

Business Leaders Turn Out to Urge Light Rail Red Line

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Director of Memberships Sara Bruszewski, 25, cheers with other Greater Baltimore Commission employees during a rally Tuesday at the Du Burns Arena in Baltimore to urge business leaders to support the 4C light rail variant of the proposed Red Line. Arianne Teeple/For the Examiner The light rail variant of the city's proposed east-west Red Line mass transit system is the best available option, a gathering of city business leaders said Tuesday.

The rally, sponsored by the Greater Baltimore Committee, follows the last of several public hearings on the issue and comes ahead of Gov. Martin O'Malley's recommendation on a Red Line variant to federal officials early next year.

The light rail version of the project, known as "Alternative 4C," would build a line between Security Boulevard in the west and Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in the east. It would tunnel underground at Cooks Lane in West Baltimore and through downtown Baltimore to Fells Point, and run along Boston Street through Canton to Highlandtown.

Construction would cost approximately \$1.6 billion and start as early as 2012, according to GBC President and Chief Executive Officer Don Fry. But Fry said the time is now to express support for the 4C variant.

"We have a window of opportunity we have to pay attention to," said Ken Banks, president of Banks Contracting Company. "County, city, state and federal government are lined up in support of the Red Line. The possibility of bringing this to Baltimore is something we have to do."

Fry said the line would serve more than 7,500 businesses along its route, generate 17,000 construction jobs and an estimated 33,000 permanent jobs.

It would also link the north-south MARC train, and existing metro subway and light rail line, which currently do not connect.

"[The existing] light rail was put in a place where it was easy to put, but ... where people weren't," said Bill Struever, president and chief executive officer of Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse. "With 4C, it was, 'Let's put it in a place where the ridership is and the growth will be.' "