

F R O M	NAME & TITLE	William M. Johnson, Director	CITY of BALTIMORE	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Transportation 417 East Fayette Street, Room 527		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 14-0320	M E M O	

TO

The Honorable President and Members
of the City Council
c/o Karen Randle
Room 400 City Hall

March 25, 2014


I am herein reporting on City Council Bill 14-0320, Acquisition of Property - Baltimore Red Line Transit Project, which authorizes the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore to acquire, by purchase or condemnation, the fee simple or other interests in certain property or portions of property, together with all right, title, interest, and estate that the owner or owners of the property have in all streets, alleys, ways, or lanes, public or private, contained within or abutting the whole area described or contained within the perimeter of the area, being situated in Baltimore City, and needed for the Baltimore Red Line Transit Project; and provides for a special effective date.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) supports this bill. The Red Line Light Rail Transit Project will provide connectivity lacking in Baltimore's current transit system, which will provide high quality transportation for City residents and visitors needing access to education, housing and jobs. In addition to added connectivity and mobility, the Red Line is projected to bring to Baltimore substantial economic development opportunities and create approximately 6,000 direct job opportunities and another 5,000 indirect job opportunities in Baltimore.

This bill, necessary for the Red Line's development, is an ordinance concerning Acquisition of Property – Baltimore Red Line Transit Project, which authorizes the Mayor and City Council to acquire, by purchase or condemnation, interests in property in the Red Line's contemplated right of way. Through its Comprehensive Master Plan, the Red Line Community Compact, and the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding approved by the Board of Estimates on October 24, 2012, the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore have agreed to own and acquire certain property necessary for the Red Line. Notably, Chapter 2 of the Acts of the 2006 Special Session of the General Assembly, as amended by Chapter 570 of the 2009 Acts of the General Assembly, as further amended by Chapter 360 of the 2013 Acts of the General Assembly, prohibits the City of Baltimore or the MTA from acquiring any real property for construction of the Red Line transit project if the acquisition would result in involuntary residential displacement. Accordingly, **no property proposed for acquisition would force any city resident out of his or her home.** In fact, nearly all properties contemplated for acquisition consist of minor slivers of unimproved property necessary for the Red Line's right of way. The City is working hand in hand with MTA in acquiring by purchase as many properties as possible. It is anticipated that as this process moves forward, less and less properties will require condemnation as more purchase agreements are executed. Those properties which will require condemnation must be deemed by the Commissioner of Housing and Community Development as necessary for the construction and operation of the Red Line, and necessary for the health, safety or welfare of the public. Acquisition of property for the Red Line will facilitate the development of a direly needed east-west light rail system that will substantially compound the utility of the City's public transit system and create more than 10,000 jobs in the city, all while ensuring nobody has to leave their homes.

I respectfully request a favorable report on this bill.

Respectfully,


William M. Johnson
Director

WMJ/BZ



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