



BWIB Memberandum

Week of October 31, 2008

- **Public Hearings on Baltimore Red Line Scheduled for November**

As part of the ongoing planning process for the proposed Baltimore Red Line Transit project, the Maryland Transit Administration has formally released the federally-required Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). This document includes a description of route alternatives and transit options considered, as well as a comparative evaluation of these alternatives, including the costs, benefits, and impacts. A 90-day public comment period began recently, allowing for individuals and organizations to share their views on this important project.

To take advantage of this comment cycle, the BWIB will submit a formal letter of support for the Red Line. The letter will note that within the vicinity of the Red Line Corridor, there are roughly 7,500 businesses, which collectively employ more than 192,000 individuals. The completed Red Line will serve to improve resident access to major employer hubs, such as the east/west-side biotech parks, Johns Hopkins Hospital, the University of Maryland Medical Center, and significant hospitality/tourism venues. Additionally, this transit line would spur the redevelopment of areas around the 20 -25 proposed stations along the corridor. Individual BWIB member organizations are encouraged to submit similar letters of support. For details on how to do so, please refer to the project website: www.baltimorelined.com. The public comment period concludes on December 17, 2008.

- **Legislators Call for Renewed Consideration of Second Stimulus Package**

Earlier this month, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi indicated that a \$150 billion economic stimulus plan is needed now because of the faltering economy, and she may call the House into session after the election to pass it. Prior to the pre-election adjournment, the House did pass a \$61 billion economic aid proposal last month before lawmakers left Capitol Hill ahead of the Nov. 4 election. Unfortunately, a similar plan failed to pass the Senate.

The Senate is expected to be back at work after Election Day to complete a public lands bill and perhaps deal with other matters, such as a measure to extend

unemployment benefits. The House also could return to consider a stimulus plan and additional issues in a lame-duck session before the newly elected Congress takes over in January. Both Mayor Dixon and the BWIB have sent letters to the members of Maryland's Congressional Delegation, urging that additional funding for Workforce Investment Act programs should be included as part of any second stimulus package.

- **Recent Study Documents Challenges Faced by Maryland's Working Poor**

A study recently released by the Working Poor Families Project notes that only 16 percent of Maryland's working families with children are considered low-income. This measure ranks as second-best in the United States, tying Connecticut, and falling behind New Hampshire.

The study considered a family low-income if it earns less than 200 percent of the poverty threshold defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, which in 2006 was \$41,228 for a family of four. The Working Poor Families Project is a national initiative that supports state nonprofit groups' efforts to strengthen work force development.

The report does note a number of financial challenges faced by families in Maryland. For instance, the study ranks Maryland the 40th worst state for the target group's housing costs – 69 percent have housing costs greater than one-third of their income – and 32nd worst for health coverage. A full 39 percent of families have adults without health insurance.

- **Dates of Interest**

Friday, November 7th (8:30 am) – BWIB Workforce System Effectiveness Committee Meeting
Tuesday, Nov. 17th (12:30 pm) – BWIB Public Policy Committee Meeting
Thursday, Dec. 4th (8:00 am) – BWIB Training & Postsecondary Education Committee Meeting
Wednesday, Dec. 10th (7:30 am) – BWIB Full Board Meeting at City Hall
Thursday, Dec. 11th (7:45 am) – BWIB Youth Council Meeting
Tuesday, Dec. 16th (10:00 am) – BWIB Mature Worker Task Force Meeting

****If you would like additional information regarding any of the issues or events discussed throughout this publication, please feel free to contact Jeff Smith.****