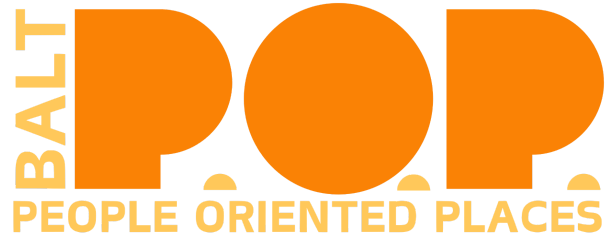


Bill: HB 0070

Bill Title: State Highway Administration - Traffic Calming Devices - Study

Position: **Favorable**



Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

As a group, BaltPOP firmly believes that the residents of Baltimore and its surrounding counties should be able to navigate safely around their communities, no matter what mode they choose: walking, rolling, taking public transit, or driving. For this reason, we support HB0070, which would require the State Highway Administration (SHA) to create a statewide policy for traffic calming.

The United States is in the midst of a road death crisis. Not only has progress in reducing road deaths in America slowed in recent years, we have actually gone *backwards*. Traffic fatalities *increased* throughout the 2010s, with a particularly sickening spike during the COVID-19 pandemic [1]. Unfortunately, Maryland is no exception. In 2019, the state adopted a Vision Zero policy, creating a long-term plan to reduce traffic deaths to zero. Instead, the problem worsened; from 2014 to 2024, road deaths increased by 31% [2]. Nor is the issue confined to any one part of the state. In fact, fatalities are worst in rural areas, which have 20% of the U.S. population but 40% of its road deaths [3]. These road conditions are harmful for everyone, but people traveling outside of cars — pedestrians, wheelchair users, cyclists — are especially at risk. As long as the status quo continues, hundreds of Marylanders will continue to die unnecessarily.

MARYLAND TRAFFIC FATALITY DATA									
	2014	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2014-2024 Change	2021-2024 Change
Traffic Fatalities	442	535	573	563	564	621	579	31%	3%
Fatalities per 100M VMT	0.78	0.89	1.13	0.99	0.99	1.09	1.02	31%	3%

Figure 1: Maryland annual traffic fatalities, from 2019 to 2024 (TRIP, 2025)

While the U.S. seems to have accepted road deaths as the cost of doing business, other countries have managed to make their streets far less deadly. One of the main ways they have done this is by lowering a road's *design speed*, limiting how fast people can drive by changing how a road's layout. Since higher speeds lead to more severe crashes, lowering speeds in key areas — for example, places where cars and pedestrians interact — leads to far fewer deaths. This is one of the major tenets of Vision Zero: designing roads that “self-enforce” lower speeds. Through the use of designs like chicanes and roundabouts, one can create a road system that is less deadly and more forgiving of errors [4].

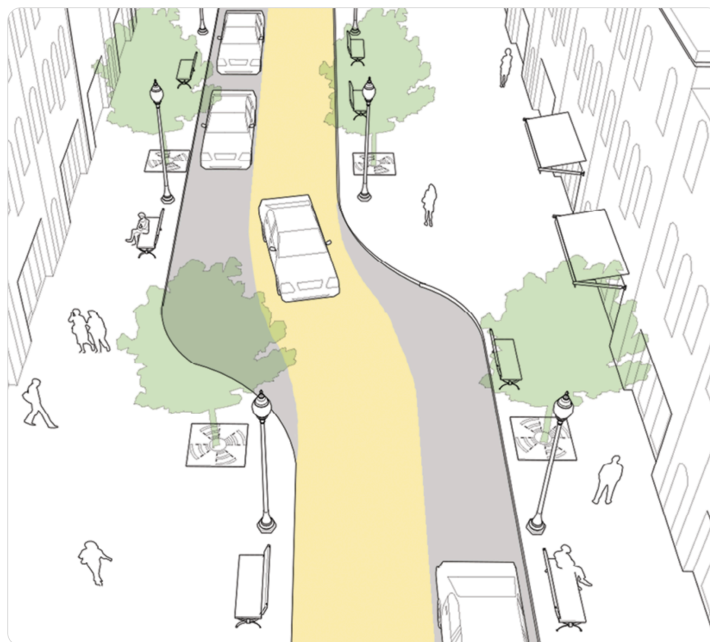


Figure 2: A chicane, slowing traffic by forcing drivers into a slight bend (NACTO, "[Chicane](#)")

While traffic calming strategies have become more widely known in recent years, the SHA would play a crucial role in determining the most effective strategies and encouraging implementation of them across local jurisdictions. State-level leadership is a necessary ingredient in an effective effort to lower traffic fatalities — for example, in Australia (which operates under a federal system), the state of Victoria took a leading role in reducing road deaths [5]. Moreover, without higher-level guidelines, local traffic engineers often need to wade through conflicting directives on safe road design, and risk defaulting to outdated, dangerous standards [6].

This bill alone is not sufficient for sustained progress on road safety; that will require careful goal-setting and accountability for lowering road fatalities. Nevertheless, HB 0070 would be an important step towards safer streets, and would provide local practitioners with a workable toolbox of interventions to use on their roads.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote in favor of HB0070**. Thank you to Delegate Healey for sponsoring this bill, and we appreciate the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

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

[1] Transportation Research Board (TRB), *Tackling the Road Safety Crisis: Saving Lives Through Research and Action* (2024), pp. 18-20.

[2] TRIP, "[Maryland Fatalities Up 31% In Last Decade](#)," 2025.

[3] TRB, 2024, p. 17.

[4] Vision Zero Network, "[Fundamentals of the Safe System Approach](#)," 2023.

[5] TRB, *Achieving Traffic Safety Goals in the United States: Lessons from Other Nations* (2011), p. 20.

[6] For example, practitioners may default to the 85th percentile rule — a dangerous rule of thumb that automatically sets speeds at the prevailing speed of existing traffic, whether or not that speed is safe in a given environment (TRB, 2023, pp. 47-9).