



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

November 14, 2022

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 for Supplemental Appropriation #23-18, Street Tree Planting Fund

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #23-18 *Street Tree Planting Fund* is unlikely—as currently proposed—to advance racial equity and social justice in the County as the supplemental appropriation implements a policy enacted before the passage of Bill 44-20. In addition, there is little to no information provided about where tree placement is planned, compared to need, and whether the processes related to the fund ensure equitable access.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of SA #23-18 Street Tree Planting Fund is to fund the replacement of roadside trees as required under Bill 41-12—Streets and Roads—Roadside Trees Protection. Bill 41-12 became effective on March 1, 2014, and aims to protect, replace, and conserve roadside trees in County rights-of-way. This supplemental appropriation, therefore, relates to existing law and does not create a new initiative or public resource. Notably, this law was passed before Bill 44-20 which codified the use of a racial equity lens in program and policy decisions.

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) commented on the importance of equitable tree preservation in its REIA of SA #22-29 Tree Replacement¹. This REIA highlighted the role redlining has played in the inequitable distribution of tree canopy and its health benefits. Therefore, efforts to preserve and protect trees on public roads (such as

¹ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-29.pdf>

those described in SA #23-18) could help reduce disproportionate burdens on Black, Indigenous, People of Color communities and low-income communities. However, data about the neighborhoods in which tree replacement is likely to take place and the demographic and income characteristics of those neighborhoods are missing from this supplemental appropriation request. In addition, there's limited information available about the process or factors considered in funding tree replacement. Therefore, it is unclear to what extent this supplemental appropriation or Bill 41-12 is aligned with policies and practices that advance tree equity.

A full analysis of Bill 41-12 is beyond the scope of this REIA, but such an analysis could help clarify the processes involved with developing a tree protection plan, whether there are any inequities in access to requisite permitting, and what the geographic distribution of tree replacement is compared to need. Consulting tools like the Tree Equity Score could help operationalize, the preservation goals in Bill 41-12, with an equity lens.

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