



Environment and Transportation Committee
House Bill 1204-Transportation Equity Analyses and Assurance Act of 2021
(Transportation Equity Act)
POSITION: SUPPORT

Testimony of Howard County Indivisible
March 11, 2021

Howard County Indivisible strongly supports **House Bill 1204** sponsored by Delegate Sheila Ruth and we urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report.

Howard County Indivisible believes that transportation and transit are essential elements to an economically vital and equitable Baltimore region. Without adequate, equitable and fully integrated transportation options for all, our region will stagnate. We support the preservation and expansion of viable transportation options for all elements of our society.

It is time to put an end to Maryland's history of transportation policies that have undeserved the very communities most in need of public transit. The cancellation of the Red-line route is the most recent and egregious example. The line would have provided urgently needed access to jobs for residents in low-income communities and persons with disabilities, a large percentage of whom have no access to an automobile and are transit and paratransit dependent.

Equitable transportation decisions are critical to remediating the systemic racism that has long plagued the region by 1) increasing access to good jobs, schools, health care and food; 2) providing incentives for community economic development and 3) reducing air pollution and heat islands which disproportionately affect minority and low income communities.

The Transportation Equity Act requires:

- Racial equity to be a primary goal in the Maryland Transportation Plan;
- The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to collect and analyze racial disparities and impacts 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 of Transportation Equity as an independent transit monitor and evaluator;
- MDOT to conduct transit equity analyses, cost benefit analyses and outreach to affected communities before public hearings occur on any major service change; and
- Increased transparency and annual reporting and service change analysis reporting.

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination by transportation entities which receive federal funds, but that goal cannot be fully achieved without greater transparency, accountability and community input from the communities that are the most critically affected by transportation policy and transportation decisions. All Marylanders, regardless of race, income, zip code or disability deserve equal rights and access to the benefits of a well-planned transportation system.

For these reasons, Howard County Indivisible supports HB 1204 and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.

Carol B. O’Keeffe
IndivisibleHoCoMD