

## **The Purple Line is "transit that hurts transit" - five truths that you need to know about the Purple Line and why it is fiscally and environmentally irresponsible**

The Purple Line is transit that hurts transit, according to Frank Lysy, a former Chief Economist of the World Bank Group ([www.aneconomicsense.org](http://www.aneconomicsense.org).) and an expert in the lawsuit by Friends of the Capital Crescent Trail in which the federal court, on August 3, 2016, ordered suspension of the Purple Line pending further review<sup>1</sup>.

The Purple Line:

### **1) ROBBS PETER TO PAY PAUL / CANNIBALIZES MARYLAND AND COUNTY BUDGETS AND PROGRAMS INCLUDING TRANSIT:**

The Purple Line is transit that hurts transit. Not only does the Purple Line tie up funding and resources that could instead be made available for **Metro**<sup>2</sup>, but the Purple Line also forces cuts in State and County transit and congestion relief programs.

- MTA has disclosed that **MARC** train fare revenues will be used to pay for Purple Line debt, thus jeopardizing the capital building and repair plans of the entire regional MARC train system. <sup>3</sup>
- In 2015, already, MTA has diverted federal funds that had been obtained to make improvements to reduce **bus** travel times on University Blvd, Veirs Mill Rd., and parts of East West Hwy, and instead used those funds to plug cost overruns for the Langley Transit Center (a transit center that would be one of the Purple Line stops). Thus, MTA is depriving transit users along this corridor of the mobility improvements they could have had today. As one transit user told Delegate Al Carr (Maryland District 18) about this diversion: " I wish our government could be more pro-active in using the solutions that are readily at hand (such as adjusting signal timing) to optimize the infrastructure that we already have."

### **2) WILL COST TAXPAYERS BILLIONS / TAKES THE TAXPAYERS FOR A RIDE:**

Far from negotiating a true and responsible Public Private Partnership in which the private party bears at least some of the risk, Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)'s Pete Rahn and Governor Hogan have continued in Governor O'Malley's fiscally irresponsible tracks<sup>4</sup> with this project and in 2016 signed a **\$5.6 billion dollar contract**<sup>5</sup>, one of the largest such contracts in the nation. The contract commits Maryland to pay the Purple Line private consortium \$150 million each year in "availability payments" throughout the 30-year duration of the contract -- even if the riders don't show up.

3) CREATES NEARLY 40% DE FACTO INCREASE IN MARYLAND DEBT:

**The \$4.5 billion alone for which Maryland is directly responsible in the \$5.6 billion dollar Purple Line contract, constitutes a nearly 40% increase in fixed obligations, or de facto debt – one of the largest in Maryland history.** The costs of the Purple Line are not limited to that contract, and are likely to increase. Meanwhile, fare revenue from fares to pay the Purple Line “availability payments” over the next 36 years, remain questionable. Even under the State’s overly optimistic ridership forecasts fare revenue would cover only about 30% of the costs of the guaranteed payments to the private concessionaire. And, remember, the private concessionaire will be paid even if the riders don’t show up.

4) WILL NOT TAKE CARS OFF THE ROAD OR ALLEVIATE TRAFFIC CONGESTION:

MTA itself admits that **most Purple Line riders would already be transit users<sup>6</sup>** and, **thus, the Purple Line is not designed to address congestion** or take cars off the road. In addition, the Purple Line’s east-west route (on roads like University Blvd) fails to address Montgomery County's highest congestion priorities and most congested roadways, which run north-south according to county studies (including MD-355 Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Ave and MD185 Connecticut Ave )<sup>7</sup>.

5) WILL NOT HELP THE ENVIRONMENT, NOR SERVE PEOPLE WHO NEED TRANSIT THE MOST

The very reason why federal law requires an environmental impact statement - and a full and fair assessment of alternatives - before federal funds or permits can be granted for projects like the Purple Line, is that such projects can have significant, damaging, permanent costs and impacts on public health and the environment. In this case, the Purple Line would clear-cut 48 acres of forest including about 20 acres of forest buffer along the Georgetown Branch section of the Capital Crescent Trail which runs from Bethesda to and through Rock Creek park, and beyond. The project would generate stormwater runoff that cannot be fully contained onsite and could carry pollutants and possible hazardous materials from mid- to high- risk sites <sup>8</sup> along the route, flowing into the Rock Creek and Anacostia watersheds.

Meanwhile - at half of the *operating cost* of the Purple Line - and avoiding this environmental harm, bus services could be provided for free in the County, spurring further transit use and serving those who need transit the most.<sup>9</sup>

Rev December 2016

See Endnotes and references on next page

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<sup>1</sup> See the federal judge's August 3, 2016 order suspending the Purple Line pending additional review: [https://ecf.dcd.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/show\\_public\\_doc?2014cv1471-96](https://ecf.dcd.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/show_public_doc?2014cv1471-96). See [www.savethetrail.org](http://www.savethetrail.org) for more about Friends of the Capital Crescent Trail and lawsuit.

<sup>2</sup> The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) may not fund a new fixed-rail project, such as the Purple Line, unless there are sufficient financial and technical resources to repair, maintain and operate the region's existing transportation network without any decrease in service. (49 U.S.C. §5309(f)). Failure to demonstrate compliance with this provision of federal transportation law is one of many claims in the federal lawsuit that has currently suspended the Purple Line.

<sup>3</sup> Washington Post, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/maryland-will-use-marc-fare-revenue-to-pay-purple-line-debt-officials-say/2016/04/04/7f2fa850-fa8f-11e5-80e4-c381214de1a3\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/maryland-will-use-marc-fare-revenue-to-pay-purple-line-debt-officials-say/2016/04/04/7f2fa850-fa8f-11e5-80e4-c381214de1a3_story.html)

<sup>4</sup> Wall Street Journal, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/mary-anastasia-ograde-marylands-incredible-purple-people-mover-1403910560>

<sup>5</sup> Washington Post, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/maryland-board-scheduled-to-vote-wednesday-on-56-billion-purple-line-contract/2016/04/06/7a397f82-fb44-11e5-9140-e61d062438bb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/maryland-board-scheduled-to-vote-wednesday-on-56-billion-purple-line-contract/2016/04/06/7a397f82-fb44-11e5-9140-e61d062438bb_story.html)

<sup>6</sup> Plaintiffs Brief, pages 11, 12, 13, citing Administrative Record for the case, [https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://savethetrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Friends-et-al.-Supp.-Memo-June-29-2016.pdf&hl=en\\_US](https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://savethetrail.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Friends-et-al.-Supp.-Memo-June-29-2016.pdf&hl=en_US)

<sup>7</sup> See Table 5, Top 25 Congested Roadways, page 26 of the Montgomery County 2014 Mobility Assessment Report [http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/documents/Mobility%20Assessment%20Report%202014%20-%20\(6-3-2014\).pdf](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/documents/Mobility%20Assessment%20Report%202014%20-%20(6-3-2014).pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See MTA map of hazardous materials sites on the Purple Line route, page 66, in <http://savethetrail.org/resources/stormwater-runoff-and-water-pollution-from-the-purple-line-report/> PCBs are so toxic they were banned in the United States in 1979. According to EPA, today, PCBs can still be released into the environment from: Poorly maintained hazardous waste sites that contain PCBs; Illegal or improper dumping of PCB wastes; Leaks or releases from electrical transformers containing PCBs; and other sources. "The types of PCBs that tend to bioaccumulate in fish and other animals and bind to sediments happen to be the most carcinogenic components of PCB mixtures." <https://www.epa.gov/pcbs/learn-about-polychlorinated-biphenyls-pcbs#healtheffects>

<sup>9</sup> <https://aneconomicsense.org/2014/09/28/the-high-cost-of-the-purple-line-light-rail-transit-project-free-bus-service-would-be-cheaper-for-everyone-and-provide-a-better-service/>