

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Transportation Improvement Program Amendment for the Red Line

The BRTB received a number of comments on the proposed amendment to the TIP for the Red line project. The amendment was released for comment from Tuesday, August 12 through Friday, September 12, 2014. Below is a summary of comments received and the BRTB's response. The BRTB is scheduled to vote on the proposed TIP amendment on Tuesday, September 23, 2014 at 9 a.m.

Assumptions MTA has made about the proposed Red Line are wrong, the project carries enormous financial risks for the already financially-strapped taxpayers of Baltimore City, and will make it impossible for the City to improve other parts of its infrastructure for decades to come. At this time the BRTB should insist on an independent review of the Red Line project by a firm that has planned successful light rail lines in other cities. (Mr. Hyman)

MTA respectfully disputes the commenter's characterization of the project development process for the Baltimore Red Line. The Red Line has been approved as part of a succession of long-range transportation plans and short-range Transportation Improvement Programs for the Baltimore region. The planning and design process has adhered to both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements to arrive at the recommended alternative. A Draft Environment Impact Statement/Alternatives Analysis was prepared and approved by MTA and FTA. A Final Environmental Impact Statement was prepared, and the Record of Decision was signed by FTA in 2013. The project continues to follow the MAP-21 process and procedures. FTA's FY 2015 15 New Starts Annual Report gave the Red Line project a Medium-High Rating. The project was recommended to receive \$100 Million in federal funding in FY 2015 and was also recommended to receive total funding of \$900 Million. As a state-managed project, the Red Line is subject to legislative oversight that includes an annual budget appropriation which to date has exceeded \$214 Million.

With regard to the comment that the project carries "enormous financial risks," the project risks are carefully managed by MTA with oversight by FTA. The current cost estimate includes a contingency of approximately 17 percent which is derived using industry-accepted methodologies. The share of the project cost attributed to a "public private partnership" will come through a long term agreement with a competitively-selected concessionaire who will design, build, finance, and maintain the project. MTA is proceeding to deliver a similar project in the Washington region using this same delivery model.

It is incorrect to conclude that by contributing to the Red Line the City of Baltimore "will not be able to improve other parts of its infrastructure for decades to come." The project includes reconstruction of several miles of City roadways and utilities which alleviates the City of this cost in the future. A further share of the value of the City contribution is in the form of a waiver of franchise and conduit user fees that the City would not have realized without the Red Line.

With regard to the commenter's statement that "no one at MTA has ever undertaken a project like the Red Line," MTA has assembled a team of agency staff and internationally-experienced



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consultants who together bring thousands of work years of experience planning, engineering, and managing the construction of many light rail and heavy rail transit systems. The project staff has the proven expertise such that FTA has allowed the project to advance toward a Full Funding Grant Agreement under the watchful eye of its staff and Program Management Oversight Consultant. MTA believes that FTA has the knowledge and expertise to judge what defines a project that is worthy of a \$900M investment of federal funding from the New Starts program.

The commenter states that “citizens from across the city have demonstrated that all these assumptions are wrong.” MTA is not aware that any of its assumptions are “wrong.” If the commenter is referring to an alternative developed by the Right Rail Coalition, an advocacy organization, MTA analyzed the alternative and concluded it deprives the region of a significant share of the benefit of the Red Line, would be more costly than the Red Line, and includes a number of engineering and legal risks.

Concerned because she heard that funding had been previously approved and questioned the purpose of the TIP amendment. (Ms. Burks)

The specific question before the BRTB is whether to make a minor adjustment to short term funding for the Baltimore Red Line and whether to include new federal grant funds that are available for construction. While MTA has presented a plan for funding, it is subject to this and future approvals by BRTB and other entities.

With regard to your request for better communication with community members, the BRTB is undertaking a review of its public involvement procedures. We are evaluating our current procedures and identifying best practices used by similar organizations.

Provided feedback on staffing, location and advertising for the public meeting. (Ms. Heard)

Thank you for the positive comments on staffing and location. Regarding advertising, we are always competing for peoples’ attention yet we make an effort to reach communities and will endeavor to work with project sponsors and local jurisdictions to enhance our current efforts.

Supports the Red Line and wants to see it move ahead as quickly as possible. (Mr. Groff)

The BRTB appreciates the time taken to review the materials for this proposed amendment and your involvement in the regional transportation planning process.

Supports transit generally as well as the Red Line and wants to see the project as a top priority. (Ms. Rose)

The BRTB appreciates the time taken to review the materials for this proposed amendment and your continued involvement in the regional transportation planning process.