



## Trolley supporters drop idea of property tax

*Homeowners off hook; businesses will be hit instead*

By Adam Bednar  
abednar@patuxent.com

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A proposed property tax on home-owners to fund a streetcar line along the Charles Street corridor is off the table, both proponents and opponents of the plan say.

The Charles Street Development Corp. is promoting a \$150 million plan for a 7.5-mile, fixed-rail circuit that would run between the Inner Harbor and the Homewood campus of Johns Hopkins University.

Previous proposals by the corporation to fund the project's operating budget included a tax of 2 cents per \$100 of assessed value on homes within a quarter mile of the trolley track.

New proposals by the corporation would fund the operating budget partly with \$1.8 million from trolley fares, \$450,000 from ad revenues and a property tax of 1.3 cents per \$100 of assessed value on business and rental properties -- up from 0.5 cent in the old plan -- in the Charles Street corridor.

Owner-occupied homes would not be taxed under the corporation's latest plan.

An additional \$1.5 million would come from the trolley replacing a leg of a planned shuttle service called the "downtown circulator."

The free service, announced in May, is slated to start next summer.

David Funk, chairman of the Charles Street Development Corp. Trolley Committee, said the change in financing addressed the misgivings of homeowners and exposed deep divisions between people who supported the tax and those who opposed it.

"There was widespread discomfort with a benefits tax" on home-owners, Funk said.

Ed Hopkins, creator of the Web site [www.trolleytrouble.org](http://www.trolleytrouble.org), said taking the property tax for homeowners out of the mix makes it more palatable, but he's still skeptical.

"It's better, but I still have reservations because it's not enhancing Baltimore's mass transportation," Hopkins said.

The public will get to see the full plan and comment on it at two open houses being held this month.

The first open house will be Thursday, June 12, at 5:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Incarnation, 4 E. University Parkway.

The second open house will be June 23, also at 5:30 p.m., at the Belvedere Hotel, 1 E. Chase St.

Funk stressed that the corporation is trying only to craft a "political document" that will have to be approved by the city and the state.

"This is a grass-roots project. If the community wants it, it will happen," Funk said.

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