

March 21, 2014

James T. Smith, Secretary
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Re: Mandatory Referrals for the Purple Line, Bethesda Metro Station South Entrance, Capital Crescent Trail, and Silver Spring Green Trail

The Planning Board reviewed the Mandatory Referral of the above projects at our regularly scheduled meeting on March 20, 2014 and approved them with comments to your agency, as well as the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). As you know, these projects are of statewide and regional importance and your assistance is requested to ensure a coordinated joint response by MTA and SHA, constituent agencies of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). The Board's comments are attached for your information.

While MTA is the overall sponsoring agency that has proposed to construct the four projects, this is a large and complex group of projects that requires funding from different sources and approvals from different agencies. Where an agency other than MTA is expected to be the decision-maker on a particular issue, that agency is specified in parenthesis at the end of the individual comment, but the comment should still be considered as guidance to MTA as to the preferred condition.

Many of the major station areas are on State highways and therefore the assistance of SHA is essential in achieving optimal pedestrian and bicyclist accommodation to these stations. Therefore, close coordination between MTA and SHA is needed, as well as input from MDOT's staff.

While the projects as currently designed are substantially consistent with the County's approved and adopted master plans, we believe that the pedestrian accommodation and station access in the project area must be improved to ensure the success of the Purple Line. A thorough review of this project in this regard is needed with the goal of meeting both AASHTO recommendations for pedestrian facilities and ADA Best Practices at a minimum. In commercial areas, a higher level of accommodation is required to ensure that transit patrons have safe and adequate access, that potential patrons are encouraged to use the Purple Line and justify the State's and County's significant investment in this facility, and to support and promote transit-oriented development. Needed improvements within the Purple Line corridor should be completed in the near term with the rail facility itself. Other longer term improvements are also likely needed to enhance station access, improvements that will require a partnership between SHA and MCDOT. It's important

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though that the latter improvements be identified to the extent possible and responsibility assigned so that construction can be expedited.

As a last general comment, while Montgomery County is providing substantial funding for the three projects that are associated with the Purple Line, coordination between SHA and MCDOT is also necessary to ensure that the traffic signalization prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle movement in station areas.

Thank you for your assistance in coordinating a joint response from MDOT. We request that responses to the individual Planning Board recommendations be provided to us within 45 days. If you have any questions or comments concerning our review, please do not hesitate to call me at 301-495-4605, or you may call David Anspacher at 301-495-2191.

Sincerely,

Françoise M. Carrier
Chair