

**A RESOLUTION REGARDING CALLS TO CLOSE LIGHT RAIL STATIONS
BY THE PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PAC) OF THE BRTB**

WHEREAS, the BRTB, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Baltimore region responsible for transportation planning and policy making for the Baltimore region; and

WHEREAS, the PAC serves as an advisory body to the BRTB, charged with providing independent, region oriented citizen advice to the BRTB on issues related to the development of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and amendments that affect the region's conformity with federal air quality requirements, the public involvement process, regionally significant land use issues, and other regional transportation-related issues, as appropriate, promotes public awareness and participation in the regional transportation planning process and promotes equity in the regional transportation planning process; and

WHEREAS, the PAC has discussed recent calls from Anne Arundel County Executive Steve Schuh, two State Senate candidates and several community representatives, to close Light Rail stations and reduce Light Rail service in parts of Northern Anne Arundel County;

THEREFORE, be it resolved, the PAC submits the following statement:

We thank Governor Larry Hogan for rejecting these calls and for responding that his Administration and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) "are not planning any service cuts or closures of these stations."

The PAC agrees with Governor Hogan that public transportation is vital to state's economic development and job growth. Closing stations and reducing service along one of the few high-capacity, rapid transit corridors in the region would negatively affect existing riders and limit access to jobs and opportunities for the over 20,000 residents who use the light rail every day.

County Executive Steve Schuh and other elected officials in Anne Arundel County point to crime concerns from the community as the reason for making the request. However, the Anne Arundel County Police report no increase in crime related to the light rail. Indeed, since the police expanded patrols on and around the Light Rail in April, they have made only three arrests. Press coverage also referenced community concerns about drug use and the opioid epidemic. Addiction is a disease that can impact anyone and cuts across geographic, racial, social and economic lines. Addiction within communities should be addressed as a public health emergency, not by limiting access between communities.

Across the nation, transportation policies and projects, or lack thereof, in the Baltimore region, have had a tendency to result in service gaps, providing access for some, but not others. Full application

of all modes of transportation is needed to ensure that all residents – no matter their race, ability, background, socioeconomic status – have access to economic opportunity. High-quality transit, including light rail, subway, and bus, supports economic productivity because its efficient movement of people allows for denser concentrations of capital, entrepreneurs, workers, and institutions. Light Rail service moves people through some of the most economically productive parts of greater Baltimore, including downtown Baltimore, the BWI Business District, Timonium, and Hunt Valley.

Since greater Baltimore last expanded its rapid transit system in 1997, many similarly sized regions in the U.S. have aggressively expanded theirs. Since 1997 the Charlotte region has added 9.6 miles of light rail and 1.5 miles of streetcar, the Minneapolis-St. Paul region has added 23.3 miles of light rail, the Denver region has added 29.5 miles of light rail, and the San Diego region has added 27.6 miles of light rail. Globally, the mileage of rapid transit has tripled since 1980 and the pace of new lines entering service has accelerated since 2000. In short, metropolitan regions with robust and growing economies are aggressively adding new rapid transit service.

Over the last two decades greater Baltimore has fallen behind other regions and was being asked to contemplate actually removing existing transit service. Our state and region need to be investing in improving and expanding transit if we want to remain economically competitive in the future.

Because the PAC is an independent advisory body with a regional outlook and focus on public involvement and engagement, we believe this issue presents an important opportunity to have a cross-boundary conversation about transit, its role in the larger regional economy and how it can be an asset to local communities. We suggest that the BRTB consider a public outreach campaign to hear directly from residents, riders, employers, law enforcement, public health officials, and other relevant parties in order to facilitate a comprehensive, evidence-based discussion.

Additionally, the PAC is interested in learning more about the process of transportation decision-making in regards to requests to reduce or eliminate existing transit or other transportation services and facilities.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, the PAC thanks the BRTB for this opportunity to participate by sharing comments and for facilitating its participation.

Submitted by:

Eric Norton
Chair, BRTB Public Advisory Committee