

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore (SURJ), a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are working in collaboration with Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition. I am a resident of District 40, who's commutes and regular travel needs have been mired by Baltimore City's disproportionately disinvested transit system. **I am testifying in support of the Transportation Equity Act of 2022 (SB 23).**

The Transportation Equity Act of 2022 requires setting equity as a primary goal in the Maryland Transportation Plan by requiring:

- MDOT to collect and analyze data on racial disparities across modes of transit, and impact on persons with disabilities in the annual Attainment Report;
- 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;
- Increased transparency with annual reporting and service change analysis reporting.

Maryland has a shamefully long history of racist transportation policies, from highways built through and dividing Black and Brown communities to the cancelation of the Red Line route, which would have provided 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 healthy food;
- Providing incentives for community economic development;
- Reducing smog, air pollution, and heat islands, which disproportionately impact Black communities;
- Setting right years of disinvestment that have hurt all Baltimoreans

Current transit equity analyses study each mode of transit separately, which does not accurately capture the racial and economic impacts of department-wide policy. For example, the core bus ridership (local bus system) is majority Black while the commuter rail ridership is majority white. If more cuts are made to core bus service than to commuter rail routes, a disparity is created that will not show in separate analyses. In a state where all transportation is funded and managed through one agency, cross-modal analysis of all transportation is needed to better assess and address systemic equity issues.

Ultimately, there is a need for greater transparency, accountability and community input. ***Equity must be central to all planning and decisions throughout the process.***

Sharif Rashid, a Baltimore resident, transit rider, and impacted member of the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, had to spend most of their day's pay to get a ride to their job at the Amazon warehouse in South Baltimore. In an article published on Dec 28th 2020 by The Public News Service, journalist Diane Bernard quotes Sharif Rashid: "When the pandemic hit I had to change the location of my job, and now I'm currently at FedEx," Rashid explained. "Just for, you know, a \$16 or \$17 wage, I've got to go hours out of the way. If I catch a Lyft or Uber, it's \$25 or \$30; I didn't really make anything for the day, you know what I mean?". Rashid has an almost three-hour commute to get to his job that would take less than 30 minutes in a car.

Transportation equity is 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.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **vote in support of SB 23**. Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jon Smeton  
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

**SURJ**  
**BALTIMORE**  
showing up for racial justice