



ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 22, Number 4, November 2008

ACT's monthly meetings are held at 7:30 PM, the second Tuesday of each month, at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Avenue (near the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Spring Street), in the Woodside Conference Room.

The Silver Spring Center is a ten minute walk north of the Silver Spring Metro Station; it is a two-block walk from the nearest Ride-On #5 stop; and, the Metrobus "Q" and "Y" routes pass in front of the Center.

For meeting updates check our website listed on pg. 4.

Dec 9: Wilbur Smith Consultants -
"Urban Transit Integration"

Why We Need the Purple Line

Quon Kwan

The existing transportation system (e.g., Metrorail system) is oriented to travel in the radial direction between downtown Washington, DC and the suburbs. Changing land uses in the Washington metropolitan area have resulted in more circumferential travel from suburb to suburb. In terms of suburb-to suburb road travel, the National Capital Beltway is certainly congested at peak hours. The only suburb-to-suburb transit service is bus, which is slow and unreliable because it operates on congested roads, such as University Blvd., or East-West Hwy. There is no efficient, reliable, high capacity transit between Bethesda and New Carrollton. The Purple Line would fill this need.

In addition, the Purple Line would provide east-west connectivity to the radial Metrorail lines (Red, Green, and Orange) as well as to the MARC Commuter Rail lines

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THE PURPLE LINE ISSUE

This special edition of Transit Times is dedicated to discussing the recently released Alternative Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) for the Purple Line

3 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT THE PURPLE LINE!

- 1 - Send written comments** expressing your support for a light rail Purple Line to the Maryland Transit Administration. The comment period runs until January 14, 2009.
Email: purpleline@mtamaryland.com
On-line: www.purplelinemd.com
Mail: Diane Ratcliff, Maryland Transit Administration,
6 St. Paul Street, 9th floor, Baltimore, MD 21202
- 2 - Sign the Purple Line Petition** at <http://citizen-networks.org/campaign/purplelinepetition>
- 3 - Volunteer with ACT's planned Metro leafleting** Dec. 9, 10, 11 (Tues. - Thrus.) to get the word out. Send an email to actfortransit@mail.org or call Cindy at 240-308-1209 to volunteer. We need you.

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(Brunswick, Camden, and Penn) and to Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor intercity trains.

The Purple Line would provide in the corridor enhanced transportation choices, improved travel times, improved air quality, and reduced traffic (in terms of reduced congestion, auto trips, and vehicle miles traveled). Furthermore, it would support local plans for economic development, community revitalization, and transit-oriented development.

MTA Releases AA/DEIS for Purple Line

Quon Kwan

What is the importance of an AA/DEIS?

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released for public review and comment, the Alternative Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Analysis (AA/DEIS) for the Purple Line on Oct. 17.

The AA/DEIS is critical to decision-making in selecting one of the alternatives as the locally preferred alternative for Federal funding and for final design of, right-of-way acquisition for, and construction of the Purple Line.

Where and what is the Purple Line?

The Purple Line corridor is a major east-west transitway between Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties that lies inside the National Capital Beltway linking Bethesda and New Carrollton and includes highly significant activity or central business districts: Bethesda, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Langley Park, University of Maryland College Park campus, College Park, Riverdale Park, and New Carrollton. The Purple Line would be the circumferential transitway that connects Metrorail stations at Bethesda, Silver Spring, College Park, and New Carrollton.

What Alternatives Are Analyzed?

The AA/DEIS evaluates and compares six build alternatives against a baseline, dubbed the “no-build” and a slightly better alternative called the “transportation systems management” (TSM) alternative. The TSM alternative is improved bus service between Bethesda and New Carrollton over the existing Metrobus F4, F6, and J4 routes. The improved bus service would consist of limited stops, selected intersection upgrades, and signal priority.

The build alternatives for the Purple Line consist of two modes: bus rapid transit and light rail transit. Each of the two modes has three variations:

low investment, medium investment, and high investment. Thus, there are six total build alternatives, which are discussed in more detail later.

What Information is contained in the AA/DEIS?

The AA/DEIS for the Purple Line consists of a preface, executive summary, and six chapters covering:

1. Purpose and Need
2. Alternatives Considered
3. Transportation and Traffic
4. Environmental Resources, Impacts, and Mitigation
5. Costs and Funding
6. Evaluation of Alternatives

What Should I Read in the AA/DEIS?

Although this newsletter briefly summarizes the AA/DEIS, more information can be obtained by reading the 14-page executive summary. For the adventurous who want more information, you may want to delve into one or more of the six chapters of the AA/DEIS.

For the even more ambitious, highly detailed technical reports are available on specific subjects: air quality, capital cost, energy, operating/maintenance cost, socioeconomics, traffic analysis, and travel demand forecasting.

How Do I Get A Copy of the AA/DEIS or a Technical Report?

A portable document file (pdf) may be downloaded from www.purplelinemd.com. Compact discs read-only-memory (CD-ROM) containing the AA/DEIS may be ordered free of charge from the same website. Hardcopies are available for reading at the public libraries in the Purple Line corridor - Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Long Branch, Silver Spring, and Takoma Park).

The Alternatives for the Purple Line

Quon Kwan

Two mode alternatives are proposed for the Purple Line: bus rapid transit (BRT) and light rail transit (LRT). For each of the two modes, there are three variations: low investment, medium investment, and high investment.

Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a mode that uses high-capacity buses operated in limited-stop service. Stops would be at specifically identified stations with amenities.

Low investment BRT would operate primarily on existing roads shared with traffic (e.g., Jones Bridge Rd.) and minimally on dedicated bus lanes or exclusive rights of way (e.g., Georgetown Branch east of Jones Mill Rd.). Of course, this alternative has the lowest ridership, benefits, and costs (capital and operating/maintenance). It has a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) cost-effectiveness rating of medium (this rating is important for receiving Federal funding).

Medium investment BRT would operate on some existing roads shared with traffic, and more on dedicated bus lanes and exclusive rights of way (e.g., Georgetown Branch east of Air Rights Bldg.) This alternative has more ridership, benefits, and capital costs than low investment BRT. However, medium investment BRT has about the same operating/maintenance cost as for low investment BRT. It has a FTA cost-effectiveness rating of medium.

High investment BRT would operate almost entirely in dedicated bus lanes and exclusive rights of way (e.g., Georgetown Branch east of Air Rights Bldg.). It includes aerial structures and tunnels in congested areas (such as Silver Spring, University of Maryland campus, and Riverdale Park). This alternative has more ridership, benefits, and capital costs than the medium investment BRT. However, the high investment BRT has a lower operating/maintenance cost than either medium- or low-investment BRT. FTA's cost-effectiveness rating is medium.

Light Rail Transit

Light rail transit is an electric railway system characterized by its ability to operate single cars or short trains. All LRT alternatives would run on the entire Georgetown Branch.

Low investment LRT would be mostly street-running, at-grade rail shared with traffic. Except for the Silver Spring/Thayer design option, it would operate in tunnels and bridges only where the topography poses grades that are too steep (e.g., from Wayne Ave. east of Manchester Rd. to Arliss St. and under Adelphi Rd. at University Bl.). This particular LRT alternative has nearly the same ridership as, more benefits than, is slightly higher in capital cost, and has much higher operating/maintenance cost than high investment BRT. FTA's cost-effectiveness rating is low-medium.

Medium investment LRT would be in dedicated or exclusive lanes with some key areas grade-separated (i.e., tunnels or bridges). The medium investment LRT is generally the same as low investment LRT from Bethesda to Silver Spring except for a bridge crossing Connecticut Ave. This particular LRT alternative has about the same ridership as, more benefits than, is slightly higher in capital cost than, and has a lower operating/maintenance cost than low investment LRT. FTA's cost-effectiveness rating is medium.

High investment LRT is nearly the same as medium investment LRT except that it would operate almost entirely in exclusive lanes. This particular LRT alternative has the highest ridership, most user benefits, and highest capital cost of all the alternatives. Its operating/maintenance costs are between high investment BRT and low investment LRT. FTA's cost-effectiveness rating is medium.

Conclusion

The LRT alternatives are better than the BRT alternatives in achieving the mobility objectives: travel time reduction, ridership, attracting new trips to transit, reducing trips by car, and reducing vehicle miles traveled by car. Although all the LRT alternatives are more expensive than BRT alternatives, all LRT (except for one) and BRT alternatives have the same FTA cost-effectiveness rating of medium. In consideration of all these factors, **it is recommended that ACT members support LRT, especially the medium- or high-investment LRT alternative as the locally preferred alternative.**



Transit Times

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I want to support the Action Committee for
Transit efforts to get the Purple Line built.

Enclosed is a contribution of \$_____.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ Zip_____

Email_____

Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is **December 9**. Send your materials to Quon at: **qykwang@gmail.com** (note new email address) or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

ACT Officers/Staff for 2008:

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SAVE THE DATE - TUESDAY, JAN. 13
ACT ANNUAL MEETING & ELECTIONS

www.actfortransit.org