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State of Affairs 9/16/2009

Maryland drafts statewide freight plan, seeks TIGER grants for rail projects

Gov. Martin O'Malley recently announced Maryland has released its first statewide freight plan.

Devised to address a projected 75 percent increase in freight traffic by 2030, the plan includes more than 100 rail, highway and port projects ranging from safety and security to freight connectivity.

The plan will provide the state a roadmap to add additional trains and trucks without increasing congestion on commuter railroads and highways, said O'Malley in a prepared statement.

Meanwhile, O'Malley also announced that additional transportation projects worth \$30 million will be funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) dollars. In addition, the state plans to apply for more than \$200 million in Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants to help fund five projects.

Of the \$30 million in ARRA funds, more than \$17 million will go toward the rehabilitation of the Mondawmin Transit Center in Baltimore, the Maryland Transit Administration's aging bus maintenance facilities and electrical systems for Baltimore's light-rail system.

The projects and dollars associated with the TIGER grant requests include:

- \$58 million for base realignment and closure program-related transportation improvements to address congestion and transit ridership increases;
- \$56 million to improve access to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's Branch Ave. Metrorail Station;
- \$45 million to improve track and upgrade electronic signals to enable MARC and CSX Corp. trains to operate more efficiently on the CSX-owned Camden and Brunswick lines;
- \$25 million for a new central Maryland transit maintenance facility; and
- \$20 million to replace a pier at the Port of Baltimore's auto terminal.