



MC 20-24 – Montgomery County – State Highways – Project Approval
Montgomery County Delegation
Washington Area Bicyclist Association – FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

November 27, 2023

Chairs Kramer and Palakovich Carr and Members of the Montgomery County Delegation,

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), an advocacy organization with 1,200 Maryland members, supports bill MC 20-24 with amendments.

MC 20-24 would require the State Highway Administration to render a decision on a proposed highway construction project in Montgomery County within 30 days after the project application is complete, failing which, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) may approve the project subject to available funding. In Maryland Code's Transportation Article § 801-1(i)(1), "highway" is defined to include "bicycle and walking paths."

This legislation addresses an actual need. I became aware of an onerous and cumbersome application-approval process, myself, earlier this year in conversations with MCDOT staff. I was told that SHA construction-project review routinely takes far longer than is reasonable and justifiable given the scope and complexity of project applications. I was told, further, that after MCDOT responds to the SHA's review points, second-round review may be assigned to a staffer other than the one who conducted the first-round review, and that person may open new issues.

We suggest amending MC 20-24 to disallow identification of new issues in a second-round review.

Regarding MDOT SHA strictures applied to local projects: We also suggest reform to allow a locality to apply directly to the federal government for experimental roadway treatments, with flashing yellow arrows as an example, and elimination of the restrictive Maryland supplement to the FHWA Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Finally, a holistic process for review of stormwater management for bicycle/pedestrian/transit projects in built environments should be mandated, recognizing that stormwater handling may be addressed area-wide.

These additional reforms would facilitate design and construction of projects that would boost multi-modal transportation options and road safety. WABA therefore recommends you advance MC 20-24 with amendments although we do recognize these amendments would greatly expand the scope of the bill before you.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

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