

Based on the DEIS and the public and agency comments received, a locally preferred alternative will be selected that will be further detailed in the Final EIS.

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Herman C. Shipman,

Acting Regional Administrator, Federal Transit Administration TRO III.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Red Line Corridor Transit Project; Baltimore, MD

AGENCIES: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) are issuing this notice to advise agencies and the public that, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the FTA and the MTA will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to assess the impacts of potential transit alternatives in the Red Line Corridor. This corridor extends from the Social Security complex in Baltimore County through the Baltimore City Central Business District (CBD) to Patterson Park in Baltimore, MD. The Red Line Corridor Transit Project would connect eastern and western communities of Baltimore City and Baltimore County, providing the first east-west fixed rail or bus rapid transit connection in Baltimore, and would provide convenient and efficient access to major employment centers in downtown and in Woodlawn. Growing traffic congestion in the Baltimore region has been identified, particularly in the western quadrant of Baltimore City and Baltimore County and there is an intent to improve access to jobs and improve air quality. Significant development and revitalization efforts are also underway in the corridor that will require additional transportation access.

A 23-member Advisory Committee to MTA developed the Baltimore Region Rail System Plan and identified a transit project in the Red Line Corridor as a priority project for implementation. The Advisory Committee recommended "that the MTA immediately begin

environmental analysis, planning and design studies" for the project, based on an assessment that this project will best provide an east-west link to jobs, tourism sites and the University of Maryland in the central business district; provide a link to the employment center with 20,000 jobs in the Social Security/Woodlawn area; provide improved transit service to East and West Baltimore communities; and provide connectivity to the existing bus, MARC commuter and Metro rail lines in Baltimore. The project is also included in the Baltimore Region Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan.

The purpose of the Red Line Corridor Transit Project DEIS is to examine the engineering feasibility, potential benefits, costs, and social, cultural, economic, built and natural environmental impacts of feasible alternatives in the corridor that will improve transit mobility in the Baltimore metropolitan area. The DEIS will examine and evaluate rail, bus rapid transit (BRT), transportation systems management and transportation demand management (TSM/TDM) strategies, and a no-build alternative. Tunnel, surface and/or aerial construction options will be considered for rail and BRT alternatives.

Scoping Meetings: Public scoping meetings for the Red Line Corridor Transit Project DEIS will be held on: June 5—Rosemont Tower, 740 Poplar Grove Street—4 p.m.–8 p.m.

June 7—Woodlawn Community Center, 2120 Gwynn Oak Avenue—10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Additional meeting dates, times and locations will be announced on the project web-site accessed through <http://www.mtamaryland.com>, and these details will be published in the following newspapers:

The Daily Record
The Baltimore Sun
The Catonsville Times
The Baltimore Times
The Afro-American
Howard County Times
East Baltimore Guide
El Tiempo
El Mesejeros
Baltimore Business Journal

Scoping material will be available at the meetings and may also be obtained in advance of the meetings by contacting Mr. Lorenzo Bryant, Project Manager, at the address below. Scoping material will also be made available on the project web-site accessed through <http://www.mtamaryland.com>. Oral and written comments may be given at the scoping meetings or comments may be sent to the address below. A

stenographer will be available at the meetings to record comments. Information will be made available in both English and Spanish.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the project scope should be sent by August 1, 2003 to Mr. Lorenzo Bryant, Attn: Red Line, Maryland Transit Administration, William Donald Schaefer Tower, 6 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202-1614, or via e-mail to railplan@mdot.state.md.us. Mr. Bryant may also be reached by calling (410) 767-3754.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: If you wish to be placed on the mailing list to receive further information as the study develops, contact Mr. Lorenzo Bryant, Project Manager, or Mr. Jamie Kendrick, Public Outreach Manager, at the above address or railplan@mdot.state.md.us. For further information you may also contact Ms. Gail McFadden-Roberts, AICP, Community Planner, Office of Planning and Program Development, Federal Transit Administration, Region III, phone: (215) 656-7100, fax: (215) 656-7260.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Scoping

The FTA and MTA invite all interested individuals and organizations, and Federal, State, and local agencies to provide comments on the scope of the study. During the scoping process, comments should focus on identifying specific social, cultural, economic, or natural environmental issues to be evaluated and suggest alternatives, which may be less costly or have less environmental impacts, while achieving the similar transportation objectives. The objectives of the Red Line Corridor Transit Project are: to provide the first east-west transit connection in the Baltimore region; to connect communities in eastern and western Baltimore City and County with Baltimore's existing bus, Metro, Light Rail and MARC lines; to provide more efficient travel times for people on one of the most heavily traveled corridors in the region and which is presently subject to increasing traffic congestion; to improve transportation accessibility to existing employment centers in downtown Baltimore and Woodlawn as well as emerging redevelopment areas in Inner Harbor East, Canton, West Baltimore, and at University Center; and to provide a viable transit alternative to single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel in the Baltimore region, which is a non-attainment area under the Clear Air Act. Comments should focus on the issues