

From the Baltimore Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/blog/real-estate/2016/04/west-baltimores-highway-to-nowhere-area-to-get-4.html>

West Baltimore's 'Highway to Nowhere' area to get \$4.7M upgrade

Apr 28, 2016, 2:26pm EDT

A portion of the long-dissed "Highway to Nowhere" in west Baltimore will soon be getting a partial re-do.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx came to the bridge located in the 400 block of N. Fulton Ave. Thursday morning to announce a grant of \$3.75 million in federal funds through a program called "LadderSTEP."

The city is providing the remainder of the funding for the \$4.7 million project.

Baltimore is one of seven in the U.S. including Baton Rouge, La., Atlanta, Richmond, Va., and Charlotte, N.C., to receive grant funds that aim to spur economic development around transportation hubs by using local workers.



BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
An artist's rendering of upgrades planned for Franklin and Calhoun streets in West Baltimore.

The money will be used in Baltimore for major street improvements and upgrades beginning at the Fulton Street bridge and extending west along Fulton to Calhoun Street, near North Avenue.

The upgrades include the addition of bike and pedestrian lanes, sidewalks and landscaping as well as traffic lights to improve parts of the urban corridor and make it more user and pedestrian friendly.

Contractors who hire city residents for the work are eligible for \$100,000 in incentives, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said.

"This could not have come at a better time," Rawlings-Blake said, adding that the development will help to connect that part of town to other parts of the city. "It will offer opportunities and jobs...to areas near the West Baltimore MARC Station and will help to reconnect West Baltimore to downtown."

The area surrounding the commuter train station is blighted and filled with vacant housing. Some of the renderings of the new work distributed by the city's Department of Transportation Thursday include vacant housing in the sketches of the upgrades.

The portion of the city that will be highlighted is located about three miles from the scene of last year's riots at Pennsylvania and North avenues following the death of Freddie Gray in police custody.

"The streets may have potholes, but the people don't," said Foxx, a former mayor of Charlotte.

The upgrades to the street scape along Fulton Avenue, he said, will help to lift the community and link it to potential employment possibilities.

"We are seeing the evidence of a transition from cutting people out to bringing people in," Foxx said in brief remarks.

The 1.4-mile Highway to Nowhere is a local term for the short leg of Route 40 between Martin Luther King Boulevard and the MARC train station. It was created in the 1970s as part of an effort to extend and link Interstate 70 to Interstate 95.

But local opposition to the highway plan — led by then-East Baltimore activist Barbara Mikulski who would later rise to become a city councilwoman, member of Congress and now a U.S. senator from Maryland — scuttled the project, but not before hundreds of families were relocated and their homes torn down during the first portion of the construction.

A portion of the barriers that remained on the highway for decades were torn down in 2011 as part of another federal grant for \$1.7 million. New parking areas for the MARC station were also added during that project.

5/16/2017

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Melody Simmons

Reporter

Baltimore Business Journal

