



SIERRA CLUB
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD

P.O. Box 4024
Rockville, MD 20849

May 7, 2021

To,
The Montgomery County Council
Transportation and Environment Committee
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: increasing funding for the Safe Routes to School Program

Dear Montgomery County Council members on the Transportation & Environment Committee,

Sierra Club Montgomery County Group supports Council member Jawando's proposal to increase funding for the Safe Routes to School program. This program aligns with the Sierra Club's priority to support the County's Vision Zero goals.

In a recent letter dated April 29th to the County Council, Councilmember Jawando has proposed that the Council double the funding to the Safe Routes to Schools Program in FY22, stating that this would involve a \$200,000 increase to the FY22 CIP and \$150,000 for the operating budget.

While the letter particularly cites the example of Norwood Road near Blake High School, that has no sidewalks, is essential for students who walk to school and where cars are routinely driving in excess of 50 miles per hour mere feet from those students, it highlights an issue that is seen in many other areas of the County. Speeding vehicles and distracted driving are known causes that put pedestrian safety at risk.

To ensure the safety of students and other pedestrians from increased vehicle traffic because of school buses, and school drop off / pick up hours, sidewalks and investment in programs like the "Safe Routes to School" are essential. Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has been studying the safety of routes students use to get to school — We request that this process be expedited.

As part of Vision Zero, we urge the county to continue to examine road design and speed limits. Road design is by far the most important strategy in slowing traffic and reducing crashes. But where the road has not yet been redesigned, a cost-effective solution is to lower speed limits and use automated enforcement. Drivers do respond to automated enforcement.

We urge the Council to push for extensive automated enforcement, where the enforcement is conducted by MCDOT, and not by police enforcement. Implementing these measures in school areas will protect our students and community members, as in-person school activities begin.

As your committee reviews the Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) amendments, please support the proposal to increase funding for the Safe Routes to School Program.

Thank you.

Shruti Bhatnagar, Chair
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CC:
Christopher Conklin, Dir. MCDOT
Casey Anderson, Chair, MNCPPC, MC

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization.
The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the
Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members