

We can do better next year

Abc2news.com., Sept. 6, 2011 The first ever Baltimore Grand Prix is in the books, and city officials say traffic should be back to normal after the Labor Day weekend holiday.

City and race officials are working to determine the economic impact of the race.

"As successful as it was this year, we can do better next year," said Councilman William Cole (D-11th), a long-time supporter of the Grand Prix.

Restaurants right on the course did huge business, but the results were uneven for businesses that were further away, like Light Street Cycles in Federal Hill.

"A lot of people stayed out of the city, regular shoppers, and I had the impression that most of the visitors were in this self enclosed area. It was a very self contained event," said Penny Troutner of Light Street Cycles.

That's something Councilman Cole says planners need to address. "When you're doing an event as large as this, everybody can make money," he said.

One issue he believes, potential customers might have been scared away by how bad the traffic could have been. "People automatically assumed that they would have a hard time getting downtown. As we all saw, getting in and out of the weekend wasn't the issue," he said.

One change to look for next year-- more pedestrian bridges around the race course. Planners say the size of the crowds overwhelmed them, and people often had to line up to cross the pedestrian bridges that were in place.

A good problem to have -- but one planners say has to be addressed.

"The bridges were based upon projected attendance and I think as everybody could tell the attendance was tremendous," said Dale Dillon, the general manager of the Baltimore Grand Prix.

The overall economic impact could take months to determine; but the city can easily measure three things -- the taxes it collects from admission to the event, parking taxes in the city, and the hotel taxes from the weekend.

There will be a news conference on Thursday to discuss those totals.