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Governor
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Lieutenant Governor
Kathryn Thomson
Acting Secretary

February 4, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 71 – Education – Interjurisdictional Safe Pathways Commission – Establishment

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 71 and offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

Senate Bill 71 establishes the Interjurisdictional Safe Pathways Commission to identify, coordinate, and secure funding for safe pathways, including educational programs and policy initiatives, for students traveling to and from school. It requires that the Commission conduct an inventory of existing safe pathways, identify gaps in infrastructure and programs, evaluate funding needs and opportunities, recommend policies to local and state agencies, and foster community engagement with students, parents, and school personnel.

While MDOT concurs that these actions are essential to developing safe pathways to and from school across Maryland, MDOT believes that they are best suited to local coordinators who are highly knowledgeable about their schools’ communities and transportation needs and have local networks to disseminate information. The Committee should be aware that a growing network of coordinators already exists, and that it will have continued support by state agencies through the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Working Group that was established in 2024.

SRTS is both a federal funding category under the Transportation Alternatives Program administered by the State Highway Administration (SHA) and a proven framework used nationally to improve student transportation safety. Led by MDOT, the SRTS State Agency Working Group aims to improve safety around schools, with a focus on K-12 students walking and biking to school, and includes representatives from MDOT, the State Highway Administration, the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, the Maryland Department of Planning, the Maryland Department of Health, and the Maryland State Department of Education.

The SRTS Working Group develops resources for SRTS coordinators to build local stakeholder groups, identify safe pathways, develop recommendations, and implement action plans at the school level, in partnership with local communities and their local education agency. A model

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Page Two

framework for local SRTS coordinators currently exists in Montgomery County. In 2025, following a yearlong evaluation of how SRTS funding is used in Maryland, MDOT launched a SRTS Coordinator Pilot awarding Transportation Alternatives grants to Baltimore City, Howard County, Anne Arundel County, and Prince George's County, joining Montgomery County and extending the reach of funding across the region. The MDOT SRTS Coordinator Pilot provides direct support and technical assistance to local coordinators to be hired starting in 2026.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information during its deliberation of Senate Bill 71.

Respectfully submitted,

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