

Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets
Montgomery County Council Bill 11-23: Safe Streets Act of 2023
Written Testimony, March 21, 2023

Good Afternoon. I'm here to present testimony on behalf of the Montgomery County Chapter of the organization Families for Safe Streets <https://mcofamiliesforsafestreets.org/>. In case you are not familiar with our organization, we are a relatively new chapter, started about two years ago. Our Mission is to provide support and shared community for families and friends of traffic crash victims; to help share stories of the lives of those lost in preventable traffic crashes; to convert these stories into effective advocacy efforts in Montgomery County and the State of Maryland; and to prompt changes that would prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future.

As you can probably imagine from this mission, our organization lives with the reality of the dangers to pedestrians, cyclists, and other vulnerable road users on a daily basis. For example, just last week, on March 16, a 75-year old man was killed while crossing the street on Columbia Pike at Stewart Lane.

Today I'm here to express our organizations support for the Safe Streets Act of 2023, with favorable amendments to include all school-related crashes within the scope of the Safe Routes to School Provision.

First, I want to clearly and unequivocally express our full support for the Automated Traffic Enforcement Plan and the Leading Pedestrian Intervals and No Turn on Red provisions.

Automated Traffic Enforcement Plan: Regarding the first, we strongly encourage the implementation of automated traffic enforcement as it is a critical, effective, and relatively low cost means to reduce traffic death. Human enforcement is not sufficient to achieve traffic speed reduction and running red lights, both of which are necessary to reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals and No Turn on Red: As a pedestrian who lives in the downtown area of Silver Spring where there are currently leading pedestrian intervals and no turn on red at some intersections, I can say from personal experience that these changes make a huge difference to feeling safer when crossing streets in dense urban areas with high traffic volume. It is just simple common sense that if the pedestrian is already in the cross-walk, the visibility to the driver will be greater. Turning right on red creates a hazard by forcing the driver to look to the left for car traffic, while often ignoring to look right, and missing the pedestrians, cyclists, or other vulnerable road users in the cross walk. Eliminating this dangerous practice will reduce the risk to these individuals.

Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Provision: MoCoFSS feels strongly that the Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Provision as written is critical to include in the Safe Streets Act of 2023, but does not go far enough. The reality is that many school-related crashes happen outside the

current scope: 8/9 crashes involving students/schools that happened in January would have been outside of the scope of the law as currently written.

The scope must include:

ALL ROADS, state, county, municipal, M-NCPPC (4/9); and

ALL times for crashes in school zones or on school property as well as those involving students going to/from school, before, during, after arrival/dismissal (4/9)

The reasons we take these positions are three-fold:

- 1) With the narrow scope of the language, everytime a school-related crash happens, it will require determining if it's in or out of scope.
- 2) While MCDOT only has authority over county roads, our view is that there is no restriction from the County conducting an infrastructure review on state and municipal roads. The County currently implements infrastructure changes on non-county roads and provides input on non-county road design in master planning.
- 3) While MCDOT has countered that there are insufficient resources to conduct infrastructure reviews for all school-related crashes, we argue that this is the very reason for why these crashes need to be included in the Act. What higher priority does the County have than the safety of our children going/to from schools?

In summary, we strongly support the Safe Streets Act of 2023 with favorable amendments to expand the scope of the Safe Routes to School provision to include ALL school-related crashes.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Montgomery County Chapter of Families for Safe Streets.