by this bill is one such tool.

This bill is very straightforward. It will allow the State Highway Administration (SHA) to lower the speed limit on a road in an urban area by 5 mph - without the need to conduct an expensive traffic study. We can't think of a realistic scenario where simply giving the SHA this ability would be a bad idea. Even if the SHA only made use of this capability to reduce the speed limit on a road on only a test basis, it would be a power well worth granting.



While 5 mph may not seem like much, it can have a very significant impact on VRUs. The risk of death and serious injury to a pedestrian struck by a moving vehicle increases in a very clear fashion as the speed of that vehicle rises.

...the average risk of **severe injury** for a pedestrian struck by a vehicle reaches 10% at an impact speed of 16 mph, 25% at 23 mph, **50% at 31 mph, 75% at 39 mph**, and 90% at 46 mph.

The average risk of **death** for a pedestrian reaches 10% at an impact speed of 23 mph, 25% at 32 mph, **50% at 42 mph, 75% at 50 mph**, and 90% at 58 mph.[2]

**The risk of severe injury increases by 50% in the 8 mph difference between 31 mph and 39 mph. The risk of death increases by 50% in the 8 mph difference between 42 mph and 50 mph.**

A 5 mph reduction in speeds is very consequential and stands to significantly reduce the risk of death and severe injury for pedestrians (and, by extension, people traveling by wheelchair or bicycle).

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote in favor of SB0424**. Thank you for your efforts and the opportunity for us to testify on this legislation.

[BaltPOP - Baltimoreans for People-Oriented Places](#)

References:

[1] "RESOLUTION #25-19 - ADOPTING HIGHWAY SAFETY TARGETS FOR THE BALTIMORE REGION". BRTB. January 2025.

<https://baltometro.org/sites/default/files/BRTBRes25-19.pdf>

[2] Tefft, B.C. "Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death". AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. September 2011.

<https://aaaafoundation.org/impact-speed-pedestrians-risk-severe-injury-death/>

Notes to myself

<https://www.criminaldefenselawyer.com/resources/criminal-defense/state-felony-laws/maryland-felony-class.htm>

<https://www.criminaldefenselawyer.com/resources/criminal-defense/crime-penalties/petty-theft-maryland-penalties-defense>

<https://mdcriminalattorney.net/maryland-assault-lawyer/first-and-second-degree/>

<https://www.criminaldefenselawyer.com/resources/cruelty-to-animals.html>

[https://nacto.org/docs/usdg/relationship\\_between\\_speed\\_risk\\_fatal\\_injury\\_pedestrians\\_and\\_car\\_occupants\\_richards.pdf](https://nacto.org/docs/usdg/relationship_between_speed_risk_fatal_injury_pedestrians_and_car_occupants_richards.pdf)

# **BikeMaryland-FAV-SB424 SHA Urban Speed Limits\_Fina**

Uploaded by: Nigel Samaroo

Position: FAV



## **SB424 – Urban State Highways – Speed Limits - Exceptions**

### **Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**January 31, 2025**

**Position: Favorable**

Greetings Chair and Members of the Committee,

Our mission is to promote bicycling, increase safety, improve conditions, and provide a voice for bicyclists in Maryland. We partner with advocacy organizations to promote vulnerable road user safety legislation on the state and county level and work with government agencies, including police departments, to develop policy and awareness campaigns that protect the rights and well-being of bicyclists and pedestrians in Maryland.

We the undersigned represent multiple community-based organizations advocating for safe biking, walking and active transportation, submit this testimony on behalf of tens of thousands of members across the State of Maryland.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we ask for your favorable support of SB424, which would authorize the State Highway Administration to decrease the maximum speed limit by 5 miles per hour on urban state highways without an engineering and traffic investigation.

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, SB424 would directly address vehicle speed, a factor that is known to make our streets more dangerous for vulnerable road users.

Reduction in posted speed limits is part of the Context Driven toolkit that is applied by the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA). The SHA positions limit reduction as a safety countermeasure in urban and suburban contexts, "as part of the proactive treatments aimed at increasing safety for vulnerable road users." The SHA's Context Driven Toolkit states, "in denser context areas, a reduction in the posted speed limit

may have a significant impact on safety for more vulnerable users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Higher operating speeds reduce a driver's ability to react when they encounter these users in the road, and result in higher severity outcomes when collisions occur."

However, the requirement to conduct both an engineering and traffic investigation, on a road-by-road basis, is onerous. It is expensive, time-consuming, and a deterrent to taking steps we know we must take. Let us recognize that MDOT's work on Complete Streets, Context Driven, and Vision Zero strategies fully justifies allowing the SHA discretion in speed-limit reduction, as would be afforded by SB424.

The General Assembly has an opportunity to boost Maryland road safety by enacting SB424. We request that the committee support the passage of SB424.

**Baltimore Bicycling Club (BBC)**

**Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)**

**Bike Maryland**

**Bikemore**

**Maryland Eastern Shore Trail Network**

**Frederick Bicycle Coalition, Tom Rinker, President**

**Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA)**

# **SB0424 - TSO OATM - LOS - Urban State Highways - S**

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FAV

January 31, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 424 – Urban State Highways - Speed Limits - Exceptions***

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 424 as it provides another context-driven tool that can be used to improve safety and reduce road incidents on urban highways.

SB 424 enables the State Highway Administration (SHA) to reduce the speed limit on an urban highway by five miles per hour without performing a traffic or engineering study. An urban highway is defined as a roadway within a municipality (not including expressways) which features curb, gutter, and closed drainage, and is located within a U.S. Census defined urban area where significant pedestrian traffic is observed.

Of the over 570 fatalities on Maryland's roads in 2024, a disproportionate amount (28 percent) were vulnerable roadway users.<sup>1</sup> This legislation is a critical tool that can be used to accelerate efforts towards achieving zero traffic deaths and serious injuries in Maryland, specifically where known issues exist. Data shows that, in Maryland and nationally, more frequent crashes occur on state and locally-owned roads in urban areas where population density is higher and a greater amount of vulnerable road users are present. Further, more severe crashes occur on state-owned roads where speeds are generally higher. Finally, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) findings show that speeding or traveling too fast for conditions was a contributing factor in almost 31 percent of all traffic fatalities in Maryland. This exceeds the nationwide average of 29 percent.

Reflecting these realities, the State is responding to an increasing number of requests for speed limit reductions on State highways where posted speed limits no longer correspond to roadway context. Maryland adopted Vision Zero and SHA published the *Context Driven: Access and Mobility for All Users Guide* to establish a framework for understanding the relationship between access and mobility and to address serious injuries and deaths on our roadways. Since

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<sup>1</sup> Final fatality figures from 2024 are not yet available.

adoption, speed limit reductions on State roads have been one of the top three most requested engineering safety countermeasures implemented by SHA, with more than 47 corridors assessed at the request of local jurisdictions or following a serious injury or fatality. Of these requested speed studies, 46 resulted in the reduction of posted speeds. A typical study takes SHA approximately three months and upwards of ten thousand dollars to complete. Additionally, the studies must be accommodated within a variety of SHA's ongoing and competing priorities.

SB 424 provides SHA with the option – not a requirement – to forgo a speed study. It is important to note that even if SHA elects not to require a speed study, it will still apply proven standards and best practices to ensure all implementations of speed reductions are safe and manage vehicle operational impacts. This includes thorough reviews of the extents of speed reduction areas, the implementation of appropriate signage, and exploring physical improvements to support reduced posted speed limits and improve compliance with speed limits. SB 424 provides SHA with a way to respond in a more agile manner to areas where speed is a contributor to roadway incidents in urban areas of the state. This ability, in conjunction with tools such as the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, the Context Guide for engineering, and the recently adopted MDOT Complete Streets policy allows SHA to plan, design, and engineer roadways that are responsive to the environment around them.

SB 424 also aligns with recommendations in the Federal Highway Administration's *Safe System Approach for Speed Management* report which found that small changes result in improved outcomes for roadway users. Other states like Washington and Florida have adopted similar strategies for speed management where speed limit reductions by five miles per hour are used to achieve target speeds and increase compliance over time. These results increase exponentially when combined with complimentary tools in engineering, education, and enforcement to achieve target operational speeds.

Despite dedicated work and collaboration since the state adopted Vision Zero, the state is falling short on its goals to eliminate roadway fatalities and serious injuries. This bill acknowledges two key realities. First, business as usual is not working. We must do more to promote the safety of our transportation network. Second, everyone who can improve safety must act. MDOT has been hard at work engineering safer streets and educating drivers to practice safe driving behaviors. We have also partnered with others to improve enforcement and emergency response. We are now redoubling efforts by optimizing our programs, plans, and policies for safety along with advancing important legislative proposals and advocacy in the safety space. This bill is an opportunity for the General Assembly to add another tool that will empower SHA's drive to create safer streets throughout the State.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 424 a favorable report.



The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.  
Page Three

Respectfully submitted,

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Planning and Project Development  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
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Matthew Mickler  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1090

# **Takoma Park 2024 - SB 424 - Max Speed Limits - Sen**

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FAV



# CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

**Support Senate Bill 424 – Urban State Highways – Speed Limits – Exceptions**  
**Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**January 29, 2025**

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 the State Highway Administration (SHA) can act to decrease the maximum speed limit by 5 MPH on an urban highway.

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. The City has several urban highways, as defined in this legislation, that are surrounded by residential neighborhoods and schools. The City does not have sidewalks on all of its local streets. Therefore, vehicle speed is a concern for many of our residents, especially families with school-aged children, walking, biking, scooting, or waiting for a school bus.

We thank the sponsor for this proposal. This bill allows municipalities to work with the SHA to make modest decreases in speed limits on urban highways. This is a common sense, cost-saving measure that will enable communities such as ours to make necessary adjustments to speed limits which will save lives. Formal engineering and traffic studies are cost prohibitive for small communities such as ours. However, our local police are intimately familiar with the locations in the City where speeding is a concern, and where lowering speed limits by 5 MPH will be practical and appropriate.

Removing the study requirement supports the City of Takoma Park's Vision Zero goal to create a safer community for all residents, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

In sum, the City of Takoma Park supports SB 424 and urges a favorable committee vote.