

Study urges raising transportation spending by \$600M a year

By Andrew Cannarsa
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Baltimore's commuters spend almost 60 million hours sitting in traffic a year, wasting almost 40 million gallons of fuel and creating in excess of \$1 billion in costs.

Without an improved transportation system, the cost of congestion will only increase in Maryland and the Baltimore region, according to a study issued Tuesday by the **Greater Baltimore Committee**, the Greater Washington Board of Trade and the Maryland Chamber of Commerce.

The study suggests Maryland increase transportation expenditures by \$600 million per year to curb the rising cost of congestion. Across the state, the total cost — wasted fuel, time and economic activity — is about \$3.1 billion per year, said Donald Fry, president and CEO of the GBC.

"It's going to continue to get worse. We have not addressed this for 15 years," Fry said. "It's critically important we make this investment."

The \$600 million investment would go toward funding a backlog of 97 transportation projects still in the planning stage, Fry said. Those projects include road improvements and transit, port and airport con-

struction.

According to the study, done by the Texas Transportation Institute, the investment is estimated to create about 8,100 jobs needed to complete the projects and save about \$1 billion a year — saving 1.8 million gallons of fuel and 2.6 million hours of delay each year.

The study was released as Mayor Sheila Dixon announced the creation of the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance, a privately funded multisector organization focused on bringing a new transportation system to the state.

"Transportation has emerged as one of the most important and multifaceted issues facing the Baltimore region," Dixon said in a statement. "There has been a lot of talk. It's time for action."

Otis Rolley III, Dixon's chief of staff since Dixon took office in January, recently resigned from his position and will serve as CMTA's president and CEO beginning in November.

"This alliance validates what we've been talking about," said Fry, vice chair of the CMTA board of directors.

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From 1982 to 2003, rush-hour traffic increased 71 percent, while the number of daily vehicle miles increased 135 percent, according to a recent traffic study.
 — Greg Whitesell/Examiner

