

[Maryland's mandatory helmet law a disaster for biking](#)

Commuting in Copenhagen: Bicycling is safe, yet almost no one wears a helmet.

If the bill passes, it would probably kill BikeShare as well as decrease the prevalence of transportation cycling. Capital BikeShare, now coming to Montgomery County, is asking the county to invest in more bike infrastructure and will allow many more bike trips. Montgomery County's transit oriented communities and new urban centers (including Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Areas designated by the state) rely on bicycling and walking as a way to reduce traffic. But this bill would undermine it all.



In Copenhagen, [36% of all commuting trips](#) are by bike. In Amsterdam, [29% of trips](#) across the city are by bike, 43% in the city center ([more here](#)). Yet very few Dutch and Danish riders wear helmets, which are seen as seen as inconvenient and discouraging to cycling. And there are far fewer bike fatalities per rider in those countries than in the U.S. **Please see the video ([Copenhagen-cyclists-video](#)) at for a full representation of typical cyclists in Copenhagen.**

Mandatory helmet laws are a BikeShare killer. Who is going to plan half a day ahead and bring a helmet in case they might use BikeShare for an impromptu lunchtime trip? BikeShare is all about convenience and short trips. Many BikeShare users won't carry a spare helmet around all day just to make a couple 5 minute trips. When they get to their destination, perhaps a store where they'll spend 20 minutes, they will have to carry their helmet there too, even if it was just a 4 block ride on a sidewalk.

Consider this scenario. A rider lives in a smart growth community designed to support biking, walking and transit. He or she lives one mile from a Metro station, most of which is bike path or sidewalk. At a 4 mph walking pace, that's 15 minutes. At a 10 mph biking pace, it's 6 minutes. The difference is 9 minutes. If the person boards Metro with his/her helmet, that's twice as many things to carry on the

crowded train, assuming a purse or briefcase as well. The trip becomes awkward, so the person gives up on the bike, effectively adding 9 minutes to his/her commute. This makes driving 9 minutes quicker relative to Metro. **So the person drives to work.**



People don't "gear up" for their bike commute in Amsterdam or Copenhagen

Bike sharing is simply untenable in a city that requires bike helmets. The [New York Times](#) notes:

A two-year-old bike-sharing program in Melbourne, Australia — where helmet use is mandatory — has only about 150 rides a day, despite the fact that Melbourne is flat, with broad roads and a temperate climate. On the other hand, helmet-lax Dublin — cold, cobbled and hilly — has more than 5,000 daily rides in its young bike-sharing scheme.

BikeShare promises to be a game changer in lower Montgomery County, just as it has been in D.C. It will lead to many more bike trips by people who aren't typical bikers, reducing car traffic and getting drivers to become more aware and accepting of cyclists. But requiring bike helmets would be a death knell to BikeShare and impact transportation biking overall.

Therefore, we urge the Committee to return an Unfavorable vote on this bill.