

Indy race in Baltimore one step closer to reality

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I had a chance to catch up with some of the key players today who are trying to bring an Indy Car race to Baltimore in two years. Now that Councilman William H Cole IV's resolution in support of the race passed (in a unanimous vote), it's time to get down to brass tacks to make this a reality.

(Cole's resolution, by the way, does not authorize city funding — that comes later. Monday's approval authorizes Baltimore Racing Development to promote the Baltimore Grand Prix and to negotiate with the Indy Racing League.)

BRD is wrapping up studies that look at what kind of impact the race, which is plotted to run in city streets around Camden Yards and the Inner Harbor, would have.

One will address noise and what the city would need to do for the residents in the area (which is also Cole's district). The company, which cooked up the Baltimore race idea in the first place, is also working with the city on a traffic study that will address road closures, public transportation rerouting and cost estimates, according to BRD President Jay Davidson.

"We expect those to be finished fairly quickly," Davidson said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Visit Baltimore is working with officials to nail down a race date. Cole said he believes Labor Day weekend is in the running because no conventions are scheduled for that weekend for the next few years.

"That way, the same weekend could be blocked for several consecutive years," Cole said.

So it looks like we're inching closer to the Baltimore Grand Prix, something Cole said was just a pipe dream only a year ago. But there's a tough road ahead — especially when talks over financing begin. From repaving roads and rerouting transit to renting track barriers, city officials have their work cut out for them.