

TRANSPORTATION

New group seeks transit funds

Study for regional business leaders says traffic woes cost \$3B a year

BY ANDY ROSEN

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Regional business leaders continued to push for the state to boost transportation funding, releasing a study Tuesday calling traffic congestion a costly, serious impediment to economic development.

The study — jointly sponsored by the **Greater Baltimore Committee**, the **Greater Washington Board of Trade**, and the **Maryland Chamber of Commerce** — found that Maryland's congested roadways cost \$3 billion in lost time and wasted fuel every year.

"An efficient and reliable transportation system is itself not sufficient to guarantee a strong, competitive economy, but it is necessary. And the necessity is greater today than ever before," said the study, conducted by the **Texas Transportation Institute**, part SEE TRANSPORTATION PAGE 11A

of the Texas A&M University System.

The study was released on the same day that officials announced the formation of the **Central Maryland Transportation Alliance**, which will focus on Baltimore City and the five surrounding counties.

The nonprofit group will have about a \$700,000 annual budget, said CEO Otis Rolley III, who resigned as Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon's chief of

staff to take the position at the alliance. It will be funded largely by area charitable foundations. He said the alliance will sharpen the focus on transportation needs, a major concern for many in business, as well as community leaders and public officials.

"It's going to be very difficult to say no when you have so many diverse and strong groups working together," Rolley said.

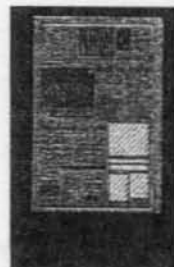
Mayor Dixon said many transportation issues are shared among jurisdictions, and noted that the support of business and nonprofit groups will help move the transportation agenda forward.

"Having the private sector step up and get involved can only enhance our efforts sooner rather than later in what we're trying to do," she said.

Donald C. Fry, president and CEO of the Greater Baltimore Committee, said the results of the study underscore the need for improvements in roads, public transit and ports. The GBC has called for \$600 million in additional state funding for transportation.

While Gov. Martin O'Malley's plan to raise state revenue contains \$392 million in new transportation funding, Fry said that will not be enough. According to the study, an annual increase of \$400 million would save \$637 million and create 5,300 jobs. An increase of \$600 million would save \$1 billion and create 8,100 jobs.

The projected savings were based on fewer traffic delays and reduced vehicle fuel consumption, while the new jobs were based on the effects of infrastructure construction and increased economic activity.



Fry, also a vice chairman of the transportation alliance, pointed to data from the Maryland Department of Transportation that suggest about \$250 million is needed to maintain existing transportation infrastructure. He said \$600 million would cover all of the needs in a backlog of nearly 100 projects for the state.

"I think the most significant issue is that there are costs in wasted

fuel, lost economic opportunity and just lost time for people because of congestion," he said. "The gridlock is likely to expand and result in additional cost to citizens unless we improve the transportation infrastructure."

And the problems are apparent to most businesspeople, said Laura L. Gamble, president of Bank of America, Maryland, who is the alliance's vice

chairwoman.

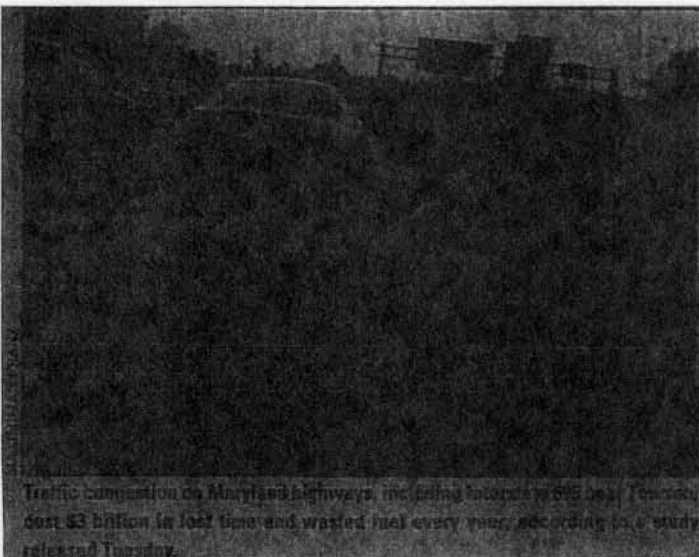
"You go into any meeting with any group, and someone is complaining about how long it took to get from point A to point B, or the lack of alternatives because they were stuck on the beltway or whatever," she said.

James L. Shea, chairman of the law firm Venable LLP, heads the board of directors of the new alliance. He said there are many ways that the organization can consider paying for needed transportation improvements, and business will have to share the burden, but he said most people should understand the need to be proactive.

"Like all things in business, if you don't invest, you ultimately will stagnate and not succeed," he said.

"It's going to be very difficult to say no when you have so many diverse and strong groups working together"

Otis Rolley III



Traffic congestion on Maryland highways, including Interstate 95, is estimated to cost \$3 billion in lost time and wasted fuel every year, according to a study released Tuesday.

