



Howard County Office of Transportation

3430 Court House Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-0702

Bruce Gartner, Administrator

bgartner@howardcountymd.gov

FAX 410-313-1655

TDD 410-313-2323

August 27, 2020

DATE: August 27, 2020

FROM: Bruce Gartner, Administrator, Howard County Office of Transportation

TO: Lonnie Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: Prohibiting Parking - Marked Bike Lanes

The Howard County Office of Transportation supports the Council Bill prohibiting parking in a designated and marked bike lane as an important step to make bicycling in Howard County safer for all users of the transportation system.

As a result of recent information from the Howard County Police and the State's Attorney's Office for Howard County, the Administration has determined that the most efficient way to keep bike lanes clear for their intended use is to amend Title 21 of the Howard County Code to add an additional prohibition to the existing language to clarify that an individual may not stop, stand, or park a vehicle in a designated or marked bike lane. The legislation also defines "bike lane" in County Code using the same terms as the definition in Section 21-101 of the Transportation Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and adding some clarification for how a bike lane is designated.

Designated and marked bike lanes are intended for the conveyance of people on bicycles. Vehicles parked in a bike lane present a danger by forcing cyclists to quickly move into the general-purpose travel lane. This is a difficult maneuver since a cyclist must first look over their shoulder to assess traffic coming from behind, judge if the gap is sufficient to merge into, signal their move, then make the lane shift to ride in the general-purpose travel lane. This challenging sequence is even more difficult and dangerous for a senior, a parent riding with children, or a cyclist with a baby trailer. Prohibiting parking in a bike lane reduces this danger.

Bike lanes are becoming more common on Howard County streets. The Howard County Bicycle Master Plan, known as "BikeHoward," was adopted by the County Council in 2016 recommending a network of bike lanes, pathways and shared streets. Currently, there are over 43 miles of bike lanes in Howard County. BikeHoward outlines a process for adding bike lanes, including community outreach and engagement. Safety and parking, particularly on roads near schools, are carefully considered and discussed with the community. In these discussions it has always stated to the community that vehicles should not be parked in bike lanes and in some instances, bike lane implementation has been halted or modified due to the effects on parking. This conscientious community engagement should be coupled with clarity in the law regarding parking in bike lanes.

The Howard County Complete Streets Policy, adopted by County Council in 2019, states:

“...public and private roadways in Howard County shall be safe and convenient for residents of all ages and abilities who travel by foot, bicycle, public transportation or automobile...” and “...safety shall be the highest priority; particularly safety for the most vulnerable street users (pedestrians, bicyclists, children, seniors, and people with additional accessibility needs).”

Clarifying the law regarding parking in bike lanes is fitting with this Complete Streets Policy and will improve the safety of people on bicycles in Howard County. Please support and approve the Council Bill prohibiting parking in bike lanes.

cc: Chief Lisa Myers, Howard County Police Department
Rich H. Gibson, Jr. State's Attorney for Howard County

CALVIN BALL
County Executive



LISA D. MYERS
Chief of Police

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

DATE: August 25, 2020
FROM: Lisa Myers, Chief of Police *APM*
TO: Lonnie Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer
SUBJECT: Prohibiting Parking - Marked Bike Lanes

This memorandum expresses my support of the Council Bill addressing parking in marked bike lanes. The Howard County Police Department (HCPD) recognizes the need to prohibit vehicle parking in clearly designated and marked bike lanes to enhance the safety of residents of all ages and abilities who travel by foot, bicycle, public transportation or automobile.

Field research, officer observations, citizen complaints and statistical data have helped determine this legislation is the most efficient way to keep bike lanes clear for their intended use. The proposed amendment to Title 21 of the Howard County Code will help clarify that an individual may not stop, stand, or park a vehicle in a designated or marked bike lane. The proposed adjustment also defines the term "bike lane".

The HCPD knows the importance of clearly designating marked bike lanes for the conveyance of people on bicycles and recognizes that vehicles parked in a bike lane create an unnecessary and dangerous situation. This legislation provides the necessary clarity for citizens and police officers that parking in a bike lane is illegal, allowing the HCPD to enforce the law and improve safety. This legislation will reduce the likelihood of forcing cyclists to abruptly look over their shoulder to assess if adequate space exists to shift into a traffic lane. This is never ideal, and even more challenging for children, seniors, and those pulling a baby trailer. Our County has embraced cycling and is working to increase bike lanes as part of the 2016 Bicycle Master Plan and the 2019 Howard County Complete Streets Policy, both approved by County Council.

Too often, our officers are called to respond to collisions, complaints and incidents involving cyclists just trying to "share the road". Prohibiting parking in designated bike lanes will help reduce roadway danger and improve the safety of all citizens.

Many local Maryland jurisdictions that have passed similar legislation, including Baltimore City, Rockville, Greenbelt, Caroline County (Recreation and Parks) and Wicomico County.

We ask that the Council support and approve this bill.

