



Feb 20, 2024

## **Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) Bicycle / Pedestrian Safety Bill HB135**

The undersigned organizations representing various aspects of the community advocating for safe and connected infrastructure for biking, walking and active transportation, submit this testimony on behalf of tens of thousands of members across the State of Maryland. A state agency's policies reflect its priorities and we appreciate the commitments that Governor Moore, Lieutenant Governor Miller and MDOT Secretary Wiedefeld have made to equitable multimodal mobility around the state in order to advance safety, reduce traffic, reduce GHG emissions, promote health and make Maryland a more equitable, affordable and attractive place to live, work, visit and play. We write to express our strong support for assuring policies and funding that elevate the priority of bicycle and pedestrian safety and infrastructure.

Communities around Maryland have prioritized the development and construction of safe and connected networks for walking, biking and active transportation. Nearly every county across the state has a trail or active transportation plan, including larger plans such as the Capital Trails Network and the Baltimore Greenway Trails Network, to smaller local plans such as the Anne Arundel Trail Network and Frederick & Pennsylvania Rail With Trail & C&O Towpath New Design Sidepath Connector. If constructed, these projects would transform our transportation system, enabling hundreds of thousands of Marylanders to travel to work, school, and other daily destinations, and enjoy the outdoors, in a way that is safer, better for our economy, more accessible for all Marylanders, and environmentally sustainable than our motor vehicle-focused transportation system currently is.

There are also significant national trail routes that traverse Maryland including the 3,000 mile East Coast Greenway (Maine to Key West), the 9/11 Memorial Trail and the American Discovery Trail (Atlantic to Pacific). Unfortunately, Maryland has significant gaps in these local and national networks, sometimes due to water crossings and also to interstate highways that lack safe, grade-separated walk/bike crossings. Many major new bridges built in the United States include safe, separated



bicycle/pedestrian facilities. This has been done on recent bridges of varying length around the U.S. including the replacement Tappan Zee (see photo) and Pensacola Bay bridges. Locally, the Woodrow Wilson and Frederick Douglas Bridges have such facilities which are quite popular. The planned American Legion replacement is expected to have one as well. In spite of the previous governor's announcement that the Nice Bridge replacement would include a separated bike/ped facility, it was left out of the final bridge design. These are once in a multi-generation

opportunities which should not be wasted. These bicycle/pedestrian facilities are in line with Maryland's Complete Streets policy and are a tremendous draw for tourism especially over the iconic Chesapeake Bay, Potomac River and Susquehanna River. A safe bicycle/pedestrian lane over the Chesapeake Bay would also provide passageway for long distance national trails, including the American Discovery Trail and the complementary (alternate) route of the Maine to-Florida East Coast Greenway between



Wilmington, DE and Annapolis via Dover, DE and Chestertown, MD. The lane would provide safe access to and from the scenic and historic byways on the Eastern Shore that are so popular with cyclists as well as non-motorized transportation to and from communities on both sides of the Chesapeake.

In the 2018 legislative session a Complete Streets bill was passed that embraces safe multimodal transportation by all of the MDOT modal agencies except MDTA. This bill establishes a “Routine Accommodation” policy for safe, separated pedestrian and bicycle facilities on bridges and across controlled access highways that is consistent with the Maryland legislative mandates for Complete Streets and Vision Zero. Such a policy would also align with federal transportation policies. The elimination of the planned bike/ped facility on the Nice Bridge put federal funding at risk. This bill provides for such accommodations unless waived where inappropriate. MDTA should coordinate with other MDOT agencies, DNR, National Park Service and local jurisdictions to build out a safe interconnected network of bike/pedestrian facilities. MDTA’s role should be to assure that new or renovated bridges and controlled access highways include such safe, separated pedestrian/bike infrastructure and crossings. This would include the I-495 Potomac crossing, a new Chesapeake Bay Bridge and a new Susquehanna River crossing. There should also be consideration for a retrofit program to construct facilities on critical existing bridge connections where original designs and/or present conditions fail to include safe accommodations for vulnerable road users.

We appreciate that the Governor Moore administration has demonstrated a strong priority toward equitable mobility. We look forward to working with Secretary Wiedefeld and his teams at MDOT and MDTA to maximize the amount and effectiveness of investment in safe and connected infrastructure for walking, biking and active transportation.

- Baltimore Bicycling Club**
- Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)**
- Bike Maryland**
- Bike HoCo**
- East Coast Greenway Alliance**
- Frederick Bicycle Coalition**
- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy**
- Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA)**
- Worcester County Bike and Pedestrian Coalition**