



OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE


Marc Elrich
County Executive

Tiffany Ward
Director and Chief Equity Officer

MEMORANDUM

March 31, 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) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) #25-60
FY25 Capital Budget MCPS Bus Depot and Maintenance Relocation (\$10,550,000)

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #25-60 - FY25 Capital Budget MCPS *Bus Depot and Maintenance Relocation* has the potential to advance racial equity and social justice in the County. The funds will allow for the construction and relocation of over half of the bus fleet from the Crabbs Branch Way site to an industrial warehouse/parking lot site, which would have a lower impact on residential areas.
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of SA #25-60 is to fund the first phase of the Bus Depot Maintenance and Relocation project, which includes building out bus depot operations at 861 East Gude Drive, relocating 250 of 450 buses to the new site, and demolishing the current site at Crabbs Branch Way. The proposed site will be operated under a lease agreement, which would be more cost-effective than purchasing a new site. Due to the improvements being made on leased property, recordation taxes¹ will be used to cover the cost of improvements.

¹ A recordation tax is an excise tax imposed by certain states, including Maryland, as compensation for registering the purchase or sale of property as public record. The tax applies to the principal amount of debt secured by a mortgage or deed of trust when a house or building is being purchased. When a mortgage is refinanced, the tax applies to the amount of the principal debt that is greater than the principal remaining on the original debt. Available at: https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccllims/DownloadFilePage?FileName=2792_1_24860_Bill_17-2023_Introduction_20230321.pdf.

The Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) system transports 103,000 students to and from home to school daily and houses a fleet of over 1,300 buses at five sites situated throughout the County.² The depot sites include Bethesda, Clarksburg, Randolph, Shady Grove North and South (Crabbs Branch Way site), and West Farm.³ The Shady Grove North/South depot serves several diverse communities and school clusters in the County, including Gaithersburg, Magruder, Watkins Mill, Richard Montgomery, Rockville, and Wooton. It also serves Magnet and special education programs.

- III. **ANALYSIS:** The following table compares the zoning and census tract data for the existing bus depot site at 16651 Crabbs Branch Way and the proposed site at 861 E. Gude Drive.

Zoning and Census Tract Comparison

Location	861 E. Gude Drive	16651 Crabbs Branch Way
Zoning		
Zone	IMF-2.5 H-70	CRT-0.75 C-0.25 R-0.5 H-80
Master Plan	Upper Rock Creek	Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment
Land Use	Warehouse	Office
Census Tract		
Tract Income Level	Middle	Middle
Underserved or Distressed Tract	No	No
% below Poverty Line	7.33	4.25
2020 Tract Median Household Income	\$132,488	\$131,778
2024 FFIEC Estimated MSA/MD/non-MSA/MD Median Family Income	\$155,800	\$155,800
Tract Population	6,350	6,733
Non-Hispanic White	2,487	2,469
Asian	1,746	1,377
Black	878	1,074
Hispanic	766	1,446
American Indian/Other	473	367
Tract Minority %	60.83	63.33
Total Housing Units	2,349	2,210
1-to-4 Family Units	1,351	1,830
Owner Occupied Units	1,177	1,638
Renter Occupied Units	1,098	423

Source: <https://mcatlas.org/zoning/> and <https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/>

The new bus depot location at 861 E. Gude Drive in Rockville is zoned as an IMF-2.5 H-70 (Moderate Industrial Floating Zone), which is intended for light manufacturing,

² Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/transportation/about/>.

³ Available at: <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/transportation/depots/>.

warehouse, and related uses.⁴ According to the Zoning Ordinance, the floating zone plan may provide for additional parking. Relocating the bus depot to this industrial area is consistent with surrounding land uses and businesses.

At the census tract level, both the current and proposed sites are racially diverse, with over 60% of residents being Asian, Hispanic, and Black. The proposed site is not categorized as underserved or distressed, and the surrounding area within the tract is a less densely populated residential area. The residential numbers for the proposed site are primarily due to a portion of the King Farm neighborhood being included in the census tract.

The relocation of approximately half of the bus fleet to an industrial area represents a positive step toward reducing impacts on neighboring residential communities. An important environmental justice consideration deals with emissions, particulate matter, and other air pollutants that affect the health of nearby residents. Relocating a portion of the fleet to an industrial area could improve air quality, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions. Although this is a partial solution, it represents progress after numerous unsuccessful attempts to find a suitable relocation site. Additional planning and investment may be required to complete the relocation process and ensure the project aligns with the implementation plan to transition the MCPS fleet to electric over the next 12-15 years, as noted in the PDF.

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) recommends referencing our previous REIAs, which explore the intersection of racial equity and social justice, transportation, and the environment, specifically the impacts on air quality.

- #24-59 RideOn Bus Fleet
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-59.pdf>
- #24-13 FY24 Capital Budget Montgomery County Hydrogen Fuel Cell Fueling Station
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/24-13.pdf>
- #23-88 Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Maryland Department of the Environment Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust Grant
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-88.pdf>

cc: Thomas W. Taylor, Superintendent, Montgomery County Public Schools
Tricia Swanson, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

⁴ Chapter 59 Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance. Section Article 59-5. Floating Zone Requirements. Division 5.5. Industrial Floating Zones. Available at:
https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/montgomerycounty/latest/montgomeryco_md_zone2014/0-0-0-4184.