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Banks Contracting Co. Inc.*

TRANSPORTATION

Rallying for Red Line

Greater Baltimore Committee calls for swift action on proposed link between Woodlawn and Bayview

BY ANDY ROSEN

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Business leaders rallied Tuesday for swift action on the proposed Red Line transit link between East and West Baltimore, calling the project a necessary improvement to the region's transportation system.

More than 100 people gathered for a lunchtime event hosted by the **Greater Baltimore Committee**, holding signs that read "Red Line Means Business & Jobs." Other placards held by GBC staff at the event highlighted a layout for the line — known as "4C" — that features a light rail system with two tunnels under parts of West Baltimore, as

well as downtown and Fells Point.

Many who attended said they had never been to a rally for transit before, though the GBC has been a vocal advocate of the project. Baltimore City is leaning toward support of the 4C alternative, while several other business, community and civic groups have gotten behind that layout. There are 11 options for the line.

Other potential layouts, such as a heavy rail system that runs entirely underground, or an enhanced bus system, have been ruled out as either too expensive or dismissed as not substantial enough. The rail line would be designed to connect service on the existing light

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rail and Metro subway systems, a feature seen as critical by many supporters.

C. William "Bill" Struever, CEO of the developer **Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse**, said the Red Line would be an opportunity to improve on the light rail, which was built quickly but along a

route that he does not consider optimal for the population of the city.

"With 4C, the goal was very much to put the Red Line where people were going to use it in the future," he said.

The 4C layout would run for 14 miles between

Woodlawn and the **Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center**, via downtown, Harbor East and Fells Point. It has been projected to cost about \$1.6 billion, and city officials have said it could begin running as soon as 2015. The **Maryland Transit Administration's** Route 40 QuickBus runs roughly along the same path as the proposed project, and according to its schedule, takes about 5 minutes longer than the Red Line train is projected to take.

Kenneth R. Banks, founder of Baltimore-based **Banks Contracting Co. Inc.**,

said at the event that the Red Line would help improve people's impressions of the city.

"We cannot prosper without a significant public transit system," he said. "The Red Line is a big missing link to put Baltimore City over the top."

Valerie Fraling, an analyst at the **Social Security Administration** who came to the event to learn

more about the Red Line, said she got the impression that the rail link is a realistic possibility. She said other cities that she has been to have better-connected systems.

"This puts us behind them," she said.