



## House Bill 1296

### *Preliminary Subdivision and Site Plans – Safe School Route Reports – Requirement*

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

To: Economic Matters and Ways and Means  
Committees

Date: March 6, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1296 **WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill places certain requirements on residential projects which may contribute to the population of students walking to schools.

Counties strongly share the goal of improving safe pedestrian and bicycle access to schools. In many communities, subdivision and site plan review already address connectivity, sidewalks, crossings, and related off-site improvements, often coordinated with local transportation plans, school access points, and broader capital programming. HB 1296 usefully elevates this policy objective by requiring developers to identify infrastructure gaps and hazards, and propose mitigation measures early in the development review process.

That said, as drafted, the bill risks creating new procedural chokepoints and unclear lines of authority that could delay approvals, complicate established local processes, and inadvertently shift responsibilities onto agencies that do not control certain assets or construction timelines.

MACo's requested amendments (included on the following page) are intended to preserve the bill's core purpose—safe routes to school—while ensuring implementation fits within existing local review processes, clarifies roles, and avoids creating unintended permitting delays or unfunded administrative burdens for counties and school systems.

HB 1296 is a positive common-sense bill that, with appropriate fine tuning, will be a positive step in addressing the safety of Maryland's students. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** on HB 1296 (*amendments follow on the next page*).

**MACo Amendments for HB 1296:**

***Amendment #1** - Changes the applicability threshold from five dwelling units to ten dwelling units. Several counties provide an expedited review and approval process for projects of ten units or fewer; this amendment ensures those smaller projects are not pulled into a more intensive review track.*

On page 4, in line 16, strike "FIVE" and insert "TEN"

***Amendment #2** - Strikes provisions that blur or shift decision-making authority between counties and local boards of education, while preserving the bill's core intent and functionality. Developers would still be required to submit an analysis of the suitability of local walking routes, but counties would retain clear discretion over infrastructure conditions and related land use review decisions.*

On page 5, strike line 10 through page 6, line 7, inclusive.