



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

March 25, 2025

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 Appropriation (SA) #25-37 Streets and Roads—Roadside Trees-Protection

- I. **FINDING:** Based on available information, *Supplemental Appropriation #25-37 Streets and Roads—Roadside Trees-Protection* does not appear to significantly change the programming or activities compared to previous iterations of this supplemental appropriation. As with prior year funding, the Roadside Trees-Protection program is likely to advance racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County, though given the proposed resource allocation the impact may be minimal. Processes used to prioritize tree replacement involve consideration of historical and current racial inequities in the distribution of environmental benefits—like trees. Over time, this prioritization process could support the reduction of tree equity gaps in the County.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation # 25-37 Streets and Roads – Roadside Trees-Protection is to authorize the expenditure of street tree planting revenues (\$79,950) received in FY24. The funds will be used to replace roadside trees as required by Bill 41-12—Streets and Roads—Roadside Protection. The Street Tree Planting Fund revenues can only be used to plant trees in the right-of-way of a public road in the County. In January 2024, ORESJ conducted a racial equity impact assessment (REIA) on the appropriation of street tree planting funds received in FY23. There are no discernible differences between the activities and frameworks related to Supplemental Appropriation #25-37 and #24-19. Please refer to the background and finding statement for the REIA ORESJ conducted on supplemental appropriation #24-19. A portion of the #24-19 review is included below for convenience.

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Racial Equity and Social Justice

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- III. **BACKGROUND:** ORESJ has received additional information [in the #24-19 supplemental appropriation request] about the *performance* of the Street Tree Planting Fund and *processes* related to site selection. This information responded to some of the questions ORESJ raised in its REIA of Supplemental Appropriation #23-18. In particular, about where tree placement has taken place, relevant census tract demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of those locations, and how historical and current racial inequities in the distribution of environmental benefits—like trees—play into current prioritization and selection processes. Information that accompanied Supplemental Appropriation #24-19 demonstrated the following:

*Performance*

In FY23, MCDOT's Tree Maintenance Section planted 2308 new trees within the County Right of Ways. Based on MCDOT's analysis, 1147 (50%) of these trees were planted within the boundaries of one of the following designated areas: Equity Focus Areas, Low-income/high unemployment/historically redlined census tracts, and equity emphasis areas. Equity Focus Areas and Equity Emphasis Areas are geographic designations that use varying methodologies that don't necessarily capture or fully reflect where Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and low-income residents experience the most significant gaps in access to the benefits of trees. In addition, it's unclear whether this 50% of planted trees is proportionate to need or whether tree replacement demands in areas with higher concentrations of BIPOC or low-income residents are greater than the percentage of trees planted. Overall, it is a strength that MCDOT is tracking and mapping tree replacement. In the future, it would be helpful to gain a better sense of tree replacement demand to understand whether gaps persist (particularly those that can't be filled by other tree planting programs).

*Process*

MCDOT indicated that this supplemental appropriation funding would help its Tree Maintenance Section proactively (i.e., not in response to a 311 street tree planting service request) schedule replacement tree plantings in areas of the county where 311 street tree planting requests have not kept pace with the rate of street tree removals. MCDOT indicated that it prioritizes the proactive replacement of trees in regions that meet one of the following criteria: low Income/high unemployment; high % minority population; historically redlined. Compared to Supplemental Appropriation #23-18, this prioritization process has a stronger likelihood of reducing tree equity gaps in the County.

Overall, Supplemental Appropriation #24-19—based on the prioritization criteria described—is likely to help reduce racial disparities and other inequities in access to the benefits of tree replacement. Continued monitoring of available resources, tree equity scores, and needs will help shine a light on areas of strength or opportunity in Street Tree Planting/Roadside Tree Protection processes or outcomes.

cc: Mike Coveyou, Director, Department of Transportation  
Tricia Swanson, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive