

CB57-2022



**Provided by Jack Guarneri President Bike HoCo a 501(c)3
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Testimony to County Council Legislative Hearing on September 19, 2022
In Support of CB57-2022

Bike HoCo (founded in 2008 as Bicycling Advocates of Howard County) is a 501(c)3 non-profit representing over 1000 cyclists and cycling clubs/groups. There are two major Bike HoCo objectives that have remained consistent: to increase cycling safety through infrastructure improvements and greater awareness and to be proponents that bicycling should be a part of an energy efficient, environmentally sustainable transportation system for Howard County and the region. Bike HoCo has functioned as a subject matter expert and provided advise to the County Government and the County Executive on bicycling issues in Howard County. We have been consistent, persistent, and patient in achieving our goal of building a forward-looking bicycle infrastructure system that meets the needs and desires of all between the ages of 8 to 80+ for safer alternative transportation options.

Vision Zero is a collaborative campaign to help communities reach their goals of eliminating all traffic fatalities and severe injuries — while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all.

Bike HoCo fully supports the requirement in Council Bill 57-2022 “To require the Department of Police to notify the Director of Public Works (DPW) of certain fatalities; requiring the Director, or the Director’s designee, to conduct an infrastructure review when certain fatalities occur on a road or at an intersection; requiring consultation with the Office of Transportation (OoT); requiring the review to be complete within a certain time; requiring the review to be sent to specified recipients and published on the County website; and generally relating to traffic fatalities in the County.”

BUT we feel that the current proposed legislation needs to be amended to cover all the potential causes of bicycling and pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries (normally considered when the injured cyclist or pedestrian needs to be transported to a hospital) more broadly. In addition to inadequate or deteriorated infrastructure these include errors made by drivers or cyclists due to lack of training and/or proper signage and negligence or incapacitation of drivers that may have caused the crash and injuries. When negligence is found a follow-up report by the Department of Police should be submitted to describe the citations/fines issued or the reason why they weren’t. In the past 10 plus years, Bike HoCo and the HC Bicycle Advisory Group (BAG) have observed bicycling crashes resulting in fatality or serious injury have occurred about once a year and pedestrian incidents a little more frequently. Therefore, adding serious injury and other causes does not provide an onerous burden on Police, DPW or OoT.

Examples (Note there is no formal record kept on incidents below and details are based on web search, my contemporaneous notes and my memory):

- On Saturday September 19, 2015, a cyclist was killed in the vicinity of Old Frederick Road and Twin Arch Rd in Mt Airy. He was on a 160 mile Ride to Conquer Cancer charity fundraiser from DC to Mt Airy. Why did this happen? He was on an unfamiliar road that is a downhill and has a 90 degree curve and drifted into the oncoming lane. What made this crash different was the rider was Jake Brewer who was on President Obama's White House Staff and who was married to Mary Katherine Ham at the time a Fox News contributor and 7 months pregnant with their second child. The fatality received a great deal of press (Washington Post, Baltimore Sun, and local television and radio). Without a full police investigation completed DPW examined the road conditions and in a week had added warning and 'Share the Road' signage to the area.
- Last year (on April 10, 2021) an 11 year old Mikael Crier of Columbia was struck while riding his bike at the intersection of Rt 175 and Tamar Drive; he died 10 days later. We and OoT were not aware of this until 2 weeks later when neighbor posted this on NextDoor app and Facebook. It took over 2 months before the incident was discussed at a BAG meeting where the HCPD representative reported that the child had crossed against the light and the driver was not charged. Bike HoCo also found out that Mikael's school Jeffers Hill ES was not one of the few Elementary Schools in the County that provided bicycle Safety Training. HCPSS owns over 100 bicycles but does not require all schools' Physical Education instructors to hold bicycle classes; it is purely voluntary for teachers.
- This year (August 2, 2022) a 17 year old student from Oakland Mills HS, Alex Morales, was struck by a truck Gorman Road near Declan Road. Declan is one of the new roads that is part of the Milk Producers site. On google maps, Declan Road is labeled as Tranquility Road. He has been in a coma since the crash. He was transported to Shock Trauma and remains in a coma. Neither OoT or Bike HoCo was aware of this incident until 2 weeks later when a GoFundMe page for Alex (<https://gofund.me/c0f583b9>) started appearing on local social media. The page stated that he had been hit by a drunk driver. At a BAG meeting last week, the Police reported that they had not reported this on their social media, but that Alex had been struck at 9pm while riding on shoulder of Gorman Road and driver was believed to be incapacitated (drunk) but they were awaiting blood tests (over a month after the crash). I later asked whether Alex had been wearing a helmet (optional for over 16) and whether he had lights on his bike (mandatory at night), but no one appears to have that information.

There are many reasons other than road condition or design that accidents occur. We believe that it is important for all bicycle and pedestrian accidents resulting in a fatality or serious (admitted to hospital) injuries being included in this Bill. We further recommend that summary reports from HCPD be sent to OoT for determination which need to be followed up on and which should be reported to other HC entities (DPW, DPZ, HCPSS) and/or to the BAG. A data base should be developed and be available to interested citizens and provides summary data on serious crashes and any remedial action taken by County or citations issued by HCPD. Limiting CB57 to road infrastructure eliminates other mitigation and assistance to injured or their families that should be taken into consideration to truly achieve the goals of Vision Zero.



Transportation Alliance

September 19, 2022

Testimony on Council Bill 57-2022 – *Howard County Vision Zero Act* Howard County Council

Position: Favorable

Many jurisdictions in the U.S. have adopted Vision Zero policies to dispel the notion that there is any acceptable number of fatalities on our roads and to bring greater focus to efforts to preventing them. In 2019, Maryland enacted Vision Zero legislation that requires an infrastructure review of pedestrian and bicyclists fatalities on state highways and intersections. The Howard County Vision Zero Act, would codify state law and enhance implementation of the County's Complete Streets vision.

While few would argue with the goal to have zero pedestrian, bicyclist and driver fatalities in Howard County, too many people are complacent about the actual, ongoing and increasing trend. The Act would help Howard County design safer streets by requiring an infrastructure review of *all* traffic fatalities that occur on County roads and making recommendations to improve infrastructure safety. Designing streets and intersections to be safer is more effective than signage and enforcement alone, and this Act makes design part of the response to fatalities.

We are encouraged that Howard County is a leader in Maryland on Complete Streets and support passage of the Vision Zero Act.



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September 19, 2022

BILL: Council Bill 57-2022 (Howard County Vision Zero Act)

POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County's community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

Howard County has made great progress in recent years in implementing complete streets and providing record levels of funding for bike and pedestrian infrastructure projects in our community. Still, too many of our streets are not accessible or safe for walkers, bikers, bus riders or people with disabilities – and sadly, accidents happen. As a result, in many places, it is too difficult for children to walk safely to school, for people to be more physically active and for people with disabilities and older adults to travel easily and independently.

In 2019, the Maryland General Assembly passed Vision Zero legislation that was signed into law, which would require an infrastructure review of pedestrian and bicyclists fatalities on state highways and intersections. To make our community safer for ALL users of the road, the Horizon Foundation supports the Howard County Vision Zero Act, which would codify state law and enhance implementation of our Complete Streets vision. Requiring an infrastructure review of *all* traffic fatalities that occur on county roads and making recommendations to improve infrastructure safety will help us achieve a future where there are zero pedestrian, bicyclist and driver fatalities in our community. Designing our infrastructure to be safe and accessible for everyone is a key component to achieving our shared Complete Streets vision for our community.

Most importantly, this bill includes considerations that outlines proven safety improvements when assessing a section of road or intersection. When a fatality occurs, we must look at the greater roadway context and identify these and other considerations that can provide greater safety enhancements to our roadways and intersections for ALL users of the road including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and drivers.



Howard County needs better streets so people can walk, bike, use their wheelchair, ride the bus or their car more safely. This legislation will complement and enhance existing Complete Streets performance measures related to safety and help hold ourselves accountable in making improvements to our infrastructure that will prioritize the safety of ALL users of the road, no matter how they travel. Given the increase of fatalities we have seen over the last few years, this legislation is also a reminder that we provide the necessary investments for staff capacity to improve safety, work towards zero fatalities and advance Complete Streets.

Everyone in Howard County – no matter who they are or where they live – should be able to safely, easily and comfortably bike, walk or take public transportation anywhere they need to go. This legislation will help make Howard County a leader in prioritizing safety and upholding our Complete Streets vision. We urge you to pass the Howard County Vision Zero Act.

Thank you for your consideration.