



## Senate Bill 865

### *Vehicle Laws - School Zone Crosswalks - Traffic Control Signals*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**  
**WITH AMENDMENTS**

Date: February 22, 2017

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Barbara Zektick

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 865 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill requires jurisdictions owning roads in school zones where the speed limit is at least 35 miles per hour to place traffic signals at all marked crosswalks. Further, it prohibits operation of those traffic signals from operating outside of the hours posted on signs designating the school zone.

MACo supports efforts to ensure children's safety in school zones, but has concerns with the terms of this bill which actually compromise safety. Prudent traffic engineering requires consideration of multiple factors to determine the best approach for any particular situation or location. While a traffic signal may be appropriate at one intersection, it may not be appropriate at another, due to any of a number of factors including but not limited to proximity to other traffic signals, visibility and sightline considerations, road slope nearing the intersection, and access points entering and nearby the intersection.

Traffic engineers require flexibility in the law to determine the best treatment for any particular location, rather than "one size fits all" mandates which may actually compromise, rather than promote, traffic and pedestrian safety. Furthermore, restricting operation of traffic signals to specific times of day may only cause greater confusion and risk of accidents – particularly in school zones, where traffic may increase after regular school day hours due to after school events.

Moreover, as counties continue to suffer the repercussions of devastating cutbacks to their highway user revenues, it becomes increasingly important for local governments to maintain control over their own roads. The ongoing battle to keep local roads in a satisfactory state of repair despite inadequate funding will only be made more difficult by "one size fits all" mandates. Design, engineering and installation of one intersection traffic signal costs approximately \$200,000. Requiring counties to spend limited transportation funds on unnecessary or even dangerous mandated infrastructure makes funds unavailable for other priorities.

MACo requests that the Committee consider amending this bill to mirror its cross file, House Bill 1199, which authorizes – rather than requires – installation of the subject traffic signals. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 865 a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**.