

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

POSITION: SUPPORT

Testimony of Anne E Corrigan

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.

I am a staff research data analyst at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and I've been invested in advancing research efforts to serve the Baltimore community for the past 3 years. In my work I've seen strong evidence of the impact of transit on public health outcomes and health determinants; I believe that transit is the backbone for individual and community well-being around housing and job stability, educational opportunities, and social cohesion. I have been disappointed that policy and planning efforts – including my own research at times – have failed to address the interconnectedness of these issues and create solutions which dare to propose structural changes which account for the potential costs and benefits which historically might have been considered “outside” management of the transit system. Concerning this bill, if we don't demand an evaluation of equity as systems are put into place, we can be sure that historically underserved and oppressed communities will remain that way.

My interest and support for this bill stems not only from my professional opinion but also from my concerns as a citizen. Having decided to move to Baltimore as a young adult to live closer to my family again and invest in the city, I feel optimistic about the Baltimore City's potential for growth and improvement in its relationship with the rest of the state. As an educated, wealthy, young professional I might be not at first glance be an obvious beneficiary of the products of this legislation, but I believe I can only ever succeed if my community does too. Finally, I expect climate change to topple our systems (transit, infrastructure, energy, agriculture, etc.) as they currently exist. The transportation equity act gives us an opportunity to at least get ahead on anticipating and improving design to manage those overhauls now.

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.

As we've seen throughout history these benefits won't arise as byproduct of "smart business" but must be intentionally planned into our development initiatives.

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