



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

April 29, 2024

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) for Supplemental Appropriations #24-76
Mass Transit

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #24-76 *Mass Transit* is likely to advance racial equity and social justice, particularly for bus operators and transit coordinators and those who are most burdened by transit inequities. This supplemental appropriation can help mitigate transit inequities by expanding access to accessible transportation options as well as ensuring safe and reliable bus service across the County.

- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #24-76 *Mass Transit* is to allocate \$14,398,933 (from Mass Transit Fund Undesignated Reserves) to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation Transit Services to address current year increases for transit and community mobility services. Changes in the transit operating context (locally and nationally) prompted the request for additional transit services funding. Price increases and returns to pre-pandemic levels of service have prompted the requested increases to address:
 1. Bus operator and transit coordinator overtime cost increases.
 2. Projected overages for parts, maintenance, and repair services for the RideOn Bus fleet.

3. Increased reimbursement requests for wheelchair-accessible vehicle purchases and trips within the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF).
4. Cost increases for Nicholson Court lease and utilities.

Based on available information, addressing these issues is essential for the maintenance of current program and service levels.

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORES) has conducted numerous racial equity impact assessments (REIAs) on supplemental appropriations related to transportation programs and capital projects. ORESJ recommends the following REIAs for each of the items this supplemental seeks to address:

1. Bus operator and transit coordinator overtime cost increases
 - [REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-26 Transit Service Bus Operators](#). This REIA highlighted the overrepresentation of people of color in transit operator and coordinator positions and the potential for wage increases (or in the case of Supplemental Appropriation #24-76, overtime payments) could help to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in median household income and housing cost burden.
 - Finding: The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #22-26 is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in the County, as it raises the wages of transit operators and coordinators who are disproportionately people of color. Raising the wages of these positions contributes to reductions in racial and ethnic disparities in median household income and housing cost burden.
2. Projected overages for parts, maintenance, and repair services for the RideOn Bus fleet
 - [REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-92 Transit Services](#). This REIA looks at retroactive payments to bus operators and increased prices for fuel, parts, and repair services for the RideOn Bus fleet.
 - Finding: The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #23-92 Transit Services (\$14,409,927) is likely to advance racial equity and social justice. It enables the payment of wage increases for transit operators and coordinators, who (because of historical and current inequities) are disproportionately people of color, while also ensuring the safety and reliability of Ride On bus service, the ridership of which (due to structural inequities) is disproportionately comprised of low-income and Black Indigenous and Other People of Color (BIPOC) residents.
3. Increased reimbursement requests for wheelchair-accessible vehicle purchases and trips within the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF).

- [REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #22-92 FY22 Operating Budget, Department of Transportation, Taxicab Accessibility, Transportation Services Improvement Fund.](#) This REIA focuses on the increased demand for accessible transportation services in the County.
 - **Finding:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #22-92 Taxicab Accessibility Transportation Services Improvement Fund is likely to advance some aspects of racial equity and social justice related to transportation equity in the County, but further investments in the quality, safety, and reliability of services are necessary to realize the full the impact of increasing the supply of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- 4. Cost increases for Nicholson Court lease and utilities.
 - [Racial Equity Impact Assessment \(REIA\) Supplemental Appropriation \(SA\) #24-77 FY24 Operating Budget - Utilities Non-Departmental Account \(11,348,928\).](#) While this REIA does not speak directly to the Nicholson Court lease or utilities payments, it does provide context for how ORESJ has considered lease and utility payments in the past.
 - **Finding:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #24-77 Utilities Non-Departmental Account (NDA) does not appear to functionally alter programming or uses considered during the review of SA #23- 93, FY23 Operating Budget - Utilities Non-Departmental. Therefore, ORESJ’s finding remains unchanged; the supplemental appropriation neither advances nor impedes racial equity and social justice in the County. The supplemental funding is intended to cover cost increases in utilities for County facilities.

In addition to the finding statement above, it’s important to consider whether there are any historical or current racial equity impacts associated with the Nicholson Court location. While beyond the scope of this REIA to fully assess the site selection process for bus depots and other transportation infrastructure, it is important to highlight the intersection of environmental pollutants, proximity to depots and heavily trafficked areas, and racial equity. The Montgomery County Climate Action Plan show in Figure 6, 7, and 8 which shows that, “the majority of BIPOC and low-income communities live near major roadways and that they are more likely to live in close proximity to traffic”¹.

ORESJ identified the following demographics for the census tract where the Nicholson Court transit shop is located:

¹ Page 27 and 28 of the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan. Available at:
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/climate/Resources/Files/climate/climate-action-plan.pdf>

Demographic group	Percentage for Census Tract: 7012.02
Non-Hispanic White Population	75%
American Indian Population	0%
Asian/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Population	7%
Black Population	1%
Hispanic Population	10%
Other/Two or More Races Population	7%
Percent below the Poverty Line	.35%

Source: 2023 FFIEC Geocode Census Report. Address: 4925 Nicholson Ct, Kensington, Maryland, 20895. MSA: 23224 - FREDERICK-GAITHERSBURG-ROCKVILLE, MD. State: 24 – MARYLAND. County: 031 - MONTGOMERY COUNTY. Tract Code: 7012.02. Available at: <https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/>

These demographics suggest that residents closest to the location are less likely to be BIPOC and low-income, and thus face fewer systemic barriers to mitigating potential impacts associated with the depot. This analysis does not consider a broader environmental assessment of other factors that may impact residents.

Based on the findings highlighted in previous transportation-related REIAs, addressing cost increases associated with bus operators and transit coordinators' overtime and Ride On repair and maintenance is necessary to help reduce transit-related disparities in the County. Delivering transit services in a reliably safe manner reduces the burden of transit and other inequities in the County.

cc: Ken Hartman, Director, Office of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive
Chris Conklin, Director, Department of Transportation