



Baltimore, Maryland
February 13, 2024

Greetings:

Honorable Wes Moore, Governor of Maryland;

Paul Wiedefeld, Secretary of Transportation of Maryland; and

Holly Arnold, Administrator of the Maryland Transit Authority:

In 2015, after a decade of community planning and consensus building, we had a shovel-ready and fully funded Red Line light rail transit (LRT) project in Baltimore. Governor Hogan summarily dismissed it while inflicting deep harm on Baltimore transit riders most in need and living in historically marginalized communities. We lost important routes, or they were reshuffled, while operators carried the weight of a declining and ineffective transit system. This systemic lack of investment is a legacy of structural racism, and one that we must correct by supporting the system reliability and transit-oriented development (TOD) that follows rail.

It was no surprise then, that in 2023, Baltimoreans applauded Governor Moore's decision to right the wrongs committed by his predecessor, understanding that the Red Line light rail transit project will spur economic progress and provide access to jobs, healthcare, and schools. To be completed, the approved Red Line LRT plan is being evaluated in collaboration with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The East-West Corridor Study's Alternative bus rapid transit (BRT) routes will not provide the reliable, clean, revenue-generating transit mode upon which our citizens, our surrounding regions and all of Maryland can build. History shows that "development follows rail" and we insist on nothing less than light rail transit.



The Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC), and the signatory organizations and leaders on this letter, demand a declaration of the LRT mode as the mode of choice to the Federal Transit Administration. We also demand an immediate Supplemental Federal Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) to allow for the original Red Line light rail transit project's plans to be evaluated in 2024. Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen crafted federal legislation to allow approved transit projects like our original Red Line light rail transit project to access funds without having to start the planning process all over. We must honor their work and legacies in capturing what is indeed an historic opportunity for the city, the region, and the state in job creation and economic growth. Baltimore needs healing from the divestment which has plagued us in the past and which has made the region and the state of Maryland vulnerable to economic setbacks.

During this time of economic uncertainty in the State, the importance of investment in light rail transit cannot be understated: Light rail transit brings a return of \$4 for every \$1 invested. LRT brings faster commute times and avoids street-level traffic. LRT offers greater autonomy and accessibility for disabled transit riders over bus service alone. LRT gives a boost to property values and a fixed location for developers to build offices, housing, restaurants, attractions, and amenities. Bus stops offer none of these incentives to build. Moreover, LRT is the most effective response to climate change and emissions from fossil fuels.

Currently, Maryland faces a convergence of crises, but we also have a unique set of opportunities to address them. This includes providing transit funding, addressing the climate crisis by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, leaning into green economy training and jobs, and providing for equitable housing and development. In addition, we must address the State-of-Good-Repair backlog for transit and transportation and secure Red Line light rail transit funding. This will take more than levying fees. As Delegate Stephanie Smith so aptly stated at the Greater Baltimore Committee and Associated Black Charities event on January 29th of this year, "We can't cut our way to solvency."

BTEC and supporting organizations suggest an Escape Velocity Revenue Generation (EVRG) strategy which will break through the budgetary inertia and allow us to access the funds needed.



Its purpose is to have the state of Maryland make an assertive entry into the General Obligation bond market to finance the capture of substantial taxable private sector investments in public transportation infrastructure, the Red Line light rail transit project. With escape velocity revenue generation, the Red Line light rail transit will help escape the current crises in budget funding and investments with its \$3.0 - \$6.5 billion in transit-oriented development and 10,000 jobs. The Escape Velocity Revenue Generation strategy will provide a continuous source of taxable private sector generated revenues, improved transit equity, and community development along the corridor for the next 5 – 6 decades and beyond.

To show the broad community support for the original Red Line light rail transit project, BTEC has launched a revived Red Line Community Compact 2.0. With over a dozen signatory organizations and leaders, and more joining every week.

In addition to highlighting transit-rider support for the LRT, BTEC, CASA, CDN, and other community organizations will lead a march and rally to demand funding for the original Red Line light rail transit project next Tuesday, February 20th, starting at McKeldin Square at the Baltimore Inner Harbor at noon.

Governor Moore, it is time to lock in a Supplemental Environmental Impact Study in collaboration with FTA to expedite completion of the original Red Line LRT and raise the funds needed to address our convergence of crises by adopting the Escape Velocity Revenue Generation strategy. In the words of the Lyndhurst Community Association President, Mrs. Cynthia Shaw, “Put the Shovels in the Ground!”

Respectfully submitted by

Samuel Jordan, President - Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition



With

CASA de Maryland

Climate Communications Coalition

Community Development Network of Maryland

Progressive Maryland

Maryland Latinos Unidos

Coppin Heights CDC

Fund for Educational Excellence

SURJ Baltimore

Rosemont Community Interfaith Coalition