



Ray Biggs II  
Purple Line Senior Project Director  
Maryland Transit Administration

RE: MD 201/Kenilworth Avenue project safety alterations

June 18, 2024

Dear Mr. Biggs,

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) strongly urges safety alterations to the MTA's plans for MD 201/Kenilworth Avenue between the River Road intersection and MD 410/East West Highway in Prince George's County. This segment is part of the Purple Line route between the Riverdale Park North-UMD and Riverdale Park-Kenilworth stations.

Current plans and conditions

The MTA's plan drawings<sup>1</sup> show unprotected bike lanes along MD 201/Kenilworth Ave between River Road and MD 410/East-West Highway. The right of way would be significantly widened to accommodate the Purple Line without sacrificing traffic lanes, however traffic lanes are indicated at 11' width. There are slip lanes at the intersection of MD 201 and MD 410.

These conditions are unfavorable for pedestrians and bicyclists. They can and should be altered.

While this is an MTA project linked to Purple Line construction, MD 201/Kenilworth Avenue is a state highway. The State Highway Administration's Maryland Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment – November 2023<sup>2</sup> lists "MD 201, Kenilworth Avenue from Annapolis Road [MD 450] to River Road" as a high-risk area. This stretch includes the East-West Highway-River Road segment of Kenilworth Avenue/MD 201 that is the focus of this letter.

The SHA notes regarding Kenilworth Avenue/MD 201 (emphasis added) "Key points from the consultation process:

- *Fast traffic with missing crosswalks and people crossing midblock*
- *Limited, if any, bicycle facilities*
- *Substantial improvements will be made in conjunction with the Purple Line; confirm that these will address pedestrian and cyclist safety*
- *Designs should reflect a denser context zone than exists today"*

<sup>1</sup> See drawings S7021PTD-106, S7021PTD-107, and S7021PTD-108, dated May 6, 2020, created under contract T-1042-0220:

<https://waba.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/MD-201-Kenilworth-Ave-S7021PTD.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://zerodeathsmd.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SHSP2021-25\\_compressed.pdf](https://zerodeathsmd.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/SHSP2021-25_compressed.pdf)

### Goals and policy

WABA believes that the “substantial improvements,” as currently planned, will not adequately address pedestrian and cyclist safety. Further, MTA plan elements are not in keeping with former State Highway Administrator Tim Smith’s March, 2023 commitment<sup>3</sup> to “implement context guide design elements in all capital projects,” nor of course, with the recently launched MDOT Complete Streets commitment<sup>4</sup>.

Alterations to the current plan will boost safety and should be doable without major new costs. These alterations will allow MDOT to get a jump on improvements linked to the SHA’s Pedestrian Safety Action Plan that are envisioned for some future date, without a hard commitment.

The MDOT’s new Complete Streets policy would “Require the implementation of planning and design principles from Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) Maryland Transit Administration’s (MTA) Bus Stop Design Guide, and State Highway Administration’s (SHA) Context Driven: Access and Mobility for All Users Guide, or Context Guide, to address safety, access, and mobility for all users on all projects in MDOT right-of-way.” MTA can and should implement this provision on Kenilworth Avenue/MD 201. We will suggest how.

### Suggested alterations

The SHA’s context designation for this stretch is Suburban Activity Center/Traditional Town Center, although we recognize the SHA’s point that “designs should reflect a denser context zone than exists today.” Referencing the SHA’s Context Driven guide, regarding the current context<sup>5</sup>:

- Traditional Town Center (TTC) indicates **barrier separated bike lanes**.
- All contexts indicate **green pavement for bike lanes across intersections**, but these are not indicated in the drawings.
- The contexts indicate pedestrian-signal **Leading Pedestrian Intervals at intersections**.
- The Suburban Activity Center (SAC) and TTC contexts indicate **No Turn on Red**.
- The **inner traffic lane should be narrowed** to 10' in these contexts (which of course would help provide space for bike lane separation barriers).

We ask the MTA to modify plans to implement these points. Further:

- The plans show a 35 MPH speed limit. **The speed limit should be reduced to 30 MPH.**
- The plans appear to show a wide turning radius at the intersections. Please **reduce turning radii**.
- Please take steps to **eliminate or minimize the bike-lane impact of stormwater intakes, man-hole covers, and a narrow gutter distance**.

In addition to addressing these points, we ask MTA and SHA engineering staff and contractors to review the plans for additional, forward-looking improvements that are doable now and would boost pedestrian, bicyclist, and motor-vehicle safety in accordance with current and emerging standards. This review should include conformance with the Federal Highway Administration’s Bikeway Selection Guide, with NACTO

<sup>3</sup> [https://waba.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023-SHA-Commitment-HB-70\\_FINAL.pdf](https://waba.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2023-SHA-Commitment-HB-70_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://policymanual.mdot.maryland.gov/mediawiki/index.php?title=MDOT\\_750\\_Complete\\_Streets](https://policymanual.mdot.maryland.gov/mediawiki/index.php?title=MDOT_750_Complete_Streets)

<sup>5</sup> <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/3476e680584c49e48303fe6d52ceeda9>

provisions, and with provisions of the Bicycle Facility Selection Draft Guidance in Appendix D of the Maryland Statewide Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan<sup>6</sup>.

Finally, would you please identify any organizational, contractual, funding, or other challenges that would complicate making these safety improvements.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and your Purple Line team colleagues, the State Highway Administration, elected officials, and advocates to advance transportation safety and boost transit ridership.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Seth Grimes  
WABA Maryland organizer

Copy:

Councilmember Eric Olson, District 3 and chair, Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment (TIEE)

Senator Alonzo Washington

Delegates Anne Healey, Ashanti Martinez, Nicole Williams

Kathryn Lamb, MDOT MTA

Derek Gunn, Erich Florence, Joseph Moges, MDOT State Highway Administration

Kevin Oberheim, RK&K

John J. Farley, Maryland Transit Partners

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/MDOT\\_State\\_Bike\\_Ped\\_Master\\_Plan\\_FULL\\_FINAL\\_VERSION.pdf](https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/MDOT_State_Bike_Ped_Master_Plan_FULL_FINAL_VERSION.pdf)