

Climate Assessment

Office of Legislative Oversight

EXPEDITED

SPECIAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

BILL 14-25:

PROJECT – CLARKSBURG LIBRARY

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Expedited Bill 14-25 could have a small, positive impact on the County’s community resilience as if authorized, the proposed library could serve as an important hub for services during a natural disaster and other extreme weather events in Clarksburg.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF EXPEDITED BILL 14-25

The Montgomery County Charter requires the County Executive to prepare, and the Council to adopt, a biennial Capital Improvements Program (CIP).¹ The CIP is a six-year plan for long-term investments in County facilities and infrastructure, commonly referred to as “capital projects” such as schools, transportation systems, and libraries. The CIP can be amended between biennial updates to address changing needs and priorities. The annual Capital Budget, also developed by the County Executive and approved by the Council, provides yearly appropriations for capital projects and must be consistent with the CIP.² County law further requires the Council to individually authorize any project in the Capital Budget and CIP, called a “special capital improvement project” if the locally funded cost exceeds a certain threshold—currently \$25,190,000 in FY26 dollars.³

The purpose of Expedited Bill 14-25 is to authorize the planning, design, and construction of a new library in Clarksburg.⁴ The Executive’s justification for the project is stated in the project description form:

“The Clarksburg population is expected to increase from 13,766 in 2010 to almost 40,000 by 2025. The closest library is the Germantown branch, which opened in 2007. The library will serve as the community connection hub to ideas, learning, and the exchange of information. It will improve the community through facilitating knowledge creation, informing the community, and inspiring lifelong learning and collaboration.”⁵

The Clarksburg Library project is estimated to cost \$35,580,000, as included in the FY26 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY25-30 CIP.⁶ The Executive must attain Council authorization to proceed with the project because its cost exceeds the local funding threshold.⁷

The Council introduced Expedited Bill 14-25, Special Capital Improvements Project – Clarksburg Library, on behalf of the County Executive on May 22, 2025.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

After a 2011 amendment to the Stafford Act was enacted, FEMA now recognizes libraries, alongside emergency services such as police, fire and rescue, and emergency medical services, as essential community organizations.⁸ With that designation, libraries are tasked to fulfill critical information needs in the case of a disaster.⁹ Prior and since this designation, public libraries have served as central hubs in times of natural disasters and other extreme weather events such as:

- Supplying public access to the internet in times of natural disasters;¹⁰
- Providing shelter and access to air-conditioning/heating during natural disasters and in times of extreme heat or cold¹¹;
- Disseminating emergency information;¹² and
- Serving as a hub for community organizations to mobilize aid during natural disasters.¹³

If authorized, a new library in Clarksburg would be able to serve as a vital role in the emergency response network in the County, especially as the nearest library serving the community is located in Germantown approximately six miles away from the proposed location.¹⁴ While there will be emissions associated with the construction of the library, a closer library for residents of Clarksburg would likely reduce emissions associated with individual car trips to the library.¹⁵

As the Bill proposes the authorization of constructing a library in Clarksburg, OLO anticipates Expedited Bill 14-25 will have a small, positive impact on the County's contribution to addressing climate change, including the reduction and/or sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions, community resilience, and adaptative capacity.

RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Climate Assessment Act requires OLO to offer recommendations, such as amendments or other measures to mitigate any anticipated negative climate impacts.¹⁶ OLO does not offer recommendations or amendments as Expedited Bill 14-25 is likely to have a small, positive impact on the County's contribution to addressing climate change, including the reduction and/or sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions, community resilience, and adaptative capacity.

CAVEATS

OLO notes two caveats to this climate assessment. First, predicting the impacts of legislation upon climate change is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and the broad, global nature of climate change. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to inform the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO's endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

PURPOSE OF CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of the Climate Assessments is to evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on the County's contribution to addressing climate change. These climate assessments will provide the Council with a more thorough understanding of the potential climate impacts and implications of proposed legislation, at the County level. The scope of the Climate Assessments is limited to the County's contribution to addressing climate change, specifically upon the County's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and how actions suggested by legislation could help improve the County's adaptive capacity to climate change, and therefore, increase community resilience.

While co-benefits such as health and cost savings may be discussed, the focus is on how proposed County bills may impact GHG emissions and community resilience.

CONTRIBUTIONS

OLO staffer Kaitlyn Simmons drafted this assessment.

¹ [Montgomery County Charter](#), "Sec. 302. Six-Year Programs for Public Services, Capital Improvements, and Fiscal Policy," Accessed June 3, 2025.; [Montgomery County Maryland Operating Budget](#), "Capital Improvements Program (CIP)", Accessed June 3, 2025.

² [Montgomery County Charter](#), "Sec. 303 Capital and Operating Budgets", Accessed June 3, 2025.

³ [Montgomery County Code](#), "Sec. 20-1. Authorization of Special Capital Improvement Projects by Law", Accessed June 3, 2025.

⁴ [Montgomery County Council](#), Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 14-25, Introduced May 22, 2025.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See Expenditure Schedule in [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 14-25](#).

⁷ [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 14-25](#)

⁸ [FEMA](#), "Stafford Act", Accessed June 2, 2025.

⁹ [Patin, B.](#), "What is essential?: Understanding community resilience and public libraries in the United States during disasters", October 22, 2020.

¹⁰ [American Libraries Magazine](#), "Hurricane Harvey and Libraries: Recovery and Assistance are Ongoing", September 6, 2017.

¹¹ [American Library Association](#), "Library as Safe Haven: Disaster Planning, Response, and Recovery", 2014.

¹² [Flaherty, M. G.](#), "Here, There, and Everywhere: Disasters and Public Libraries", June 15, 2016.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ [Introduction Staff Report for Expedited Bill 14-25](#)

¹⁵ [Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction](#), "2019 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction: Towards a Zero-emission, Efficient, and Resilient Buildings and Construction Sector", 2019.

¹⁶ Bill 3-22, Legislative Branch – Climate Assessments – Required, Montgomery County Council, Effective date October 24, 2022