



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

January 24, 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) Supplemental Appropriation #24-46 Traffic Signals (No. 507154)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that the effect of Supplemental Appropriation #24-45 Traffic Signals (No. 507154) on racial disparities in traffic safety is inconclusive. Two proposed project sites are within census tracts where Black, Latino, and Asian residents make up the majority of the population; two proposed project sites are within census tracts where the majority of residents are non-Hispanic White. Our demographic analysis and a lack of publicly available project location data (for existing projects within the Traffic Signals CIP) make it challenging to confidently determine the extent to which the State Aid involved with this supplemental appropriation is likely to reduce racial disparities and other inequities in traffic safety.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #24-46 Traffic Signals is to appropriate \$1,200,000 in State Aid for projects within the Traffic Signals (P507154) Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Projects were selected in collaboration with the Maryland State Highway Administration. Based on available information, this particular set of projects was selected based on their safety impacts.

ORESJ has written about the traffic signals CIP<sup>1</sup> and related supplemental appropriations which describe the intersection of racial equity and traffic safety:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-5.pdf>

Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #24-25 Traffic Signals Devices and Automated Enforcement Plan. November 1, 2023. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-25.pdf>

Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA# 24-4 Good Hope Road Shared Use Path Project (CIP No. 501902). September 21, 2023. Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-4.pdf>

Of particular note is the overriding observation that pedestrian and motorist safety is not a universally enjoyed benefit in many places, including in Montgomery County. Structural racism in planning, housing, and transportation policies has shaped current racial disparities in roadway safety<sup>2</sup>. According to the Vision Zero 2030 Action Plan, serious and fatal crashes were concentrated in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of low-income and/or racial and ethnic minorities<sup>3</sup>. These data reflect national trends highlighted by the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Statement (RESJIS) of Bill 24-22 Streets and Roads<sup>4</sup>.

III. **ANALYSIS:** To better understand the potential racial equity impacts of Supplemental Appropriation #24-46, State Aid on traffic safety, we analyzed the racial and socioeconomic characteristics of the census tracts within which the projects are proposed. Analyzing the characteristics of the census blocks helps us assess the extent to which potential (localized) beneficiaries of the projects are a) representative of the county overall and b) include communities most impacted by traffic safety inequities. The analysis showed the following:

Project Location and Census Tract Number	% Black	% Asian and Pacific Islander	% Hispanic	% Other or Two or more races	% White	2020 Tract Median household income
MD 410 (East West Highway) at NOAA Building Garage Access, 1305 E West Hwy, Silver Spring <b>Census tract:</b> 7025.01	40%	7%	10%	7%	36%	\$108,613
MD 355 at Middleton Lane <b>Census Tract:</b> 7048.05	8%	18%	9%	4%	61%	\$126,104

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/visionzero/Resources/Files/vz2030-plan.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/visionzero/Resources/Files/vz2030-plan.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/resjis/2022/Bill24-22.pdf>

Project Location and Census Tract Number	% Black	% Asian and Pacific Islander	% Hispanic	% Other or Two or more races	% White	2020 Tract Median household income
MD 355 and West Old Baltimore Road <b>Census Tract: 7003.14</b>	15%	41%	10%	7%	27%	\$149,485
MD 187 (Old Georgetown Road) and Cordell Avenue <b>Census Tract: 7048.06</b>	8%	17%	11%	7%	57%	\$97,839

**Data sources:** Project names and addresses are identified in the Project Description Section of the Memorandum of Understanding by and between Montgomery County and State Highway Administration. Demographic information was sourced from the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council Online Census Data System: <https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/>

Analyzing the data at the census block level gives insights into the beneficiaries who are most proximate to the project sites; however, given that proposed projects are along major roadways and experience high volumes of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, it is reasonable to presume that beneficiaries likely include residents beyond these census tracts. A more comprehensive analysis that takes into consideration existing traffic patterns (pedestrian and vehicular incidents) and the radius of potentially impacted beneficiaries is beyond the scope of this REIA. However, such an analysis could support decisionmakers in centering the reduction of traffic inequities within the prioritization of safety-related projects.

Another way to consider the racial equity impacts of these proposed traffic signal projects is to assess the extent to which they help reduce any inequities in the distribution of traffic safety infrastructure in the County. Such an analysis could reveal total investment in traffic signal CIP projects across the County and also by district, which would show whether the addition of these projects supports the equitable distribution of traffic safety resources across the County or further concentrates investments in particular districts or geographies. The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) conducted an analysis like this in the Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact Assessment (RESJIS) of Bill 24-22 Streets and Roads<sup>5</sup>. Based on ORESJ’s review of publicly available FY25 recommended, and the FY24 approved CIP project lists, there was insufficient data to conduct a similar analysis. In the future, precise location data for traffic signal CIP projects would help planners and decision-makers alike gain a clearer understanding of the distribution of traffic signal investments across the county, where the largest allocations are concentrated, and what demographics are of primary beneficiaries in those geographies.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/resjis/2022/Bill24-22.pdf>

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cc: Christopher Conklin, Director, Department of Health and Human Services  
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive