



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Veronica P. McBeth, Director, Department of Transportation
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	December 9, 2025
SUBJECT	25-0119 • Footways – Sidewalks – Accessibility

Position: Favorable

BILL SYNOPSIS

The City has entered into an arrangement known as Civil Action #1: 21-cv-01454-JKB Class Action Partial Consent Decree (the “Partial Consent Decree”). The Partial Consent Decree became effective on March 31, 2025. The City has agreed to introduce Council Bill 25-0119 as part of the Partial Consent Decree.

Through the Partial Consent Decree, the City has agreed to increase investment in sidewalks and accessible infrastructure such as curb ramps (also known as ADA ramps). The City’s deferred maintenance challenges have contributed to a lag in the adoption of accessible infrastructure, an issue which the Department is making every effort to correct. Through the steps outlined in the Partial Consent Decree, it is DOT’s intention to create a roadway network which is more accessible to users of all ability levels.

Council Bill 25-0119 would change certain requirements associated with footways/sidewalks and temporary pedestrian detours for roadwork preventing access to existing sidewalks. The bill would increase the minimum required width of sidewalks to five feet, mirroring DOT’s minimum standards for new sidewalks. The rules established in Article 26, § 9-4 (regarding footway compliance certificates) would require property owners to make sidewalks safe and compliant with applicable laws as a condition for transferring ownership of property or applying for certain permits. Additionally, property owners would be required to correct safety hazards upon their discovery or notification by the City; this notification is currently in place and is issued at DOT’s discretion, provided that sidewalk conditions warrant repairs.

While DOT is largely responsible for the maintenance of City right-of-way, current City law tasks property owners with the maintenance of the sidewalks adjacent to their properties. This legislation would reinforce that responsibility in an effort to accelerate upgrades to substandard City sidewalks.

Implementing this legislation would present certain requirements, including:

- **Self-certification inspections.** Inspections would need to be conducted by contractors licensed in the City and State at the property owner's expense. Penalties will be levied in instances of falsified inspection results.
- **Compliance certificates.** The Department will begin to issue compliance certificates to property owners as inspections are performed. These certificates would be required as part of the transfer of property; therefore, additional staff would likely be required to avoid delays to real estate transfers.
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- **Random inspections.** Subjecting compliance-certified properties to random inspections may require additional inspections staff. The Department may be limited in its ability to conduct these inspections without additional resources.
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SUMMARY OF POSITION

The Department is primarily responsible for the maintenance of sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure in Baltimore City. In addition, DOT was extensively involved in legal negotiations leading to the Partial Consent Decree. The Department presents this report for informational record and respectfully requests a favorable report on Council Bill 25-0119.