



June 16, 2020

Trif Alatzas
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
Baltimore Sun
300 E. Cromwell St.
Baltimore, MD 21230

Dear Mr. Alatzas:

On June 15, 2020, the Baltimore City Council voted to defund the Mounted Unit of the Baltimore City Police Department, the oldest, continuously operating Mounted Unit in the country. This Unit serves as ambassadors for the Police Department, performing the exact type of policing called for in the consent decree as well as recent reform packages.

Why do I care as the Director of the B&O Railroad Museum that the City Council voted to eliminate a unit that comprises a minor fraction (far less than 1%) of the Police Department's overall budget? For several important reasons. First, this Unit was poised to move into its new home, a recently constructed, privately funded, state-of-the-art equestrian facility located on the B&O Railroad Museum's property. Two years ago, following the Baltimore unrest, a lease was negotiated to move the Mounted Unit to the new Stable reflecting the City's interest in investing in the west side. Defunding the Mounted Unit at this point, unfortunately sends the signal that the City Council is no longer interested in west side investment or improvement.

Second, this \$3.5 million-dollar facility was supported by the State of Maryland, the private sector, and several philanthropic foundations. To date, the City of Baltimore has not contributed financially to the cost of constructing the Stable. In defunding the Unit and walking away from this project, the City is risking support from the same private donor pool for other citywide initiatives, which in the wake of COVID-19 becomes a particularly untenable risk.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, we believe the work the Mounted Unit does with the community and local children is exactly the type of work that is needed to change the culture. The Stables have been constructed with a classroom as a centerpiece so that neighboring children could have the opportunity to learn first-hand about equine studies, law enforcement, and transportation fields as potential career pathways, all while bonding with the Police. Please view this short video as proof of concept of the importance of this Unit <https://youtu.be/Xen4hptiWQs>.

We remain hopeful that the City Council will daylight its decision process, consider all of the facts and listen to its constituency. We thank Councilman John Bullock for his leadership on this issue and respectfully urge the City Council to reconsider its decision.

Sincerely,

Kris A. Hoellen
Executive Director
B&O Railroad Museum