

**House Bill 1204 - Transportation Equity Analyses and Assurances Act of 2021
(Transportation Equity Act)**

POSITION: SUPPORT

Testimony of Clarissa Chen

I **strongly support House Bill 1204**, sponsored by Delegate Sheila Ruth, and I urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

Baltimore has a failing transit system, and we know this is true. I know this personally because I have waited for a bus for hours. I'm lucky enough to own a smartphone that can connect to the Transit app - through that I've seen the bus say it'll come in 10 minutes for 50 minutes. But others don't have this information at all. Many of us wait for a bus to come that never does. There have been so many solutions to solving this issue, like the Red Line, and equitable transportation planning, but it always gets shoved to the side.

Maryland has a shamefully long history of racist transportation policies, from highways built through and dividing Black communities to the cancelation of the Red Line route, urgently-needed access to jobs for residents in low-income, redlined communities in Baltimore and regional economy-transforming, transit-oriented-development (TOD). Equitable transportation will play a key role in dismantling systemic racism by:

- Increasing access to good jobs, schools, education, and food;
- Providing incentives for community economic development;
- Reducing smog, air pollution, and heat islands, which disproportionately impact Black communities

Transportation equity is also important for people with disabilities. Because many people with disabilities do not have the option to drive cars, lack of access to other modes of transportation disproportionately harms them. Without access to transportation, people with disabilities continue to be alienated from the economic mainstream. People with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty in part due to difficulty accessing jobs, education and medical care. Because many individuals with disabilities have increased health care needs, isolation can have a profound impact on quality of life, health, and safety.

The Transportation Equity Act requires:

- Equity as a primary goal in the Maryland Transportation Plan;
- MDOT to collect and analyze data on racial disparities and impact on persons with disabilities in the annual Attainment Report;
- Adding a representative from the Maryland State Conference NAACP to the Attainment Advisory Committee;
- Creation of a Commission on Transportation Equity as an independent transit monitor and evaluator;

- MDOT MTA to conduct transit equity analyses, cost benefit analyses, and outreach to affected communities before public hearings on any major service change;
- MDOT MTA to perform cross-modal equity analysis and planning;
- Increased transparency with annual reporting and service change analysis reporting.

Ultimately, there is a need for greater transparency, accountability and community input. Equity should not be an afterthought or a box to check. Real people's lives are impacted by transportation. All Marylanders, regardless of race, income, zip code, or disability, should have an equal right to the benefits of a well-planned transportation system.

For these reasons, I strongly support HB 1204 and urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.