



Prince George's County Planning Board
Montgomery County Planning Board

(301) 952-3560
(301) 495-4500
www.mncppc.org

December 4, 2014

The Honorable Larry Hogan, Jr.
Governor-Elect
Hogan Transition Office
Tawes State Office Building
580 Taylor Avenue
Annapolis, Maryland 21404

Dear Governor-Elect Hogan:

As you and your transition team work on a long-term plan for getting Maryland's economy back on track, we urge you to support the Purple Line in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. A decision to cancel—or even to delay—the Purple Line would be a serious mistake because:

- **The \$900 million federal contribution would be lost.** If the state cancels the project, the federal contribution would go to another New Starts transit project. In total, the state's contribution of between \$360 and \$760 million toward construction of the Purple Line would leverage \$1.6 billion to \$2 billion in private, local and federal funding. **This means that the debate over the Purple Line is not totally about roads versus transit.** If you cancel the project to build a bridge over the Chesapeake Bay or widen I-270, for example, any federal funding will come out of the state's highway aid allocation and reduce the money available for other road projects, not transit.
- **Decades of work and tens of millions already invested would be put to waste.** Almost three decades of planning and design and tens of millions of dollars from the state and local governments and private bidding consortia have been invested in the Purple Line, which is now poised to begin construction in 2015.
- **Transit is a critical recruitment and retention tool for businesses.** More than 80 percent of new employment growth in the DC suburbs occurs within walking distance of a Metrorail station. A 2011 study undertaken by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit authority (WMATA) found that 54 percent of all regional jobs are accessible within a half-mile of Metro stations. The Purple Line is especially important to establishing connections among major business, housing, and educational centers, tying the developed centers of Bethesda, Silver Spring, and New Carrollton to each other and to the University of Maryland.

- **Transit-oriented development generates superior returns on investment.** The economic benefits of transit are beyond dispute. Recent studies show that consumers are willing to pay more for housing in pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods near transit, and proximity to transit also raises the value of office and retail space.

For example, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) light rail system—the largest in the nation spurred billions of dollars in economic activity as it expanded over an 11-year period. A study conducted by the University of North Texas compared real estate near the DART stations to properties without a nearby station and found developments worth \$1.51 billion were completed around station areas compared to \$600 million in areas lacking transit access.

In completing the Purple Line, Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties would certainly reap similar rewards. In fact, the redevelopment of several older retail centers and adding thousands of jobs and units of housing – not to mention the ability to attract new residents— depend on the transit access provided by the Purple Line. Dozens of developers in our counties are standing by, waiting for the Purple Line to move forward. Montgomery County alone has five separate areas where development can be accommodated if—and only if—the Purple Line is built.

- **Local transportation priorities should be respected.** Traditionally, Democratic governors have deferred to local priorities when deciding how to spend state transportation funds. For example, when the state gas tax was raised, the O’Malley administration set aside funds for transit projects including the Purple Line but also allocated money to major roads and bridges in every part of the state. Allowing county governments to identify the most important initiatives for state backing is consistent with the idea that the people closest to the problem are in the best position to understand how to solve it.
- **Business confidence would be shaken.** In order to make decisions about the commitment of significant amounts of capital, businesses need to know that they can rely on government to follow through on its commitments. There are few projects that have been studied as intensively and debated at such length as the Purple Line. The alignment of the line, the choice of light rail over rapid bus as its mode, and every detail of its design have survived exhaustive scrutiny by community groups, residents and business owners, and transportation engineers.

A failure to follow through on the Purple Line after decades of technical analysis and political wrangling that have brought the project to the brink of approval would not only send exactly the wrong signal to enterprises that have made major commitments of resources to the Purple Line but would encourage endless delay tactics as a way to block future infrastructure projects. After being elected in 2006, Governor O’Malley was asked to reconsider support for the Intercountry Connector, which had been a top priority of Governor Ehrlich. The governor refused, recognizing that “the study of the ICC was one of the most comprehensive studies ever conducted involving a transportation project in Maryland.” The Purple Line is now in a similar position.

We know that money for the DC suburbs is a hard sell in some other parts of the state. But as appointed officials responsible for strengthening the key assets in our counties—particularly those assets needed to be competitive within the DC metro areas for jobs and residents in the future—we urge you to support the Purple Line as beneficial to the economic health of our region and state.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Chair
Prince George's County Planning Board
Chair, Maryland-National Capital Park
and Planning Commission



Casey Anderson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
Vice-Chair, Maryland-National Capital Park
and Planning Commission

cc: Transition Team:

Anirban Basu

Joseph M. Getty

Nancy S. Grasmick

Blair Lee IV

Martin Madden

Alexander Williams, Jr.

*Looking forward to
working w/you on this
matter along w/additional
matters of mutual interest.
Wishing you the BEST as you
enter your new realm!
Bests,
B.*