



MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

REIA #26-13

Bus Rapid Transit: MD 355 Central (No. 502005)

Requesting Agency/Department(s)

MCDOT

Dollar Amount

\$168,412,000

Funding Source

Long-term Financing

County Match Amount

N/A

Finding

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #26-13 Bus Rapid Transit: MD 355 Central (No. 502005) neither advances nor impedes racial equity and social justice, as it updates the funding structure of an existing Capital Improvements (CIP) project but does not substantively alter or amend the project.

Background

Purpose

The purpose of Supplemental Appropriation #26-13 Bus Rapid Transit: MD 355 Central (No. 502005) is to reduce funding risk for the project and provide cash flow that enables project completion according to schedule. By securitizing funds from the State Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Fund for use as Long-Term Financing, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will be able to reduce the risk of inflationary cost increases and deliver the project more quickly. This supplemental appropriation aims to adjust the project's funding structure and does not include any project amendments.

Additional Background Information

As part of the FY25-30 Capital Budget Equity Tool (CBET) process, ORESJ reviewed the Bus Rapid Transit: MD 355 Central project. ORESJ's analysis resulted in a 6-point score (on a scale of 0 to 6). CBET responses in the 5–6-point category were described in the FY25-30 CBET Guidance Manual¹ as follows:

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“Response clearly explains how the project responds to data, community feedback, and broader research and identifies a specific racial disparity or inequity related to the project issue area and provides robust supporting evidence to explain how the disparity/inequity will be affected by the project. The response also explains what steps will be taken to mitigate any unintended consequences resulting from the development, construction, or implementation of the project.

ORESJ provided the following project-specific narrative explanation for the BRT: MD 355 Central project:

“The extensive analysis provided shows communities along the MD 355 Central corridor include a higher percentage of low income, persons of color, zero-car households, and transit commuters compared to areas off the corridor. This project aims to reduce congestion and travel times in the corridor-down from the additional 8-21 minutes, beyond the normal travel time, needed to ensure on-time arrival to desired destinations. The response provides numerous considerations to reduce gaps and disparities related to pedestrian and bicycle safety, increasing access to educational opportunities-by the route servicing Montgomery College, and considering impact to business owner and resident displacement. Thoughtful engagement using Mandarin-speaking staff ensures the most impacted residents help shape the project. The focus on including transit users in the Corridor Advisory Committee will go a long way ensuring proper representation of your ridership in the planning process. The use of a targeted and thoughtful community engagement strategy, including lessons learned, will help to mitigate the identified unintended consequences by leveraging partnerships with ORESJ, Regional Service Centers and the Office of Community Partnerships to build trust and inform those most impacted. The plan ensures that historically marginalized groups help shape the final design. The plan to retain fare costs at \$1 will also help promote affordability. Focusing efforts on unintended consequences and communicating changes in service availability and routes during construction will be essential. “

Relevant REIAs and Other Assessments

ORESJ has conducted REIAs since 2021. The below REIA(s) are relevant to supplemental appropriation #26-13 Bus Rapid Transit: MD 355 Central (No. 502005).

- [Racial Equity Impact Assessment \(REIA\) Supplemental Appropriation \(SA\) FY23-28 Capital Improvement Program \(CIP\) and Special Appropriation #23-53 FY23 Capital Budget Montgomery County Government, Department of Transportation Bus Rapid Transit \(BRT\): US 29 Phase 2 \(CIP No. 502201\)](#)

Analysis

ORESJ Research & Analysis

Because this supplemental appropriation does not include substantive amendments to the BRT: MD 355 Central project and instead alters its funding structure to reduce risk and enable cash flow, there is no additional analysis of expected project impacts. ORESJ refers to its previous analysis (above) of this CIP project.

Caveats

This REIA has been conducted with the best available information at the time of writing, including department responses to the Racial Equity and Social Justice template and research conducted by ORESJ Policy Team Analysts. While the assessment examines specific racial equity and social justice impacts of the funding request, it cannot fully address all systemic inequities that affect the communities in question, nor do we seek to examine impacts outside the scope of the funding request. We recommend using this assessment as a starting point for discussions about the impact of the program on advancing racial equity and social justice in Montgomery County.

References

¹ Page 11 of The FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Budget Equity Tool (BET) Guidance Manual: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ORE/Resources/Files/GuidanceManualFY25CBET.pdf>.