VISION PLAN
Inner Harbor
(Charles Center & Government Center)
INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the first phase of the Station Area Advisory Committees (SAAC). The SAAC process is part of the Red Line’s public involvement program.

What role did the SAACs fulfill?

SAACs are advisory to the MTA. Each SAAC was extremely helpful and provided input about their community and how the proposed station location would “behave” in their community. The SAACs functioned as a focus group. The SAACs have three major responsibilities:

- Vision Planning
- Station Design and Goals
- Sharing Information

This document summarizes the SAAC’s activities regarding Vision Planning and Station Location. The Vision Plans for each SAAC summarize the first half of the SAAC efforts. The second half of the effort will focus on Station Design and Goals. The meetings for this effort started in October of 2010 and concluded in early spring of 2011. The documentation of the Station Design and Goals efforts will be an addendum to the Vision Plans.

During the Vision Planning process, each SAAC decided on their station area’s boundaries; examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for their areas; and reviewed the connectivity elements for the proposed station locations. The SAACs not only examined what existed, but also thought about the potential for their areas. They also reviewed the station locations in relation to the Vision Plan for their station area. In some of the SAAC areas, it was confirmed that the station location was in keeping with the community goals and in other instances station locations were modified. Each Vision Plan explains the elements of the Visioning Process and the Station Location.

Once the SAACs completed their Vision Plan and confirmed their desired Station Location, Open Houses were held for the general public. These Open Houses were extensively advertised and over 400 citizens attended. There were four Open House sessions; each one focused on a different portion of the Red Line corridor. The areas were West – Baltimore County, Route 40 West, Downtown and the Eastside. At these Open Houses, the draft Vision Plans were discussed with the community and feedback was obtained. After this public feedback, the SAAC members revisited their Vision Plans to ensure, “Did we get it right?” The Vision Plans are the result of this effort.
STATION AREA VISION PLAN

Station Area Defined (analysis):
What do we see? What do we know? What is our Vision Area?

Analysis

a) Physical Boundaries

The Station Areas are located in the core of the Central Business District (CBD) and have ample access opportunities, given the strong urban grid. The northern limits of the station areas are Mulberry/Orleans Street, with Park Avenue serving as the western boundary, Central Avenue and back to Pratt Street are the eastern limits, and Henrietta Street in Federal Hill acts as the southern boundary. The waterfront becomes a natural boundary for the remaining edge of the catchment map.

These boundaries were established by the SAAC. Park Avenue, the western boundary, was established as the logical boundary between Charles Center and the proposed Howard Street station. A similar condition occurs with the adjacent eastern boundary and the Inner Harbor East station. The decision was not to include Little Italy, since this neighborhood was more likely to access the proposed Harbor East Station. The northern boundary was established in great part due to the change in grade as one approaches the area around Penn Station. The incline, combined with the walking distance, led the SAAC to agree that this area would be beyond the area of influence of the stations. The overall Vision Area is established by understanding the complexities of four distinct parts: the CBD, Federal Hill, the Waterfront, and Jonestown. Jonestown is the neighborhood north of Little Italy and east of President Street. This neighborhood can also access the proposed Harbor East station.

Upon the inception of the SAAC process two stations, Charles Center and Government Center/Inner Harbor, were proposed. During the SAAC process, the engineers/designers efforts confirmed engineering and cost implications that led to the combining of these stations into one station, known as Inner Harbor.

The combining of these stations does not change the boundary areas, vision or guidelines concluded by the SAAC members. See Figure 1: Station Area.

b) Existing Conditions/Context

There are important nodes of existing intermodal connections adjacent to the station. These include access to the water taxi, the Orange and Purple Charm City Circulator lines, access to the Metro (Owings Mills to Johns Hopkins), 18 different bus lines, and short distance access to the existing Light Rail Transit. The CBD has over 40,000 residents in the one-mile radius, supports over 20,000 students, and has over 160,000 employees that come in to work every day. The CBD has a significant number
of above ground structured parking garages, some below ground structured parking and numerous at-grade parking lots. Most of the at-grade parking lots are future development sites. See Figure 2: Uses.

The Open Space Plan was recently completed by Baltimore Downtown Partnership and focuses on opportunities to improve the overall open space at Memorial Plaza, Center Plaza, Jones Falls/Guilford bike paths, Pratt Street, and Hopkins Plaza. The green spaces in downtown are valuable. The goal is to design and maintain green spaces to enhance the downtown experience. A plan to improve Pratt Street as a pedestrian street was also recently developed.

Downtown’s land use is typical of a vital downtown of a major city, with high-rise buildings that create the urban fabric of the downtown grid. As part of Transform Baltimore, the City is recommending changes to the Zoning Code that will support additional density, and provide design guidelines for the reduction of surface parking lots. This is complemented by efforts to better address the needs of the waterfront properties.

The area is generally seen as a safe environment. Baltimore Downtown Partnership has successfully implemented plans to improve the overall city hardscape and softscape through various initiatives. In addition, the Downtown Partnership, and its members, provide Ambassadors; people in casual but identifiable Downtown Partnership uniforms patrol the streets as “eyes on the street.” They assist visitors and other downtown travelers in getting around downtown. The Downtown Partnership also has staff that help keep the area clean. This is a major effort that helps to reduce the potential negatives of “crime and grime.”

As with many major cities, Baltimore is experiencing a temporary lull in the office market. Some hotels are not meeting their desired required capacity. For the past decade, there has been a trend of renovating Class B office space for residential reuse. The Downtown Partnership continues to identify opportunities to transform unoccupied/underutilized office buildings into residential units. These conversions and the construction of new residential units and student housing have helped to activate the downtown beyond working hours. The City sees the trend of people moving downtown continuing.

There are pedestrian barriers that break the urban grid and niches that are not perceived as friendly to the general public. For example, the Arena is a two-block structure and its elimination of a block of Redwood Street creates a major break in one of the most walkable downtown streets. The SAAC also mentioned concerns regarding the “Block”, or the old red light district. It is perceived that this area attracts elements of crime and drug activity to the community. In addition, several streetscapes west of Charles Street have low levels of pedestrian activity and become unfriendly to pedestrians beyond business hours.

The SAAC had difficulty applying one overarching identity to downtown.
Downtown residents tend to be of a high median income ($75K+/Year), but also tend to be more transient. This is due to the limited tenure at higher centers for learning, such as Hopkins, University of Maryland, University of Baltimore, and Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). In addition, many people who are coming to Baltimore for the first time often live downtown for at least a year, until they decide on which of Baltimore’s many neighborhoods they desire to live.

Baltimore’s downtown is really a series of many niches. There is the Financial District, Government Center, Inner Harbor, Charles Center, University Center, historic Howard Street retail district and a variety of neighborhoods. This variety makes Baltimore’s downtown interesting.

Like many healthy downtowns, Baltimore is constantly evolving in its characteristics and its demographics.

The overarching goal of the SAAC is to continue to build on Baltimore’s assets, and to continue to work to activate pedestrian level movement beyond the business hours and encourage the waterfront activity to extend northward through the CBD. To date there have been different levels of success at achieving this goal throughout the downtown. There have also been great successes with activities such as the weekend farmers market. See Figure 3: Economic Opportunities.

c) Stabilization Area vs. Redevelopment Area

The CBD is considered a stable business, educational, and residential community. As with most healthy cities, they are always evolving. To that end there are opportunities for redevelopment including: the former News American site, the former McCormick site, the Arena site and the “Superblock.”

The neighborhoods just outside of the CBD, but within close proximity to the stations, are stable areas. To the east is Jonestown and to the south is Federal Hill.

Station Area Vision: What changes? What stays the same? What do we value?

Values

The Charles Center Station/Government Center Station catchment area is considered a well established community with improvement opportunities to help increase density and provide safer pedestrian activity.

The Pratt Street Plan and the Open Space Plan are good examples of ways to improve the streetscape at a pedestrian scale to help facilitate the way in which visitors and residents navigate the CBD, and what could be done to entice northern movement from the Waterfront.

Elevated pedestrian bridges have not worked well for downtown and are expected to come down. The SAAC reinforced this effort and concluded that the activity should take place at the street level, with increased retail and restaurant life, which extends beyond normal 8 to 5 business hours.
Goals: What are our Vision Area Goals? What do we want to see for the future?

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles for the station have focused on the opportunity for increasing intermodal connections. Any major urban downtown needs to provide a variety of transportation opportunities for people to get into and around downtown. The Red Line will contribute to the existing transportation system and will help improve the way downtown serves the rest of the city and the region. See Figure 4: Intermodal Connections and Figure 5: Pedestrian Access.

Intermodalism

- Identifying the modes of transportation and support facilities (such as parking and bus layover) in the station area and how they are connected: bus, taxi, shuttle, park-and-ride, kiss-and-ride, light rail, subway or heavy rail
- Establish a vision for future connection of intermodalism with the Red Line in place

Connectivity (Complete Streets)

- **Accessibility:** Providing an understanding of the surrounding circulation network for pedestrians, cyclists, patrons with disabilities (ADA) and general traffic circulation routes
- **Service Providers/Users:** Identify the people who will use the station and access the vision area (i.e. residents, working commuters, students, patients, visitors, event commuters)
- **Areas Served/Anchor Uses:** Identify station area activities and community establishments that will be served by the station, such as institutions, employers, event attractions and residents
- **Open Space:** Identify existing open space within the vision area (parks, trails, historic and wetlands preservation). Establish the community vision for preservation of the existing open space or desire for development/redevelopment. Establish the guiding principles for adding or enhancing open space within the vision area and the connection to the station.
- **Infrastructure/Streetscape:** Provide a well-maintained aesthetically pleasing streetscape: sidewalks, street lighting, street trees, bus stops, benches, services (garbage/recycling pickup, snow removal, utilities, trash/recycling receptacles, trash pickup

Land Use

- Evaluate current and future zoning opportunities for future development
- Establish preference and availability for new development and redevelopment in the vision area. Principles should include preferred use (i.e., restaurants, shops, retail, etc.), scale, infrastructure support (i.e., parking). Also establish what is not preferred.
- Evaluate current housing stock and conditions
- Establish residential preferences for the vision area. For example, stabilizing of a particular housing stock, development of new housing (single family, multi-family, elderly).
Economic Development

- Establish goals for job creation, both for construction of the Red Line and with future development

Safety and Security

- General lighting, passive surveillance, street activity, traffic calming, way finding signage (both system-wide and community specific)

Neighborhood Identity

- Evaluate/provide visual connection (corridors) to link and promote activities, neighborhoods and uses
- Acknowledge physical separations used to set area boundaries and define neighborhoods
- Establish and celebrate key features of neighborhoods that foster community identity
- Art-in-Transit: Integrate art and art programs into the station area
- Develop a marketing slogan, graphic design (signage), and promotion graphics for the neighborhood

Sustainability

- Establish and incorporate sustainability goals for the vision area and station design, incorporating system-wide and station specific opportunities (Use/increase pervious surfaces, use indigenous landscape plants and materials where possible, promote recycling, utilize solar technology where practical, promote car sharing, encourage use of mass transit by providing a safe, aesthetically pleasing and convenient transit system that connect communities)

Vision Statement

The alignment and stations in downtown will be in a tunnel. The SAAC, therefore, focused on the impact of the headhouses. The SAAC thinks it is important to ensure clear lines of visibility to its street level headhouse locations and a direct means of connectivity to the overall Baltimore transit system.

The underground stations are part of a Regional Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) system that begins to expand its services to include connectivity to the city at large and the overall region.

The downtown underground stations are walk-up stations with no associated parking.
STATION CONCEPT

Station Location

Platform Location/Behavior

It is currently being proposed to combine the Charles Center Station and Government Center/Inner Harbor Station into a single larger underground station.

This combined station is to be the point along the Red Line that would connect to the Metro. There is a strong desire to have the Baltimore region’s rail transit connect. The Red Line will provide this connection at two locations. The Red Line Howard Street Station is to provide a connection to the existing Light Rail Transit. This station will provide a pedestrian tunnel connection to the existing Charles Center Metro Station.

The SAAC reviewed potential headhouse locations. The desire is to have headhouse entrances at the corner of Light and Lombard Streets, Calvert and Lombard Streets, and South and Lombard Streets. Due to the nature of the underground station, the headhouse design and its presence and visibility in the CBD and the Waterfront become design elements of great importance and significant design coordination. See Figure 6 Potential Access Zones.

Platform Type

This is an underground with up to three headhouse entrances.

Alignment Issues

This is an underground alignment and station.

Station Performance & Station Image –
Neighborhood Identity

This document summarizes the Vision Plan and Station Location efforts of the SAAC. This concludes the first phase of the SAAC efforts.

The second phase of the efforts begins in October 2011 and are anticipated to run through early spring 2012. During this second phase, the SAACs will focus on Station Performance and Station Image. The discussion elements will include elements such as:

- **Urban Design and Site Planning:** This will cover the functional relationship of the station to the neighborhood. The SAAC will review station orientation, accessibility, landscape/hardscape opportunities, and vision and physical connectivity (pedestrian, bicycle and auto – intermodal).

- **Station Programming:** This will include discussions on system-wide standard elements and elements that may become “customized” per neighborhood station.

- **Station Image-Neighborhood Identity:** The SAAC will discuss special features, art in transit and recommend station names.

The outcome of the second phase of SAAC efforts will be documented as an addendum to the Vision Plan.
Fig. 1

Charles Center & Inner Harbor/Gov’t Center - Station Area

Adjacent Red Line Stations
1. Howard St. Station Area
2. Inner Harbor East Station Area

Key Landmarks
1. Mechanic Theatre
2. City Hall
3. Shot Tower
4. Convention Center
5. Inner Harbor
6. The Lewis Museum
7. National Aquarium
8. Maryland Science Center

Legend
- Red Line Surface Alignment
- Red Line Tunnel Alignment
- Approx. Station Location
- Station Area Boundary
- Primary Corridors
- Peripheral Station Area
- Downtown Management District

Map Details:
- Charles Center & Inner Harbor/Gov’t Center Station Area
- Red Line Tunnel Alignment
- Red Line Surface Alignment
- Approx. Station Location
- Station Area Boundary
- Primary Corridors
- Peripheral Station Area
- Downtown Management District

Special Areas:
- Charles Center & Inner Harbor/Gov’t Center
- Howard St. Station Area
- Inner Harbor East Station Area

Rail Station Design Open House

Inner Harbor (Charles Center & Government Center)
Adjacent Red Line Stations

- Howard St. Station Area
- Inner Harbor East Station Area

Key Landmarks

1. Mechanic Theatre
2. City Hall
3. Shot Tower
4. Convention Center
5. Inner Harbor
6. The Lewis Museum
7. National Aquarium
8. Maryland Science Center

Fig. 2

Charles Center & Inner Harbor/Gov’t Center Station #12 & #13 Rail Station Design Open House

Red Line Surface Alignment
Red Line Tunnel Alignment
Approx. Station Location
Station Area Boundary
Primary Corridors
Peripheral Station Area
Institutional
Commercial
Religious
Civic / Governmental
Hospitality
Mixed Use Residential
Cultural / Entertainment
Residential

Charles Center & Inner Harbor/Gov’t Center - Uses
Adjacent Red Line Stations:
1. Howard St. Station Area
2. Inner Harbor East Station Area

Key Landmarks:
1. Mechanic Theatre
2. City Hall
3. Shot Tower
4. Convention Center
5. Inner Harbor
6. The Lewis Museum
7. National Aquarium
8. Maryland Science Center

Charles Center & Inner Harbor/Gov’t Center - Economic Opportunities

Fig. 3
Adjacent Red Line Stations
1. Howard St. Station Area
2. Inner Harbor East Station Area

Key Landmarks
1. Mechanic Theatre
2. City Hall
3. Shot Tower
4. Convention Center
5. Inner Harbor
6. The Lewis Museum
7. National Aquarium
8. Maryland Science Center

Charles Center & Inner Harbor/Gov’t Center - Pedestrian Access
Charles Center Metro Station - Potential Station Access Zones

Fig. 6

- Connector to Metro
- Vacant Properties
- Multi-Story Structure
- Sidewalk
- Surface Parking Lot
- Sidewalk or Open Space
- Sidewalk
- Commerce St.
- South St.
- S. Calvert St.
- S. Charles St.
- Light St.
- E. Baltimore St.
- Water St.
- E. Lombard St.
- Charles Center Metro Station
- Charles Center Station - Potential Station Access Zones
- Digital Map with various points marked:
  - Inner Harbor (Charles Center & Government Center)