The Greater Baltimore Committee had an impactful and productive year in 2008. There was progress on the legislative front, membership growth and development, and noteworthy success with major policy initiatives.

Despite a challenging economic period, the GBC had a successful financial year in 2008. But like other businesses and non-profit organizations, we are cautious about 2009. Perhaps more than ever, when faced with difficult economic times, the work of the GBC is just as important - if not more important - as during good financial days. Your continued support to maintain progress is critical.

During the past year, the GBC’s leadership role has directly, substantially, and beneficially impacted business-related policy in numerous measurable ways, including:

- Coordinating business support for Baltimore Youth Works summer jobs program and Safe Streets crime reduction strategy; and
- Leading business participation in developing a regional emergency preparedness plan.
- Creating an Emerging Business Council to serve as a voice for small and emerging businesses in the Baltimore region.

A more detailed summary of GBC accomplishments during the past year is outlined in this report. I trust you will find this work to be consistent with the objectives and goals of the business community.

The GBC continues to provide vital business and civic leadership that impacts the Baltimore region and state and delivers high value to our members. Thank you for your involvement and support of the GBC.

We need your continued involvement to achieve our mission of bringing the corporate and civic community together to develop solutions to problems that negatively impact our competitiveness and viability as a region.

Sincerely,

Donald C. Fry
President & CEO
Red Line light rail. The GBC continues its role as the lead advocate for a proposed 14.6 mile light rail Red Line from Woodlawn in western Baltimore County to Johns Hopkins Bayview in southeast Baltimore, specifically “alternative 4C,” which would feature light rail on a dedicated surface with strategic tunnels under congested areas.

The GBC and members of the business community led an aggressive business campaign, including hosting business rallies, collecting letters of support and signatures, testifying at hearings, and garnering television, radio, and print coverage to name a few.

In February or March, the Maryland Transit Administration and Governor O’Malley will designate a Red Line “preferred alternative” to federal transportation officials, who will consider the project for federal funding. The GBC is confident that alternative 4C will be the likely choice, a position strongly pushed by the GBC.

Federal transportation funding. The GBC is active with numerous national organizations, including Business Alliance for Northeast Mobility and T4 America, in advocating for more effective federal transportation funding policies.

Amtrak funding. The GBC urged members of Congress to pass bipartisan legislation to sustain and strengthen the Amtrak rail system. In remarks to federal lawmakers on September 10, GBC’s President & CEO Donald C. Fry urged the passage of funding to improve two 19th-century tunnels in Baltimore that are critical bottlenecks in the nation’s rail system. The $1.5 billion Amtrak reauthorization bill subsequently passed by Congress included funding to upgrade the tunnels and to study a possible bypass around the tunnels.

Investment in infrastructure — stimulus package. Investment in strengthening the nation’s infrastructure, particularly its transportation resources, should be a major element of any new congressional economic stimulus package, Greater Baltimore Committee President & CEO Donald C. Fry told members of Congress’ Joint Economic Committee on October 30.

Investing in transportation systems is directly linked to the economic viability of the region. The GBC convened a private sector task force to address the long-term Maryland Transportation Trust Fund revenue sources and governing structure for transportation needs. The task force’s work is expected to be completed in the next year.

Regional Transportation Summit. The GBC, in June 2008, hosted its first Regional Transportation Summit.

Outlook 2035. Successfully advocated for Baltimore Regional Transportation Partnership Board to add the Green Line and other transit improvements into Transportation Outlook 2035, Baltimore region’s metropolitan planning organization’s long range plan.

The GBC continued its role as a leader in the Greater Baltimore community for bioscience.

The GBC participated on two subcommittees of the Maryland Life Sciences Advisory Board, as well as the Maryland Governor’s Workforce Investment Board (GWIB) Bioscience Committee.

The GBC connected companies and business leaders through:
- Legislative advocacy for biopark funding, stem cell research funding, and tax credits for biotech investment and for research and development.
- GBC BioParks outreach series.
- GBC Bioscience Speaker Series.
- GBC Bioscience E-newsletter.
- Publication of 2008 GBC Biotech Report in The Daily Record for the fourth consecutive year.
- Providing financial support for bioscience organizations and events.
- Supporting operations of the BioTechnical Institute of Maryland, Inc., which trains high school graduates for entry-level jobs in bioscience.

Transportation financing and regional governance. The GBC convened a private sector task force to address the long-term Maryland Transportation Trust Fund revenue sources and governing structure for transportation needs. The task force’s work is expected to be completed in the next year.

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Developing products from the region’s research. The GBC commissioned the development of the Chesapeake BioDiscovery Initiative, a unique private-sector driven model for a private-sector wealth equity fund. Rather than investing in start-up companies, the fund would invest in a portfolio of promising discoveries and advance them through the early stages of product development and value creation.

Recognizing bioscience achievement. The GBC presented the 3rd annual Greater Baltimore Regional Bioscience Awards, which honored three companies and a university for outstanding achievement in the field of bioscience.

Strengthening minority and women-owned businesses in the region.

- The Bridging the Gap priority initiative, the GBC’s priority program to nurture the development of minority-owned and women-owned businesses achieved an early milestone in its efforts to strengthen procurement from minority vendors and gained recognition for its work from the Greater Baltimore Urban League.
- The Bridging the Gap procurement initiative with the regions’ transportation systems has produced a 114 percent increase in participation with minority-owned and women-owned businesses over a four-year period. The GBC is working in collaboration with the Maryland Hospital Association to expand the program throughout the state.
- The Greater Baltimore Urban League honored GBC President & CEO Donald C. Fry as a recipient of a 2008 Whitney M. Young, Jr. Award for leading the GBC’s “Bridging the Gap” initiative.

Professional development. In addition to its day-to-day work cultivating the growth of minority-owned and women-owned businesses, Bridging the Gap held a number of well-attended professional development and networking events, including an April diversity seminar and a September vendor fair.

Recognizing minority business achievement. The fifth annual Bridging the Gap Awards in October honored six Baltimore-area companies, two nonprofits, a majority-minority partnership, and two individuals for their efforts to strengthen minority business development.

Developing solutions to address Maryland’s energy crisis.

- GBC Energy Committee. The GBC established a new Energy Committee to work toward a stable regulatory policy environment in Maryland, to educate the business community about the nature of the crisis currently facing Maryland, and to outline the implications for the business community should adequate energy not be available