

Transit spending decisions are on tap

Cummings says he also wants money to help port's shippers

By **ANDY ROSEN**

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There is a lot at stake for Baltimore and metropolitan centers across the country this fall, as Congress takes up a massive spending bill to set highway, transit, and bridge spending for the next six years.

Elected officials and experts said Thursday at a conference organized by the **Greater Baltimore Committee** that they are hoping the federal government will adopt a new perspective on how to pay for transportation when they craft a new surface transportation plan for the country.

Many also pointed to this week's fatal crash on the Washington Metro system as evidence that the country needs more infrastructure spending. Though no bill has been filed yet, committees have begun working on the legislation with hopes that something could be passed by the time the existing authorization expires this fall.

It would replace a bill, passed in 2005, that covered spending from 2004 to 2005. That authorization was for \$286 billion, while a replacement is set to include \$450 billion for highways and transit, along with \$50 billion for high-speed rail projects.

U.S. Rep **Elijah E. Cummings**, D-Md., told the conference that he is pushing for a number of changes that could help Baltimore, including a dis-

cretionary spending program that would be able to identify large priority projects. He also said the bill is expected to include a \$50 billion for a metropolitan mobility program designed to help large cities address congestion.

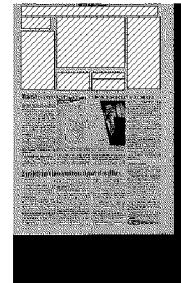
Cummings, who sits on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said he will push for authorization of Baltimore's Red and Green Line transit projects, which were also authorized under the previous bill. He also said he is supporting a measure that would expand the ability of shippers to move double-stacked container cargo by rail from the **Port of Baltimore**.

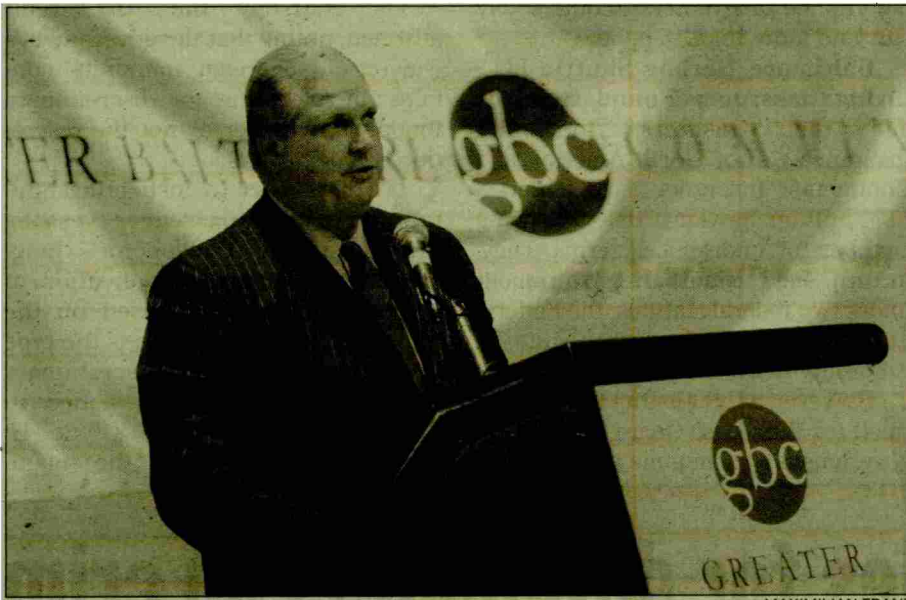
The tunnel under Howard Street in Baltimore prevents trains from moving stacked containers. The measure supported by Cummings would also aid ports in Virginia and North Carolina, he said.

"By expanding rail capacity, we will be able to attract new customers ... by offering them the opportunity to quickly move goods to the markets of the Midwest," Cummings said.

GBC President and CEO **Donald C. Fry** said he intends to press for better funding of the state's transportation system.

"While our elected leaders have many issues to deal with these days, for the business community, strengthening our transportation infrastructure is at the top of the list," he said.





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GBC President and CEO Donald C. Fry says strengthening Maryland's transportation infrastructure is at the top of his organization's list of priorities.