Environmental Justice Analysis: Definition of Low-Income Households
December 7, 2021
Introduction

- **EJ Principles:**
  - Avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority and low-income populations
  - Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process
  - Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay of these protections for minority and low-income populations
Introduction

- Federal definitions of EJ Populations:
  - **Low-income**: A person whose household income is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines is considered low-income.
  - **Minorities**: A person belonging to any of the following groups is considered part of a minority population:
    - Person of origin in any of the black racial groups of Africa;
    - Person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin;
    - Person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, Indian subcontinent, or Pacific Islands; or
    - Person having origins in any of the original people of North America (American Indian, Alaskan Native) and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
Introduction

- EJ populations are used in a variety of analyses:
  - LRTP Project Scoring
  - Vulnerable Populations Index (VPI)
  - Environmental Justice Analysis for the plan
- MPOs have the flexibility in federal guidance to determine their own definitions of EJ populations for analysis
- This presentation will focus on the definition of low-income populations for use in EJ analyses
# Identifying EJ Populations in Max 2045: HHs in Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Total Households</th>
<th>Below 100% of Poverty Line</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel</td>
<td>205,395</td>
<td>11,818</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
<td>239,791</td>
<td>49,940</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>312,859</td>
<td>27,209</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>60,432</td>
<td>3,174</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harford</td>
<td>92,895</td>
<td>7,539</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>111,337</td>
<td>5,385</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Anne’s</td>
<td>17,995</td>
<td>1,079</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Total</td>
<td>1,040,704</td>
<td>106,144</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates
EJ TAZs
Definition of Low-Income Households

- Different definition for low-income
  - HHS poverty thresholds extremely low
  - PAC recommendation to increase
  - BMC staff agree that definition should be increased
  - Alternatives should be drawn from regularly updated federal sources:
    - 150% Federal Poverty Level
    - 200% Federal Poverty Level
    - % of Household Area Median Income

HHS Poverty Thresholds

- $12,413 (1 adult over 65)
- $13,465 (1 adult under 65)
- $17,839 (1 adult, 1 child)
- $20,832 (2 adults, 1 child)
- $26,246 (2 adults, 2 children)
## Definition of Low-Income Households

- **Baltimore Region Data:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Total Population*</th>
<th>&lt;150% Poverty Level</th>
<th>&lt;185% Poverty Level</th>
<th>&lt;200% Poverty Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pop</td>
<td>Share</td>
<td>Pop</td>
<td>Share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel</td>
<td>554,326</td>
<td>55,463</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>72,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
<td>586,821</td>
<td>179,929</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>218,417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore County</td>
<td>807,583</td>
<td>117,340</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>158,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>163,920</td>
<td>14,764</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>19,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harford</td>
<td>249,996</td>
<td>30,374</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>39,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>316,280</td>
<td>27,431</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>35,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Anne's</td>
<td>49,080</td>
<td>4,672</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>6,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRTB Region</td>
<td>2,728,006</td>
<td>429,973</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>549,448</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 ACS 5-year Estimates Table S1701
Definition of Low-Income Households

- **Survey of 23 MPOs:**
  - 11 use Poverty Level (Wilmington, Phoenix, Orlando, Tampa, Kansas City, Cincinnati, Columbus, St. Louis, Pittsburgh)
  - 10 use a higher % of the Poverty Level (DC, Philadelphia, San Antonio, Minneapolis, San Diego, Portland, Sacramento, Seattle)
  - 1 uses % of AMI (Boston)
  - 1 uses lowest income quartile (Detroit)

- **Staff Recommendation for low income = 200% Poverty Level**

![HHS Poverty Thresholds](chart.png)
Definition of Low-Income Households

- Advantages of 200% Poverty Level:
  - Captures a larger portion of economically insecure households in the Baltimore region
  - Housing staff indicate that it is a close approximation to 50% Baltimore area AMI, an income level that is utilized for some HUD programs
  - Available through the ACS and readily available for use in BMC tools such as the VPI
  - Good approximation of family-supporting wage
    - FS wage utilized in BMC workforce development analysis
    - Aggregates across several household types based on MIT living wage calculator
    - ~$24.36/hour ≈ $50,700 annually ≈ 50% AMI ≈ 200% poverty level for a four person household
Thanks!

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