

Survey of possible Grand Prix race to cause parking restrictions downtown

By Michael Dresser, *Baltimore Sun*, March 19, 2010

Drivers will face parking restrictions and possible delays downtown Saturday as a helicopter crew conducts a survey of the likely route of a proposed Grand Prix race in Baltimore.

City officials will post notices warning motorists not to park along certain streets in the [Inner Harbor](#) and [Camden Yards](#) areas between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. to clear the roadways for an aerial and ground survey of the 2.44-mile route.

Adrienne Barnes, a spokeswoman for the city Transportation Department, said vehicles that block those streets could be removed - towed to a nearby location or to a city impound lot. She said the survey will involve minimal disruption because it largely avoids residential areas and uses blocks where there is already limited "minimal" parking.

The survey is being done to determine whether the city needs to do any modification to the roads before the race could take place, Barnes said.

Ryan O'Doherty, a spokesman for Mayor Stephanie C. Rawlings-Blake, said the survey could bring Baltimore one step closer to landing the high-profile, multiple-day auto race.

Baltimore Racing Development LLC envisions sponsoring the Indy Racing League event - including a main race with cars going at speeds up to 200 mph - starting in August 2011 and continuing annually for at least five years.

O'Doherty said the potential benefits of bringing the race to Baltimore outweigh any inconvenience during the three hours of the survey.

"It's a world-class event that brings global media exposure to the city and has a huge economic benefit for the city and the citizens of Baltimore," O'Doherty said. He said the city could realize \$60 million in economic gains over the five years of the race, as well as hundreds of full-time jobs and millions in city and state tax revenue.

Councilman William H. Cole IV, one of the prime advocates of bringing the race to Baltimore, said its impact could be bigger than that of a Preakness.

"This would fill every hotel room in the Baltimore metropolitan area for a four-day period," he said.

The route of the race would circle around the Convention Center and Inner Harbor hotel district from Light Street on the east to Russell Street on the west.

Jay Davidson, chief executive of Baltimore Racing Development, said his company envisions the Grand Prix as a three- to four-day event with multiple auto races, including a main event that would attract the top names in Indy-style racing.

O'Doherty and Davidson said the city and company are negotiating on how to share the costs of the survey.

Davidson said he hopes the company and city can wrap up a contract agreement by the end of this month. He said a final decision by the Indy Racing League on giving Baltimore the regional franchise could follow by another two or three weeks.

"They very much want this market," Davidson said. "They don't have anything in the Mid-Atlantic."