

House Bill 9

Equity in Transportation Sector – Guidelines and Analyses House Environment and Transportation Committee February 2, 2023

SUPPORT

House Bill 9 requires the Department of Transportation, prior to undertaking a reduction or cancellation of a major construction project or major reduction in service, to conduct an equity analysis of disparate impact or disproportionate burden, a cost-benefit analysis on impacts on economic development, employment, education, and health, and meet with leaders of the relevant affected communities, including those who are minority or low-income, and consider equity impacts to vulnerable populations in existing transportation projects.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of facing food insecurity. Food insecurity means a lack of consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day. Additionally, we strongly contend that people are not hungry in a vacuum, that there are additional factors or “root causes” that keep Marylanders and their families food-insecure and even exacerbate their existing food insecurity. Operating under this reality, we strategically advocate against barriers to equity and equality for the two million food-insecure Marylanders who are in need of economic stability.

The lack of reliable and affordable transportation has consistently been one of the top reasons food-insecure Marylanders provide for their struggles accessing healthy food for their families. There are many individual circumstances that increase the difficulty of finding food, such as a person’s geographic location requiring a car, a lack of public transportation, living in a “food desert” with few-to-no grocery options, difficulty navigating multiple transportation options with family members due to a disability or children in tow, inability to afford transportation, or transportation that is unreliable due to schedules or needed maintenance.

Beyond increasing stability in the expectations of Marylanders for their needed transportation, House Bill 9 will shed light on the equity impact of transportation projects on communities and populations that for too long have been marginalized and left out of planning conversations. It is a necessary step in the direction of transparency, learning, and equity in an area that impacts the lives of every Marylander.

For these reasons, the Maryland Food Bank respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 9.