



SIERRA CLUB

MARYLAND CHAPTER

P.O. Box 278
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Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee
Testimony on: HB 256, Motor Vehicles – Speed Monitoring Systems – Safety Corridors
(Vulnerable Road User Protection Act of 2026)
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 12, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report on HB 256 with suggested amendments. The bill would let the State Highway Administration (SHA) use speed cameras in areas determined to be high risk to vulnerable road users. It requires the fines to be used for these speed cameras first, then highway safety and repairs.

Protecting pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchair users, and other vulnerable road users who are engaging in more sustainable modes of transportation is crucial to creating a sustainable, multi-mobility transportation system.

Speed matters. People hit by a car at 40mph are killed about 85% of the time but are only killed about 5% of the time by a car at 20mph, according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) research. The number of Marylanders injured or killed by car crashes while walking has been steadily increasing since 2020. Specifically, walking has suffered an 18% increase in deaths and 25% increase in injuries from 2020 to 2023, according to MDOT's Zero Deaths dashboard. These deaths and serious injuries are preventable tragedies. Recently, the City of Helsinki, Finland, with a population of nearly 700,000 people, went an entire year without any road deaths, providing a model for safe streets.

In addition to tragic loss of life, these crashes have a negative impact on the state economy. The non-profit organization TRIP calculated that Maryland took on \$8.1 billion of economic burden from all the fatal and serious crashes in 2024. Given that 1 in 4 people killed by crashes in Maryland are pedestrians, HB 256's measures to reduce unsafe speeding would more than pay for itself, even without the bill's measure redirecting violation penalties to pay for the systems.

This bill would be greatly improved with a couple of amendments:

Currently, HB 256 requires that leftover funds from violations be used for a) highway safety purposes and b) state highway administration system preservation. Because "highway safety purposes" has often been interpreted as "safety for drivers" at the expense of other road users, we urge the language be amended to "vulnerable road user safety purposes" and either remove "system preservation" or amend it to "state highway administration system preservation that results in updates to the road design that improves the safety of vulnerable road users."

The bill also mandates that violation income beyond what pays for the speed camera systems shall be directed to the Transportation Trust Fund. However, because SHA does not maintain any Baltimore City roads, the entire city road network would be excluded from the leftover funds. As such, we strongly suggest the bill be amended to direct the funds leftover from Baltimore speed camera expenditures back to high-risk areas in the city.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 256 with the suggested amendments.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

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