

## Baltimore task force to study funding for transportation; \$2.5B deficit looms

By Len Lazarick  
*Examiner Staff Writer*

The Greater Baltimore Committee has formed a new 24-member task force on transportation funding at the same time legislative analysts are forecasting a \$2.5 billion shortfall in funding for highway and transit projects over the next six years.

"The way we fund transportation is broken," said Don Fry, president of the GBC. "We announced we were going to form this even before all the major hits to the trust fund took place."

On Tuesday, legislative analyst Jon Martin told lawmakers on the

joint Spending Affordability Committee that transportation revenues are down primarily because people are buying fewer cars and trucks, and driving less.

That means the titling tax — the sales tax on vehicles — is expected to be down \$1 billion over the next six years, and gasoline tax revenues already are down as well. That means the transportation department will be able to sell \$1.2 billion less in bonds to build projects.

Transportation Secretary John Porcari said his department was looking carefully at the estimates, but he didn't think the future would be as bad as forecast.

In past recessions, the titling tax has recovered after about 24 months, Porcari said.

In September, Porcari announced he was shelving \$1 billion in road and transit projects based on lower revenue estimates.

"We've already made operating cost reductions" since then, Porcari said. It is "too early to speculate" about the need to cut other projects in the future.

Fry said transportation funding was too dependent on titling fees and the gasoline tax. Even when the economy turns around, Fry said, people would likely be buying smaller, less expensive and more fuel-efficient vehicles, generating lower transportation revenues.

[lazarick@baltimoreexaminer.com](mailto:lazarick@baltimoreexaminer.com)

