



Maryland Chapter

7338 Baltimore Avenue, Suite 102
College Park, MD 20740-3211

MC 02-21

Montgomery County House Delegation Bill Hearing

Testimony on: MC 02-21 - Montgomery County – Speed Limits – Establishment

Position: Support

Hearing Date: December 1, 2020

The Sierra Club supports MC 2-21 which would allow Montgomery County to decrease the maximum speed limit in the county to not less than 15 miles per hour on highways in an urban district without performing an engineering and traffic investigation, and on highways outside an urban district after an engineering and traffic investigation is performed. Currently, the lowest speed limit allowed for such roads is 25 miles per hour.

We live in a car-centric culture where transportation planning, road infrastructure and vehicle laws have historically been focused on enabling vehicles to get to their destinations as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, this has resulted in unnecessarily high rates of injury and death for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as vehicle drivers and passengers. Research shows that a vehicle's rate of speed has a direct impact on the ability to see ahead and notice people in or near the roadway, how quickly one can respond to avoid potential problems, how long it takes to stop a vehicle, and how likely someone will die as a result of a car collision.

Authorizing the county to lower speed limits where needed would bring a number of benefits. In addition to improving safety and reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries, lower speed limits would encourage more biking and walking which has health benefits. Lower speed limits also would enable the county to implement smart growth policies and fight climate change by creating more walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented communities where residents don't even need to own a car to get to where they need to go.

Lowering speed limits is a key component of "Vision Zero," a program Montgomery County (and our state) have adopted aimed at eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries for all road users. Other components of Vision Zero include having adequate sidewalks, bikeways and crosswalks, allowing sufficient time to cross streets, narrowing lanes, and adding other traffic calming measures. Despite the many elements of Vision Zero I just mentioned, it's doubtful that the program can succeed unless speed limits can be lowered as MC 2-21 specifies.

In summary, this bill makes sense for our county, our residents, and our environment. We encourage the Delegation to support MC 2-21 and will commit to testifying in support of the bill in Annapolis if it is introduced there.

Shruti Bhatnagar
Chair
Montgomery County Group
shruti.bhatnagar@mdsierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Director
Maryland Chapter
josh.tulkin@mdsierra.org