



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

July 20, 2016

NANCY FLOREEN
COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The Honorable Larry Hogan, Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Pete K. Rahn, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Mr. Gregory C. Johnson, Administrator
State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: Safety improvements needed at the Veirs Mill Road/Turkey Branch Parkway intersection and Matthew Henson Trail crossing

Dear Governor Hogan, Secretary Rahn and Administrator Johnson:

Once again, we are mourning the loss of a young man who was struck and killed on Veirs Mill Road (MD 586) at the Matthew Henson Trail crossing. Less than a year ago, another bicyclist lost his life at the same intersection. With downhill approaches in both directions and high traffic volumes on Veirs Mill Road and the Matthew Henson Trail, there is no question this intersection remains a pedestrian and cyclist hazard.

After the fatal collision in December, Councilmember Nancy Navarro wrote the attached letter asking you to expedite the process for implementing measures to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety at this intersection. Since then, the State Highway Administration has taken steps to address the safety concerns and has installed flashing yellow lights. While we appreciate the effort, we believe the flashers are insufficient to address the problem since they require motorists to slow down and exercise caution but not to stop. Drivers continue to exceed the 40-mph speed limit even when the light signal is activated. At these speeds, a collision with a pedestrian or bicyclist is almost certainly fatal.

In the wake of this latest tragedy, we urge you to take more aggressive action to resolve the serious safety deficiencies at this intersection. We ask you to investigate the feasibility of a pedestrian-actuated traffic control device and structural improvements that may make this area safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. We understand from your correspondence with Councilmember Hans Riemer in March that an earlier study determined that the pedestrian

volumes did not satisfy the warrants for a pedestrian-activated signal, but we encourage you to take another look in light of the ongoing hazard.

On a separate topic that is also critical for bicycle safety, a loophole in the Maryland law must be fixed. In 2010 the State legislature amended § 21-1103 of the Maryland Code to allow cyclists to ride their bikes in crosswalks. While this was a strong step forward, the law that protects pedestrians on the crosswalks (§ 21 – 502) needs to be amended to include wheelchairs, electric personal assisted mobility device and bicycles. It has been reported that a judge dismissed charges against the driver who struck and killed the 19-year-old at the same intersection because he was riding his bike, not walking it, and thus was not protected by the law. We will be working with our Delegation to amend this law to safeguard all legal users of a crosswalk in our state, and we ask for your support in that endeavor.

Montgomery County shares the Maryland Department of Transportation's commitment to moving the State toward zero deaths on our roadways. There is no way to prevent people from making mistakes on our roads, but these mistakes need not be deadly. The crossing at Veirs Mill Road/Turkey Branch Parkway and the Matthew Henson Trail is undeniably dangerous, and we thank you for prioritizing improvements there.

Sincerely,



Nancy Floreen
Council President



Roger Berliner
Council Vice President



Marc Elrich
Councilmember



Tom Hucker
Councilmember



Sidney Katz
Councilmember



George Leventhal
Councilmember



Nancy Navarro
Councilmember



Craig Rice
Councilmember



Hans Riemer
Councilmember

Enclosure

cc: Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive
Al Roshdieh, Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Montgomery County Delegation



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

NANCY NAVARRO
COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 4

January 6, 2016

Larry Hogan, Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Pete K. Rahn, Maryland Secretary of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Gregory C. Johnson, State Highway Administrator
707 North Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Dear Governor Hogan, Secretary Rahn, and Administrator Johnson:

On Monday, December 28, a 19-year-old man named Frank Towers was struck by an SUV and killed while riding home from work on his bicycle at the intersection of Veirs Mill Rd. (MD 586) and Turkey Branch Parkway. As you know, the area around this intersection has been a pedestrian and cyclist hazard for some time. Two people were killed within a mile of this intersection by cars last year.


While I am aware the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) and State Highway Administration (SHA) are currently reviewing this incident, I am urging your administration to take prompt action to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety at the intersection of Veirs Mill Rd. (MD 586) and Turkey Branch Parkway, as well as undertake a comprehensive review of all intersections along Veirs Mill Road (MD 586).

According to the *Washington Post*, SHA “has an active project underway to add additional flashers at this location...to address the occurrence of rear-end crashes...” While I am pleased some thought has already gone into making this intersection safer for vehicular traffic, I am concerned there is not enough emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle safety. As SHA continues to review traffic calming strategies for this area, I hope you

will prioritize the need to reduce the number of accidents involving pedestrians and bicycles. I implore SHA to expedite its process in light of this most recent tragedy by taking swift action to resolve these serious safety deficiencies.

In 2015, Montgomery County experienced more than a dozen pedestrian and bicycle fatalities. The vast majority of these incidents occurred along State Roads. I look forward to working with your administration, the County's Department of Transportation and Police Department to reduce the number of these incidents to zero in 2016.

Sincerely,



Nancy Navarro
Councilmember, District 4

CC: Isiah Legget, Montgomery County Executive
J. Thomas Manger, Montgomery County Police Chief
Al Roshdieh, Acting Director, Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Nancy Floreen, Montgomery County Council President
Roger Berliner, Chair, Transportation, Energy, & Environment Committee
Roger Manno, Senator (District 19)
Richard Madaleno, Jr., Senator (District 18)
Bonnie Cullison, Delegate (District 19)
Ben Kramer, Delegate (District 19)
Marice Morales, Delegate (District 19)
Al Carr, Delegate (District 18)
Ana Sol Gutierrez, Delegate (District 18)
Jeff Waldstreicher, Delegate (District 18)