


F R O M	NAME & TITLE	Steve Sharkey, Director	CITY of BALTIMORE M E M O	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Transportation (DOT) 417 E Fayette Street, Room 527		
	SUBJECT	City Council Resolution 21-0004R		

TO: Mayor Brandon M. Scott
TO: Health, Environment & Technology Committee
FROM: Department of Transportation
POSITION: **Support**
RE: Council Resolution – 21-0004R

DATE: 3/16/21

INTRODUCTION – Recognizing Systemic Racism as a Public Health Crisis

PURPOSE/PLANS – For the purpose of recognizing systemic racism as a public health crisis.

COMMENTS – Council Resolution 20-0004R calls on the City of Baltimore to formally recognize systemic racism as a public health crisis. The Baltimore City Department of Transportation (DOT) acknowledges the reality of systemic racism and the continued negative impact on the people of Baltimore. Historically, transportation has played an undeniable role in the facilitation of systemic racism across the United States, including here in Baltimore City.

The transportation field’s emphasis on automobile travel that came into fruition during the 20th century is worth noting. The uncompleted segment of I-70, known commonly as the Highway to Nowhere, is perhaps the most glaring physical example of systemic racism tied to Baltimore City’s transportation network. Construction of the Highway to Nowhere during the 1970s resulted in the demolition of roughly 18 square blocks of homes and businesses across a section of West Baltimore that had primarily been comprised of thousands of working and middle-class African Americans. The section of uncompleted highway remains to this day, serving as a physical barrier between blocks of West Baltimore that were once connected. From a health perspective, construction of this roadway negatively impacted the health of residents in numerous ways, including both socially and environmentally. Systemic racism is not only apparent in completed infrastructure such as the Highway to Nowhere, but also in transportation proposals that were never completed. Plans to build a regional metro-subway system to serve Greater Baltimore were significantly scaled back – in part due to opposition from neighboring majority-Caucasian suburban counties. These short-sighted racist decisions negatively impact Baltimoreans and residents of surrounding counties to this day.

Understanding the reality of systemic racism, DOT is actively working to mitigate and reverse policy decisions made in years past. On March 15th, 2021, DOT adopted the City’s first ever Complete Streets Manual – an initiative designed to dedicate public right-of-way to a more diversified set of transportation options. Cars will remain important, though increased prioritization will be given to pedestrians, bicyclists, dockless vehicles and transit. Seeking input from the public was a critical component towards formally adopting this transformative initiative. DOT has also established equity zones where capital investment will be targeted with greater emphasis on neighborhoods that have historically been underserved. Additionally, DOT has begun to take steps to invest finite capital resources towards transit corridor prioritization, with the goal of improving the speed and reliability of mass transit in Baltimore City. DOT is actively working to strengthen the relationship between Baltimore City and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), Greater Baltimore’s primary transit service operator that is responsible for providing critical transportation to hundreds thousands of Baltimoreans daily.

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT POSITION – The Department of Transportation **supports** Council Resolution 21-0004R.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Liam Davis at Liam.Davis@baltimorecity.gov or at 410-545-3207.

Sincerely,

Steve Sharkey
Director