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**HB135 Transportation – Maryland Transportation Authority -  
Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Accessibility**  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
Support  
February 22, 2024

Good afternoon Chair Korman and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee. I am Larry Zarzecki, volunteer for AARP Maryland, and resident of Queen Annes County. AARP has more than 850,00 members statewide. AARP is the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing the interests of Marylanders who are age 50 years and older and their families. Key priorities of our organization include creating livable and sustainable communities where individuals can affordably and safely age in place. On behalf of our 850,000 members, we support **HB 135 Transportation – Maryland Transportation Authority – Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Accessibility** and thank Delegate Charkoudian for sponsoring this important legislation.

HB135 removes the requirement that the chair of the Maryland Transit Authority approve pedestrian and bicycle access to Authority managed highways, delineates parameters for pedestrian and bicycle use on Authority highways, and establishes a process for developing buffered bicycle ways and pedestrian walkways. This bill would enable new pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists to safely connect with transit stations, critical needs areas, neighborhoods separated by Authority highways, and to cross natural physical barriers. It would require those seeking waivers to establishing these pathways to review and recommendation by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

Pedestrian and bicyclist safety and accessibility are key elements in livable and sustainable communities. Safe streets, bridges, and tunnels are important for all of us. Many of us walk, bicycle, use canes, walkers, wheelchairs, or accompany children and push strollers. Everyone should feel safe crossing a street or bicycling along a road. Everyone should know that choosing a path on which to walk or bicycle will lead them to their destination and not end abruptly leaving them wondering how to safely reach that goal.

But the streets can be dangerous, especially for older Americans. The number of pedestrians killed by vehicles rose 35 percent in the past decade — and the death rate is almost twice as high for people over 75 as for the general population.

Making streets safe and accessible has been a key priority for AARP. This issue is of critical importance to AARP's members. When older Marylanders don't feel safe walking or bicycling the streets, they are less engaged, less able to access necessary resources and appointments. Isolation is a major health concern that increases with age. AARP has included pedestrian and

bicycle safety as one of the measures of quality of life on our livability index, and we invite you to check out how well your city does, at [AARP Livability Index](#).

AARP supports and advocates for increased mobility—safe and accessible infrastructure that provides a wide range of connected transportation options, including public transit, cycling, and walking. Another key aspect of this infrastructure is housing located within easy walking distance of public transportation, grocery stores, and other shopping, healthcare, recreation, and cultural institutions.

HB135 offers important opportunities and guidance for enhancing pedestrian and bicycle safety and access for people of all ages to improve the quality of life in communities throughout the state and *enabling more people to comfortably age in place*. For these reasons we ask the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on HB135. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Tammy Bresnahan at [tbresnahan@aarp.org](mailto:tbresnahan@aarp.org) or by calling 410-302-8451.