



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

### REIA #26-23

### White's Ferry (No. 502606)

Requesting Agency/Department(s)	Dollar Amount
Department of Transportation	\$1,500,000
Funding Source	County Match Amount
State Aid	N/A

### Finding

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that Supplemental Appropriation #26-23 White's Ferry (No. 502606) neither advances nor impedes racial equity and social justice in the County, as funding from the Maryland General Assembly will be used to fund a subsidy that aims to facilitate and advance negotiations between Maryland and Virginia property owners to reopen White's Ferry.

### Background

#### Purpose

The purpose of SA #26-23 White's Ferry (No. 502606) is to allocate \$1,500,000 in State Aid received during the 2025 Maryland General Assembly session. The State Aid and the County's approved FY26 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget allocation of \$1,500,000 in current revenue is intended to help advance negotiations with the private entities involved in resuming the ferry's operations. According to the CIP project description, the state and local funding "provides for a public incentive to the owners of Potomac Cross, LLC and Rockland Farm LLC to restore the operation of White's Ferry to provide ferry service between Montgomery County, MD and Loudoun County, VA<sup>1</sup>. The approved CIP project includes planning, design, construction, expansion, repair, renovation, reconstruction, site improvement, acquisition of property rights and capital equipping to restore ferry service<sup>2</sup>. Agreement between the property owners is required by July 1, 2026<sup>3</sup>.

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White's Ferry closed in December 2020 following a dispute between the then-ferry owner and operator, Herb Brown, and the ferry's Virginia landing site property owner, Rockland Farm, over the ferry's use of the Rockland Farm property. On November 23, 2020 a Virginia Circuit Court ruling found, "that there was no record documenting the creation of a public landing on the Virginia shore and awarded the owners of the Rockland Farm property, where the ferry lands in Loudoun, \$102,175 in damages for trespassing, property damage and breach of contract"<sup>4</sup>. Since then, the County, current ferry owners JK Land Holdings, LLC, the Rockland Farm owner, and other officials have engaged in more than four years of negotiations. It is beyond the scope of this REIA to outline all aspects of these negotiations. At this stage, the County's \$3 million subsidy is intended to "incentivize compromise"<sup>5</sup>.

According to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), ferry service across the Potomac River is recognized as an important part of the region's transportation network, connecting pedestrians and cyclists between Montgomery and Loudoun County<sup>6</sup>. The Ferry is made up of two vessels: the General Jubal A. Early vessel and the General Jubal Early vessel (named after the Confederate general). In total, the ferry could accommodate about 24 vehicles, had a maximum occupancy of 150 passengers and a weight limit of 100 gross tons<sup>7</sup>. The ferry operated between 5am and 11pm daily and was an on-demand service, meaning that crossings were determined by the operator's sense of having enough vehicles on either side to warrant a crossing<sup>8</sup>.

Passenger and vehicle ridership statistics were not collected before the ferry's closure in 2020, so total demand is difficult to determine, with estimates largely based on other sources<sup>9</sup>. Available information suggests that before the ferry closed in 2020, it transported approximately 600-800 vehicles per day across the river<sup>10</sup>. A 2021 White's Ferry Operations Alternative Study used commercially available travel data to approximate vehicular traffic utilizing the ferry and estimated that there were between 1,092 and 1,625 trips per day in 2019<sup>11</sup>. Looking at commuter usage specifically, the study estimated that less than 1% of jobs for Montgomery County residents are in Loudoun County<sup>12</sup>. Additional information in the study suggests that the ferry was not a common commuting method among Montgomery County residents. Though a recent Baltimore Banner news article reported that the Poolesville Town Commission President Jim Brown and historian Link Hoewing knew people who moved to Virginia because their commutes to work became too difficult without the ferry<sup>13</sup>. Overall ferry demand in 2019 was higher on weekends than weekdays, implying that most trips were for recreational purposes<sup>14</sup>. The study used multiple methods to project growth in demand, with estimates ranging from an increase of 33% to 48% depending on the scenario and time of year<sup>15</sup> as well as \$9 million in savings, by 2022, based on reductions in travel time, travel cost, safety savings, emissions avoided, and trips

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not taken<sup>16</sup>. The study also outlined facilities and operational challenges, legal and environmental compliance considerations, economic impacts and opportunities, and various service delivery models. ORESJ recommends that those considering this REIA examine the study for additional context.

### Additional Background Information

There are numerous news stories<sup>17</sup>, recorded public forums<sup>18</sup>, and blogs<sup>19</sup> about the closure of White's Ferry, its importance to local residents, and negotiations to reopen it. A recent Baltimore Banner article, from October 29, 2025, described the importance of the ferry to Poolesville and the state of negotiations between the ferry operator and property owners on both sides of the Potomac. The article highlighted the impact of the ferry's closure on local community celebrations, current and prospective businesses, and travel for drivers going to Dulles International Airport.

For additional information about the history of White's Ferry, please see the timeline below:

- **1786** A ferry which is now referred to as "White's Ferry" was established<sup>20</sup>.
- **1817** The first known ferry operation was called Conrad's Ferry, pronounced by locals as "Coonrod's Ferry"<sup>21</sup>.
- **1862** During the Civil War, Confederate troops used the ferry as a crossing during the Antietam Campaign<sup>22</sup>.
- **1864** Troops under the command of General Jubal A. Early used the ferry to cross the Potomac after their raid on Washington<sup>23</sup>.
- **1871** Elijah V. White, a former Confederate cavalry commander in Montgomery County, purchased the ferry operation<sup>24</sup>.
- **1890s** Elijah B. White, son of Elijah V. White, takes over the business<sup>25</sup>.
- **1900** Williams Family takes ownership of the ferry<sup>26</sup>.
- **1946** Ferry was purchased by R. Edwin Brown and a group of local business owners<sup>27</sup>.
- **1953** The ferry was named General Jubal Early<sup>28</sup> for his "rebellious, no surrender spirit".<sup>29</sup>
- **1980s** Brown family became sole owners of White's Ferry<sup>30</sup>.
- **1988** When the new ferry was built, the name Jubal Early was preserved<sup>31</sup>.
- **July 2017** Confederate Statue moved from Rockville "Red Brick" Courthouse to White's Ferry<sup>32</sup>.
- **2020** Confederate statue at White's Ferry was removed and "sequestered by the property owners for safekeeping"<sup>33</sup>.

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- **June 2020** The vessel at White's Ferry was renamed "Historic White's Ferry"<sup>34</sup>.
- **November 2020** Virginia Circuit Court Judge Stephen E. Sincavage found that there was no record documenting the creation of a public landing on the Virginia shore and awarded the owners of the Rockland Farm property, where the ferry lands in Loudoun, \$102,175 in damages for trespassing, property damage and breach of contract<sup>35</sup>.
- **December 2020** White's Ferry closes.
- **February 2021** Chuck Kuhn, CEO of JK Land Holdings, and his wife, Stacy, purchased the ferry and the Maryland landing site<sup>36</sup>.
- **2021-2025** Negotiations about the ferry's use of the Rockland Farm landing site continue.

## Analysis

### Demographic Profile

Determining the demographic profile of potential beneficiaries of resuming White's Ferry service is difficult. As is identifying the primary beneficiaries of secondary economic, transportation, and environmental impacts. That said, presuming that some portion of ridership in Montgomery County emanates from Dickerson, we can estimate the profile of a portion of the beneficiaries compared to the county overall.

Race/Ethnicity	Dickerson, MD Census Tract: 7005.00 (2020) <sup>37</sup>	Montgomery County, MD (2024) <sup>38</sup>
White	72.1%	37.86%
Hispanic	9.9%	21.7%
Black/African American	5.5%	18.43
Asian and Pacific Islander	6.1%	15.68%
Other	6.2%	6.32%
Median Household Income	\$151,000	\$128,733 (2023)

**Data Sources:** FFIEC census tract lookup for: 7005.00. Available at:

<https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/> and Montgomery County, MD Planning. Demographic Snapshot. Available at: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/tools/research/demographics/> and Montgomery County, MD Data USA. Available at: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/montgomery-county-md>

These data do not capture the demographic profile of business owners and travelers from across the region who could benefit from the reopening of the ferry and the connection it enables between Loudoun County and western Montgomery County. Additional market research would be required to better understand how White's Ferry contributes to the county's overall economy

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and how residents from other parts of the County could gain access to this and similar transportation investments.

## 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

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<sup>1</sup> White's Ferry (No. 502606). Capital Improvements Project (CIP). Available at:

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy26/cip\\_pdf/P502606.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy26/cip_pdf/P502606.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> White's Ferry (No. 502606).

<sup>3</sup> Montgomery County, MD. Capital Budget. "White's Ferry". Available at:

<https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/BASISCAPITAL/Common/Project.aspx?ID=P502606>

<sup>4</sup> The History of Loudoun County, Virginia. "White's Ferry – the last working ferry on the Potomac". Available at:

<https://www.loudounhistory.org/history/whites-ferry/>

<sup>5</sup> Ginny Bixby. "Elrich offers \$3 million to resolve dispute, reopen White's Ferry: Historic Potomac River crossing serving commuters closed since 2020". April 11, 2025. Bethesda Magazine. Available at:

<https://bethesdamagazine.com/2025/04/11/whites-ferry-3-million-incentive/>

<sup>6</sup> Montgomery County Department of Transportation. "White's Ferry Study: Overview and Study Results". Available at: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT/Projects/whitesferry/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> White's Ferry Operations Alternative Study. Prepared for Loudoun County, Virginia and Montgomery County, Maryland. Prepared by AECOM and Stantec. October 2021. Available at:

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT/Resources/Files/White's%20Ferry%20Study%20Final%2010\\_20\\_21.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT/Resources/Files/White's%20Ferry%20Study%20Final%2010_20_21.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> White's Ferry Operations Alternative Study (page 13).

<sup>9</sup> White's Ferry Operations Alternative Study (page 23).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT/Projects/whitesferry/index.html>

<sup>11</sup> Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

<sup>12</sup> White's Ferry Operations Alternative Study (page 35).

<sup>13</sup> Ginny Bixby. "It's been 5 years since White's Ferry stopped running. Why can't it get restarted?" October 29, 2025. The Baltimore Banner. Available at: <https://www.thebanner.com/politics-power/local-government/whites-ferry-montgomery-county-R46QWWOVUNA25BG4LP4OX6JGB4/>

<sup>14</sup> White's Ferry Operations Alternative Study (page 17).

<sup>15</sup> White's Ferry Operations Alternative Study (page 107).

<sup>16</sup> White's Ferry Operations Alternative Study (ES-4).

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<sup>17</sup> MC Staff. "Four Years Later: White's Ferry Closure and Ongoing Efforts to Reopen". The MoCo Show. December 31, 2024. Available at: <https://mocoshow.com/2024/12/31/four-years-later-whites-ferry-closure-and-ongoing-efforts-to-reopen/> and "Hundreds protest over White's Ferry closure". December 29, 2022. WUSA 9. Available at: [https://youtu.be/FaWKWRki8tE?si=jWqGARMK\\_7lbWU1e](https://youtu.be/FaWKWRki8tE?si=jWqGARMK_7lbWU1e) and "White's Ferry Revival: Inside Montgomery Council's Hearing". October 16, 2023. Fox 5 Washington DC. Available at: <https://youtu.be/4C2vR5jrJRK?si=I9TTv4VSi0QzcSYp> and White's Ferry. Press. Available at: <https://www.whites-ferry.com/press>.

<sup>18</sup> "White's Ferry Closure Remains Most Urgent Upcounty Transportation Issue". October 16, 2023. Montgomery County Media. Available at: <https://youtu.be/4d038zrJfW4?si=qngc5vW-31kx4L8D> and "White's Ferry Forum". July 31, 2024. Montgomery County Media. Available at: [https://youtu.be/ta4ga\\_O397I?si=CdKsb2za1Rjdmv0i](https://youtu.be/ta4ga_O397I?si=CdKsb2za1Rjdmv0i).

<sup>19</sup> White's Ferry website. Available at: <https://www.whites-ferry.com/>.

<sup>20</sup> Ginny Bixby. "Elrich offers \$3 million to resolve dispute, reopen White's Ferry: Historic Potomac River crossing serving commuters closed since 2020" and The History of Loudoun County, Virginia. "White's Ferry – the last working ferry on the Potomac".

<sup>21</sup> The History of Loudoun County, Virginia. "White's Ferry – the last working ferry on the Potomac".

<sup>22</sup> "Historic Places: White's Ferry". Crossroads of War and Freedom. Available at: <https://www.crossroadsofwar.org/see-the-sites/whites-ferry>

<sup>23</sup> "Historic Places: White's Ferry".

<sup>24</sup> "The History of White's Ferry". The Historical Marker Database. Available at: <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=182685>

<sup>25</sup> "The History of White's Ferry".

<sup>26</sup> Montgomery County History. Paths to Present. "Whites Ferry Path #06". [https://youtu.be/Upz-VvB4ruE?si=P\\_REDSON7za23sxK&t=58](https://youtu.be/Upz-VvB4ruE?si=P_REDSON7za23sxK&t=58)

<sup>27</sup> "The History of White's Ferry".

<sup>28</sup> Montgomery County History. Paths to Present. "Whites Ferry Path #06" (originally aired in 2000). Available at: <https://montgomeryhistory.org/video-vault/paths-to-the-present/>

<sup>29</sup> The History of Loudoun County, Virginia. "White's Ferry – the last working ferry on the Potomac".

<sup>30</sup> "The History of White's Ferry".

<sup>31</sup> The History of Loudoun County, Virginia. "White's Ferry – the last working ferry on the Potomac".

<sup>32</sup> "Confederate Statue removed from City of Rockville Property" (Excerpt from Sentinel). Maryland Association of Historic District Commissions. Available at: <https://mahdc.org/confederate-statue-removed-from-city-of-rockville-property/> and "The History of White's Ferry".

<sup>33</sup> Eugene L. Meyer. "A shameful past: Montgomery County is one of the most progressive and diverse counties in the country – but it also has a long history of racism". March 29, 2021. Bethesda Magazine. Available at: <https://bethesdamagazine.com/2021/03/29/a-shameful-past/>.

<sup>34</sup> ORESJ had difficulty finding details related to the vessel's name change. Reference to the vessel's name change was made in a Wikipedia post [White's Ferry - Wikipedia](#) and in June 2020 photos of the vessel [The White's Ferry makes its way to the Montgomery County, Maryland... News Photo - Getty Images](#).

<sup>35</sup> The History of Loudoun County, Virginia. "White's Ferry – the last working ferry on the Potomac".

<sup>36</sup> Ginny Bixby. "Elrich offers \$3 million to resolve dispute, reopen White's Ferry: Historic Potomac River crossing serving commuters closed since 2020".

<sup>37</sup> 2025 Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC). Geocode Census Report. Address: 24801 Whites Ferry Rd, Dickerson, Maryland, 20842. Available at: <https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/CensusDemo.html?sMSACode=23224&sStateCode=24&sCountyCode=031&sTractCode=7005.00&iCensYear=2025&sAddress=24801%20Whites%20Ferry%20Rd,%20Dickerson,%20Maryland,%2020842&sMSAName=FREDERICK-GAITHERSBURG-BETHESDA,%20MD&sStateName=MARYLAND&sCountyName=MONTGOMERY%20COUNTY>.

<sup>38</sup> Montgomery County, MD. Montgomery County Planning. Demographics". Available at: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/tools/research/demographics/>.