



CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**HB 254
Support**

**Environment and Transportation Committee
February 3rd, 2022
HB 254: Vision Zero Implementation Act of 2022**

**Testimony of Mayor Kate Stewart
City Council of the City of Takoma Park
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The City of Takoma Park supports the goals and intent of House Bill 254, and urges favorable consideration. A great deal needs to be done to shift how we look at pedestrian and bicyclist safety. The Vision Zero Implementation Act would provide a tool to help shift the car-focused paradigm that now dictates how we approach our communities.

While we also need to do more to prevent fatalities, this bill will put in place procedures that are long overdue to assess the safety on State Highway Administration (SHA) roadways where a pedestrian or bicyclist fatality has occurred. The City of Takoma Park strongly endorses this bill as a municipality with many SHA roadways, and first-hand experience with how long it can take to have assessments and engineering countermeasures proposed and then actually implemented.

We thank the individual SHA traffic engineers we have worked with in the City. Unfortunately, many of the barriers to addressing roadway safety are built into how SHA is structured and conducts its work. The Vision Zero Implementation Act addresses one aspect of the current dysfunction.

Here are the hard numbers. Despite efforts of SHA traffic engineers, traffic fatalities have been increasing since 2008, particularly for pedestrians. The situation worsened in 2020. Although there were fewer cars on the road due to Covid-19 restrictions, pedestrian and cyclist deaths continued to climb. Last year alone, 130 Marylanders lost their lives while attempting to cross our streets and there were an additional 3,022 pedestrian-involved crashes which caused injury or property damage. These numbers are concerning.

We all recognize that one death on Maryland roads is too many. More than 500 traffic deaths year after year is a public health crisis. We need action to make our roads safe for everyone. Please support this live-saving legislation to provide the Maryland State Highway Administration the tools and the resources it needs to identify, assess, and systematically address specific and regional traffic threats.

In sum, the City of Takoma Park supports the goals and intent of this bill, and encourages a favorable vote.