

FY 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Environmental Justice (EJ) Analysis

Introduction

As a PennDOT Planning Partner, Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission (SAP&DC) is required to follow federal Environmental Justice (EJ) mandates for transportation planning and programming. EJ ensures that disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority and low-income populations are avoided. Low-income and minority communities, who have historically been underserved by transportation investment decisions, are actively engaged in the transportation planning process.

Environmental Justice mandates address people belonging to any of the following groups:

- **Minority**
 - **Black** - A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
 - **Hispanic** - A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
 - **Asian** - A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands.
 - **American Indian and Alaskan Native** - A person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
- **Low-Income** - A person whose income is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) poverty guidelines.

Regional Population Overview

Minority Population Composition

According to the U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimate Program, the population of the Southern Alleghenies Region is 95.5% White, as compared to the Pennsylvania average which is 81.6% and the United States average of 73.6%. Blacks or African Americans make up approximately 2.6% of the regional population, and other minorities account for the remaining 1.9%. These minority averages are considerably lower than the Pennsylvania and United States averages, indicating that the region has a relatively low amount of racial diversity. In Pennsylvania, African Americans make up approximately 11%; other minorities account for 7.4% of the population. Across the United States, there is a 12.6% African American population; other minorities account for 13.8%. **Table 1** shows the distribution of racial minorities in the Southern Alleghenies Region.

Table 1: Racial composition of the Southern Alleghenies region. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 Population Estimates)

Race	Bedford County	Fulton County	Huntingdon County	Somerset County	Regional Average
White alone	47966	14255	42302	73304	177827
Black or African American alone	279	210	2426	2023	4938
American Indian and Alaskan Native alone	104	35	27	65	231
Asian alone	111	21	210	233	575
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0	13	5	4	22
Two or more races	476	115	747	673	2011
Some other race	150	45	189	315	699

Low Income Population Distribution

According to U.S. Census Bureau 2015 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE,) 13.6% of individuals in the region are below the poverty level. This was slightly higher than the Pennsylvania average of 13.1% but lower than the United States average of 14.7% during that same time period.

Table 2: Percent of individuals living in poverty, by county. U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)

	Bedford County	Fulton County	Huntingdon County	Somerset County	Regional Average
% of Persons Whose Income in the Past 12 Months is Below the Poverty Level	13.9%	11.6%	14.3%	14.4%	13.6%

Table 3 shows county and regional income statistics. According to the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, the average median household income in the region was approximately \$45,806, in 2015 inflation adjusted dollars. This was lower than the Pennsylvania median of \$53,599 and United States median of \$53,899 the for the same timeframe. Fulton County had the highest estimated median household income, while Huntingdon County had the lowest. Per capita income for the region averaged \$22,831, which was lower than the Pennsylvania average of \$29,291 and the United States average of \$28,930. Fulton County narrowly had the highest estimated per capita income followed closely by Bedford County, while Huntingdon County had the lowest. All counties in the region had lower median household incomes and per capita incomes than both Pennsylvania and the United States estimates.

Table 3: Median household and per capita income, by county in 2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars. (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates)

	Bedford County	Fulton County	Huntingdon County	Somerset County	Regional Average
Median Household Income	\$45,930	\$48,311	\$44,396	\$44,587	\$45,806
Per Capita Income	\$23,195	\$23,435	\$21,714	\$22,980	\$29,291

Identification of Environmental Justice Communities

The threshold approach was employed to identify EJ communities. This method involves identifying whether the population of a chosen geography meets or exceeds an established threshold for a specific demographic attribute, in which case the area is considered an EJ community. SAP&DC individually mapped Census Block Groups with high concentrations of minority and impoverished populations using 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. Copies of these maps are included in the Appendix.

Both minority-related and poverty-related data were included in the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates and available for all four RPO counties. Therefore, the most recently available ACS 5-Year Estimates at the chosen geography level were used. Data compiled at the smallest geography level, the Census Block, were not available from the American Community Survey, so Census Block Group level data were used to identify EJ areas.

Minority Communities

Minority populations were mapped at the Census Block Group level using 2015 ACS 5-Year estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. The classification of a community’s minority status was determined by the percentage of Pennsylvania’s total population that identifies a minority. Minorities represent 18.4% of Pennsylvania’s total population.

As shown in **Table 4**, there are five Block Groups located in Huntingdon and Somerset Counties that meet or exceed the 18.1% minority population threshold, while Bedford and Fulton Counties do not have any Block Groups at or above the threshold. In Huntingdon County, two Block Groups within Smithfield Township and one Block Group in Mount Union Borough meet or exceed the established threshold. In Somerset County, two out of seven block groups in Somerset Township exceed the threshold. It is important to note that the minority populations in Somerset and Smithfield Townships are due in large part to the state correctional facility group quarters populations located there.

Table 4: Census Block Groups with at least an 18.1% minority population. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey Estimates)

County	Municipality	Tract	Block Group	Minority Population
Huntingdon	Smithfield Township	9503	4	59.6%
Somerset	Somerset Township	0208	4	41.7%
Huntingdon	Smithfield Township	9503	5	42.6%
Somerset	Somerset Township	0209	3	27.7%
Huntingdon	Mount Union Borough	9509	1	30.7%

Low Income Communities

Low-income populations in the region were identified using Census Block Group level poverty data from the ACS 5-Year Estimates. Block Group level data were available for the 2015 ACS Estimates, so it was also used to identify low-income populations. Household and family poverty data were not readily available at the Block Group level, so household and family poverty were not part of this analysis.

To identify communities where individuals living in poverty reside, a threshold of 13.2% of the total population was established based on the average percentage of persons below poverty across the state. All communities at or above that threshold were considered low-income EJ populations. Regionally, approximately 44% of all Block Groups with low income populations were at or above this threshold. Bedford County had the highest percentage of Block Groups meeting the threshold, with 52.38%, while there were 42.5% in Huntingdon County, 34.7% in Somerset County, and 36.4% in Fulton County. See **Appendix 1** for a detailed list of applicable Block Groups.

FY 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Evaluation

An evaluation was performed to assess the equitable distribution of planned TIP projects across EJ and non-EJ communities. A Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis was conducted to evaluate potential impacts on the EJ populations that were noted in the previous sections of this document. Projects were divided into three categories. The first category, Bridge Asset Management, included bridge improvement, bridge rehabilitation, bridge replacement, and bridge preservation. The second category, Highway Asset Management, included highway resurfacing and highway restoration. The last category, Safety, included intersection improvements, slide corrections, railroad warning devices, and other safety related projects. Projects that do not have a specific location, such as line items and public transit vehicle purchases, were not included in the analysis. The GIS was used to determine whether each project was located partially or completely within one or more EJ communities.

Potential Impacts to Minority Communities

The percentages of projects located within minority EJ communities are shown in **Table 5**. Based on 2015 ACS estimates, 6.0% of the total regional population lives in a minority EJ community. Overall, 4.1% of projects are located either partially or completely within areas that meet or exceed the minority threshold. Given the relatively proportionate distribution of projects located both inside and outside of minority EJ communities, it is unlikely that projects would have a disproportionate effect on EJ communities. With the exception on the minority EJ community in Mount Union, the other communities that are potentially impacted by those projects include group quarters populations from the correctional facilities located there.

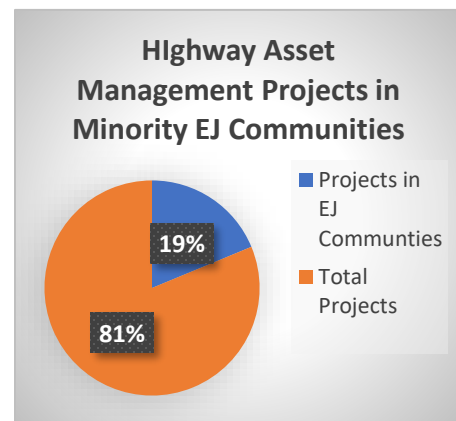


Table 5: 2019-2022 Draft TIP projects partially or fully located within areas of at least an 18.4% minority population. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey Estimates)

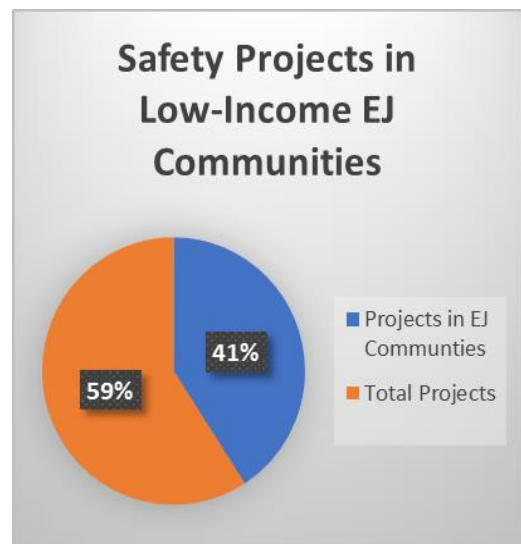
Project Type	Total Projects	Number in Minority Areas	Percent in Minority Areas
Resurfacing	26	6	45.8%

Potential Impacts to Low-Income Communities

A similar analysis was conducted to determine the percentage of projects within low-income communities, shown in **Table 6**. Based on 2015 ACS estimates, approximately 15.8% of the total regional population lives in a Low-Income EJ community. Overall, 48.6% of TIP projects are located either partially or completely in one or more low-income community. Although it appears that projects are disproportionately located within areas that meet or exceed the poverty thresholds, this is due to the strong focus on asset management activities.

Table 6: 2019-2022 TIP projects partially or fully located in areas of at least 13.2% of individuals living in poverty. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey Estimates)

Project Type	Total Projects	Number in Low-Income Communities	Percent in Low-Income Communities
Bridge Improvement	72	33	45.8
Bridge Rehabilitation	23	6	26.1
Bridge Replacement	4	0	0
Replace/Rehab	3	3	100
Preservation	2	1	50
Administration	1	0	0
Resurface	26	17	34
Highway Restoration	2	2	100
Intersection Improvement	1	1	100
Slides	2	2	100
Safety	8	4	66.7
PR Warning Devices	2	2	100
Total	146	71	



Project Specific Benefits and Burdens

The majority of projects on the TIP are highway or bridge asset management projects, which were not analyzed for potential benefits or burdens. Only non-asset management projects were reviewed for potential benefits and burdens. There are nine safety related projects on the 2019-2020 Southern Alleghenies TIP that are near EJ communities.

One safety improvement in the EJ community of West St. Clair Township, Bedford County, seeks to correct deficiencies on PA-56 between Buffalo Rd. to Dunkard Hollow Road. Another safety improvement in East Providence Township, Bedford County, will install high tension barriers on I-70 between Breezewood and Town Hill. Additionally, an enhancement in East St. Clair Township, Bedford County, will improve the intersection of RT 56 and Old Town Road. These projects will improve safety conditions in all three EJ communities and will have no negative effect on the low-income populations which reside in these communities.

Two projects will correct rock slides EJ communities. The first will stabilize the slide near RT 913 in Carbon Township, Huntingdon County. The second will excavate and eliminate rockfall on US 219 in Elk Lick Township, Somerset County. Both projects will improve safety conditions for the low-income EJ communities they are near.

Lastly, four railroad warning device projects will take place in the RPO. Two of the projects will be in Windber Borough, Somerset County, and will install mast mounted flashing warning lights on 15th Street and on Somerset Avenue. These facilities carry vehicular and pedestrian traffic over the Kiski Junction rail line and will greatly improve the safety for both modes of travel. A third project will install mast mounted flashing warning lights on Mount Davis Road over the CSX Railroad in Summit Township, Somerset County. Lastly, a project will improve railroad grade crossings on Mance Road, Philson Road, County Bridge Road, and Tooland Road in Northampton Township, Somerset County. Again, these safety projects will not have a negative impact on the EJ communities where they are located.

The aforementioned safety projects located in EJ communities are expected to reduce traffic accidents and improve rail crossing safety for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The planned projects are planned and designed to improve safety conditions for the entire region, including the EJ populations. Improvements to the intersections, rock slides, railroad crossings and highways may have some temporary negative impact on the commuting habits of populations in those communities. Conversely, the long-lasting gains in safety of the commuting public significantly outweigh any inconvenience caused by these projects.

Future Analysis

In the future, SAP&DC will continue to refine the EJ analysis presented in this document. Additional refinement could expand the data sources and methods used for determining benefits and burdens. Some potential techniques for further refinement are outlined in the remainder of this section.

Identification of Minority Communities

To further refine the analysis on minority populations, an additional review of the group quarters populations could be conducted. This would help clarify the racial composition of the group quarters populations located in the region's correctional facilities. This information could be used

to factor out group quarters populations from the minority composition, as they do not provide an accurate representation of the racial makeup the communities in which they are housed.

Fiscal Analysis

Over the four years of the 2019-2022 TIP, the total current amount to be spent on projects, without modifications and amendments, is approximately \$153,000,000. Notably, \$96,000,000 of that total is to be spent on projects that are wholly or partially located in an EJ community. Approximately 62.7% of all dollars spent on the TIP will be on projects that will have at least some effect on EJ communities. While one can identify an EJ community narrowed down to the Census Block Group, if possible, further analysis may be required to ascertain exactly how many dollars have been spent on extents that are located in EJ Communities.

Outreach and Involvement

SAP&DC distributed letters and information on the Draft FY 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to the county human services agencies as well as the municipalities identified in the EJ analysis. The letters explained the region's TIP, provided a link to the SAP&DC website where draft TIP documentation and maps could be reviewed, and provided information on public hearings, as well as how to provide comments.

As an additional effort to meet federal EJ requirements, SAP&DC also distributed informational letters to representatives from tribal groups that once resided in various areas of the Southern Alleghenies Region.

Those tribes identified include:

- Absentee-Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma
- Delaware Nation
- Delaware Tribe of Indians
- Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma
- Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma
- Shawnee Tribe

Conclusion

SAP&DC used data from the United States Census Bureau combined with GIS data to identify Environmental Justice communities in the region. An analysis was conducted to assess the equitable distribution of planned TIP projects across all communities in the region. Areas of potential impacts to identified EJ populations were reviewed further to determine where there may be burdens imposed or benefits realized by these communities. While there were few minority EJ communities that met the threshold, a significant number of Census Tracts were identified as low-income EJ communities. That being said, due to the nature of the projects impacting EJ communities, SAP&DC has concluded that the FY 2019-2022 TIP will have minimal, if any, negative impacts. However, it will provide many positive benefits such as increased safety, mobility, access, and economic opportunity for the region. SAP&DC will continue to engage and involve EJ communities in all regional transportation initiatives moving forward.

Appendix

Block Groups Meeting or Exceeding the State Poverty Level (13.2%)

County	Census Tract	Census Block Group	Low-Income Population
Bedford	9601	1	27.20%
Bedford	9602	3	14.50%
Bedford	9603	1	14.00%
Bedford	9603	3	13.40%
Bedford	9604	1	14.30%
Bedford	9604	2	15.40%
Bedford	9605	1	14.10%
Bedford	9605	2	14.30%
Bedford	9605	4	18.40%
Bedford	9606	2	22.90%
Bedford	9606	3	29.80%
Bedford	9606	4	22.50%
Bedford	9606	5	24.90%
Bedford	9607	1	15.50%
Bedford	9607	2	24.30%
Bedford	9608	4	19.00%
Bedford	9609	1	18.10%
Bedford	9609	2	13.90%
Bedford	9609	4	15.10%
Bedford	9610	4	17.00%
Bedford	9611	2	20.50%
Bedford	9611	3	20.40%
Fulton	9601	2	15.70%
Fulton	9602	1	13.80%
Fulton	9602	2	17.00%
Fulton	9602	4	15.70%
Huntingdon	9503	4	38.50%
Huntingdon	9504	1	13.90%
Huntingdon	9504	3	26.70%
Huntingdon	9504	4	44.60%
Huntingdon	9504	5	15.70%
Huntingdon	9504	6	28.70%
Huntingdon	9505	1	16.80%
Huntingdon	9508	1	15.70%
Huntingdon	9509	1	32.80%
Huntingdon	9509	2	30.60%
Huntingdon	9509	3	24.70%
Huntingdon	9510	1	16.90%
Huntingdon	9510	2	16.70%

Appendix

Block Groups Meeting or Exceeding the State Poverty Level (13.2%)

Huntingdon	9510	3	15.10%
Huntingdon	9512	2	13.60%
Huntingdon	9512	4	14.40%
Huntingdon	9513	2	16.40%
Somerset	201.01	2	16.40%
Somerset	202	4	14.30%
Somerset	203	1	26.40%
Somerset	203	2	28.60%
Somerset	204	1	13.40%
Somerset	204	4	13.40%
Somerset	205	2	17.10%
Somerset	206	2	23.90%
Somerset	206	5	16.10%
Somerset	208	1	16.50%
Somerset	209	3	20.20%
Somerset	210	1	15.80%
Somerset	210	3	13.80%
Somerset	210	4	25.70%
Somerset	211	2	48.60%
Somerset	212	2	16.80%
Somerset	213	2	15.30%
Somerset	214	4	17.20%
Somerset	215	2	16.60%
Somerset	215	3	14.30%
Somerset	216	2	18.90%
Somerset	217	1	14.40%
Somerset	217	3	14.10%
Somerset	219.02	1	13.40%
Somerset	219.02	2	19.60%