



## COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

---

### Testimony in **Support** of Medium Light Rail Alternative Connecting Downtown Bethesda and New Carrollton

Before the Transportation Policy Board  
by Rebecca Perring  
May 20, 2009

Good afternoon. My name is Rebecca Perring and I am testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. We are a regional organization founded in 1997 by this region's leading conservation groups, and work in Maryland, DC and Virginia. We are focused on ensuring transportation and development decisions are made with genuine community involvement and accommodate growth while revitalizing communities, providing more housing and travel choices, and conserving our natural and historic areas.

We strongly support the medium light rail alternative directly connecting downtown Bethesda with Silver Spring, Langley Park to New Carrollton. We urge the TPB to move forward with analyzing the Purple Line light rail project and incorporating it into the CLRP.

Purple Line light rail is a cost-effective way to move the most people in the shortest time, divert more auto traffic, reduce energy consumption, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The classic Chesapeake Bay Foundation report, Network of Livable Communities, demonstrated that a network of transit and transit-oriented development would significantly reduce driving and traffic, while also reducing the loss of land, forests and filtering so necessary for saving the Bay.

The Purple Line is an important transportation investment for our region. The investment in light rail will help anchor our older communities, enhance property values, and bring new housing and business opportunities. The permanency of high quality light rail on this alignment will foster job growth in Silver Spring and Prince George's County, while connecting workers to jobs in Bethesda and the Red Line Corridor -- creating an option that will reduce traffic.

We also recognize the impact of transit investments on communities like Langley Park. Improved transit service will help workers get to jobs and expand business opportunities. Increased investment generated by improved transit can also displace renters and small businesses. While we support redevelopment, we believe it is critical for the county and state to commit to strengthening polices and provide additional resources to preserve affordable housing and assist local businesses.

We ask the TPB to expedite this process to ensure that the Purple Line is a key priority in the CLRP. The high quality light rail service offers great benefits to the community and our region in terms of transportation choices and speed, energy efficiency and emissions reduction, and economic development. The Purple Line light rail should be a top priority for Montgomery County, Maryland and our region.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



RICHARD S. MADALENO, JR.  
STATE SENATOR  
18th Legislative District  
Montgomery County

Budget and Taxation Committee



*The Senate of Maryland*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

May 20, 2009

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board  
777 North Capitol Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20002-4226

**Re: Item 12 - Proposed Amendment to the 2009 Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) to include the Purple Line Light Rail Project in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties**

Dear Members of the Transportation Planning Board:

As the State Senator representing the community that will be hardest hit by a light rail alignment of the Purple Line, I wanted to use this opportunity to share with you a dissenting opinion on the merits of this project, including this amendment to the CLRP.

I have attached the testimony I submitted at the public hearings on the Purple Line held in November, but I would like to reiterate a few points today about why this project will not be a boon for the region as it has been billed. The proposed Purple Line will not take cars off of the beltway and will instead pull riders from buses that currently serve the east-west corridors of the region. In doing so, it will also destroy what has become a lush, urban greenspace along the Capital Crescent Trail.

At a time when state governments are under tremendous fiscal strain, funding large transit projects will be next to impossible. We need to be responsible officials and see to the maintenance of our existing transit system and only make investments in system expansion when prudent.

I also question the wording of the amendment which, as written, incorporates the Purple Line project into the CLRP as a light rail line only. I would note that Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley has not specifically endorsed the light rail option for the project and that the Bus Rapid Transit Alternative remains viable.

I understand that this project is already included in the CLRP as a transit link between Silver Spring and Bethesda, but I would encourage you to revisit your support for a project whose benefits will be negligible in the face of large environmental and fiscal impacts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Madaleno".

Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.

16)  
□ Annapolis Office  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 203  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
301-858-3137  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3137  
Richard.Madaleno@senate.state.md.us

□ District Office  
11117 Dewey Road  
Kensington, Maryland 20895  
301-933-5212



RICHARD S. MADALENO, JR.  
STATE SENATOR  
18th Legislative District  
Montgomery County

Budget and Taxation Committee



☐ Annapolis Office  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 203  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
301-858-3137  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3137  
Richard.Madaleno@senate.state.md.us

☐ District Office  
11117 Dewey Road  
Kensington, Maryland 20895  
301-933-5212

*The Senate of Maryland*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Statement by Sen. Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.  
Presented at AA/DEIS Purple Line Hearing  
November 18, 2008**

During the course of my 20 years in and around the General Assembly, I have seen and heard all of the arguments for and against the Purple Line. After many years of discussion, planning, and community outreach, I still have very serious reservations about this project, from a fiscal standpoint, from an operational standpoint, and with regards to the effects it will have on the communities in our region.

It is no secret that our state, like every other, is facing a severe economic downturn from the global financial crisis. With the end of this crisis nowhere in sight, our state will have to make some very serious decisions on our transportation priorities. Our transportation infrastructure across the state requires serious attention and dwindling gas tax and titling tax revenues, combined with this economic downturn, will severely restrict our spending on many worthwhile projects.

Quite frankly, the state does not have the resources to pay for any of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or Light Rail Transit (LRT) options. Over the past decade, the only major new construction projects the state has moved forward with have been funded primarily with toll-backed revenue bonds. There are no alternative funding mechanisms available for this project. As a member of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, I feel confident in reporting that no new revenue options appear politically feasible in the foreseeable future.

Because there are, at best, limited state funds available for this project, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) assumes a local contribution but does not suggest what shape or size that it may be. I think it is irresponsible for the state to propose this project without informing either local county government of what its share might be. I would also note that no local government in the Baltimore region has been asked to make a direct contribution towards the construction or maintenance of their light rail system. Questions about the state's ability to pay should alone prevent the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) from allowing this project to move forward.

It was only a little over a year ago that the state of Minnesota saw a major bridge collapse during the evening rush hour, killing 13 people. This summer, a serious accident on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge led to the discovery of corrosion on the bridge's steel reinforcements, requiring emergency repair. It is clear that other bridges, overpasses, and tunnels in our state will require expensive maintenance in the future.



AA/DEIS Purple Line Hearing Statement  
Sen. Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.  
November 18, 2008  
Page two

From a statewide perspective, this transportation project would take the lion's share of transportation investment money for the foreseeable future. The estimated price tag on the high investment light rail transit is nearly \$2 billion. Even with very optimistic ridership numbers, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is estimating a daily load of 34,000 round trip riders, of which, 27,200 – 80 percent – will be drawn from some other form of mass transit. Are the remaining 6,800 new riders enough to justify the cost of the system, which at nearly \$2 billion, works out to roughly \$294,000 per rider new to mass transit? It would be cheaper to buy these 6,800 people new residences closer to their jobs.

The communities that will be impacted by this project, in whatever form it takes, will also undoubtedly be changed forever. As a frequent patron and supporter of the Capital Crescent Trail, I am disturbed by the potential impact a light rail line would have on this tract of parkland. MTA has provided many artists' renderings of what the trail would look like with the rail line, but has avoided the most glaring part of this equation: most of the trees and accompanying tree canopy would have to be removed to accommodate a large set of wires. The trail would never be the same and would never be able to thrive as it does now.

Personally, I find MTA's comments about the trail highly disingenuous. The construction of the LRT alternatives will devastate the trail. It is clear that light rail and heavy forestation do not work well together. Ironically, today's *Baltimore Sun* reports that the northern half of the Baltimore light rail system has been shutdown indefinitely as falling leaves are creating unsafe conditions on the tracks. The *Sun* reports that this problem is on the section of the line that "follows a narrow, old railroad right of way along the Jones Falls Expressway through forested parkland." The same design problems exist here. To limit potential tree and leaf damage to both the overhead wires and tracks, MTA will have to continually trim the trees that border the right-of-way. A once green and enjoyable park facility will be irreparably destroyed. While this point alone may not be reason enough to stop the LRT or BRT alternatives, the government should be upfront with its citizens about the impact of this decision. Trivializing the impacts along the trail has done immeasurable harm to the reputation of this proposed project.

Beyond today's operating problems caused by leaves, MTA has a checkered history planning and operating light rail. The Baltimore system, after nearly 20 years of operation, has realized less than half of the ridership MTA estimated during construction. The light rail line has become a money pit with the state having to subsidize roughly 75% of its operating costs. The MTA Administrator during the Glendening Administration once testified that he would close it if it were not for the capital costs already sunk in it. The Baltimore light rail line does not attract riders because it is not interchangeable with the pre-existing heavy rail line and moves slowly along city streets. Yet, MTA is proposing making the same billion dollar mistake again. Light rail is not currently a part of the highly successful Washington Metro system. LRT will require new cars, new maintenance facilities, and new mechanics that can never be integrated with our existing system unlike the new rail extension currently under



AA/DEIS Purple Line Hearing Statement  
Sen. Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.  
November 18, 2008  
Page three

construction in Northern Virginia. And, in many places along the proposed LRT alignment, the trains will be slowed by operation on roads. This will not be an effective or efficient use of federal, state, or local taxpayers' money.

With little chance to expand on the current heavy rail system, I think it is clear that buses are the future of transit expansion in this metropolitan region. While the state includes new and denser development as a potential benefit of the LRT alternatives, there is no guarantee any of this development would occur. Decades after opening, many of the existing Metro stations lack new or dense development. Building it will not, as they say, ensure that "they will come."

Greatly improved and expanded bus service will best serve the development and commuter patterns of our region. On this point I would note that the TSM alternative provides more than a third of the benefit with less than a tenth of the cost of the high investment LRT. For decades we have overlooked and under-invested in bus transit in our region. With roughly half of the cost of the state's share in the LRT alternatives, we could probably divert more single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips than estimated in the DEIS. My colleagues and I have focused too much time and attention on high-profile potential rail projects and not enough on sensible bus improvements. An investment in new vehicles and new technology could make buses much more attractive to commuters. We need to expand bus transit into less dense existing and growing communities outside the Beltway more than we need to sink billions into transit to support a dreamlike vision of future high-density communities.

In the headquarters of the Baltimore Jewish Charities is a sign proclaiming "Our parents built for us; we build for our children." This sentiment briefly but profoundly summarizes the feelings most of us have about our wonderful community and region. We were granted a world-class subway system by our farsighted "parents"- the leaders and activists of the 1950's, 60's and 70's. We now wish to leave our children with a similar legacy. While many understandably believe this Purple Line proposal is worthy of this goal, I believe it has too many shortcomings, too many unanswered questions, and too many optimistic assumptions to move forward. In the end, I fear its only legacy will be yet one more unpaid bill left to our children. Instead, we should leave them a flexible, efficient, user-friendly, and affordable bus network that can more easily adjust to future needs and challenges.

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
Transportation Planning Board Meeting  
May 20, 2009  
Public Testimony – 12:00 to 12:20pm

I frequently use the Capital Crescent Trail as both a walker and a cyclist. It's a very pleasant walk of about an hour to downtown Bethesda from my house in Forest Glen Park and a regular weekend activity. I also cycle on the trail as my primary exercise route and for quick shopping trips to Bethesda, which is actually faster than driving. When I realized how much the Purple Line Rail threatens its existence, I started noticing the number of people who use it as I do. Many walkers and cyclists are carrying not just water bottles and trail snacks, but backpacks, briefcases, and grocery bags. I'm still amazed at the number of people I see on it regardless of the time of day. I'm a casual user of the Rock Creek Trail between Lake Needwood and the DC line, and I've never seen the density of people anywhere along it, including the section near my house, that I do on the Capital Crescent Trail.

The trail draws people from all over the community. I've lived in Montgomery County for eighteen years and have many friends and colleagues from all over the MD/DC/VA region. Since I started using the trail regularly in July, I've seen many of them more regularly there than I have anywhere else. I run into someone I know every other week at least.

The sense of community and the obvious health benefits from being a frequent trail user will disappear completely if the Purple Line route uses the trail. Since so many trees will be cut down and the trail will be so close to the light rail, people will no longer want to take an afternoon stroll on a shadeless, barren path next to a noisy transit way. It might still be useable as a commuter cycling route, but only if it remains as wide as it is now and without stairs or rail crossings. As much of the current trail is along very narrow and very high earth berms, I cannot imagine that both a trail and a light rail can use the existing trail bed alone. Consequently, I fear the trail will either become extremely narrow or sacrificed altogether in places where it would be prohibitively expensive or impossible to construct wider berms.

Christopher Maines  
9528 Ament Street  
Silver Spring MD 20910



Testimony, Bonnie Naradzay, Silver Spring, MD resident

To the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board: Have you ridden your bicycle or walked or jogged from Silver Spring along the Capital Crescent Trail to Bethesda and then on downtown Washington DC and back again? If not, would you all please do so before deciding whether to replace it with the Purple Line? Make no mistake, closing down the Trail for a number of years and constructing the Purple Line in its place will irreversibly end this down-county green space and hiker/jogger and bicyclist friendly connector.

I've lived in Silver Spring for over thirty years. I'm 64 years old. I live near the intersection of Forest Glen and Georgia Avenue. For untold years, I've biked to Bethesda as well as commuted to work in downtown Washington DC -- using the Capitol Crescent Trail's important link between Silver Spring and Bethesda -- to get everywhere. It's a joy and a blessing.

To my mind, regional transportation planning must include systems for safe bike trails for commuting, and the Capitol Crescent Trail link from Silver Spring to Bethesda is unique for people like me who can't afford to live in Bethesda. Traditionally the lower eastern part of Montgomery County has gotten short shrift from county officials when it comes to protecting existing green space. Call it demographics, but I would hope that you use your power to promote bicycling as the greenest means of commuting.

I note that you're applying for Recovery Act funds for a bus project. Are you also applying for Recovery Act funds for adding to and improving bicycle commuter routes?

Just as this Trail is important to tens of thousands of Trail users, it is important to me. When my two children were growing up, they rode the Capitol Crescent trail with me as well. My daughter, when she worked downtown, rode her bike on the Trail to get downtown. Now you're threatening to close it down for years to tear it up and destroy our quality of life as "green" commuters. I've seen the artist's fanciful mock-up of how the trail is envisioned when the Purple Line is finally installed, at great cost. If you've used this trail, you'll know that illustration of a sunken single track and narrow sides for two-way commuting by both bicycle and tram is not feasible.

This trail that links Silver Spring to downtown Bethesda is a precious heritage and a legacy. Running trains adjacent to a narrow bike lane would destroy this legacy. Help us to preserve this natural green corridor, and our diminishing quality of life.

Please protect lower Montgomery County from further ravaging and flawed decision processes that imperil our irreplaceable greenspaces, especially since doing so is a stated priority for the County Council. There's a larger picture here. We can build the Purple Line as an elevated tram over or adjacent to an existing roadway, but there's only one route for this part of the Capital Crescent Trail. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.



**Statement of Matthew Moskitis  
To National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board  
May 20, 2009**

Based on news reports, the Peak Period Freeway Congestion Report that we will learn more about today confirms what many have observed in the past, which is that higher unemployment is one way to lower peak hour congestion.

And based on news reports, the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance offers the following observations.

First, higher energy costs and higher unemployment are not exactly the building blocks for higher prosperity and a better quality of life. Paying more for fuel and moving more people from automobiles to unemployment lines are not causes for celebration.

Second, while recent public transit ridership increases *are* cause for celebration, the TPB's 2008 Household survey reminds us that 94% of daily trips in this region still occur by means other than public transit.

Third, despite this report's findings, a survey of area residents is likely to find that for most people congestion continues to get worse, especially on weekends.

Fourth, I-66 congestion continues to be severe, particularly eastbound, which is why new lanes, not just spot improvements, are needed in both directions.

Fifth, American Legion Bridge congestion continues to be severe which is why additional Potomac River bridges are required.

No doubt this report will provide spin opportunities for all parties in the transportation debate. And that's important at some level because spin is very much a regional growth industry.

However, our region substitutes spin for substance at its peril.

Substantively, demographic and economic projections assume the transportation infrastructure necessary to support them is in place in the future.

Substantively we know this is not currently the case here. The Constrained Long Range Plan and the CLRP supplemented by numerous land use and transit scenarios tested in the nearly decade-long Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study are clearly inadequate to support the Cooperative Jobs Forecast as well as various rosy economic forecasts issued from time to time.

As things stand now, inadequate transportation infrastructure will make this region less attractive to many future leading edge industries and employers.

Absent greater investment in regional capacity and improved intra-regional connectivity outside the Beltway where most people will live and work, future congestion may well be less than projected, but so will future prosperity and quality of life.



PUBLIC COMMENT  
5/20/09

JOSEPH KENARY

April 21, 2009

Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1707 Longworth Building  
Washington, DC 20515-2008

Purple Line

Dear Mr. Van Hollen:

I write to express my concern and displeasure with the proposed taking of the Capital Crescent Trail for construction of the Purple Line to Bethesda. You have heard and reheard all the arguments for and against the proposal, but in talking to people, I have expressed two thoughts that I have never heard expressed by others, and, when I raise them, the response is something like, "Gee, I never thought about it that way".

These are my thoughts:

First, can you imagine a surface rail line, for the fine purpose of getting people to and from downtown DC ---- through Rock Creek Park? Unthinkable. Better that people walk, drive, or find other means. And the Park would be minimally affected. The Trail, though smaller, is just as precious and unreplaceable a resource for our citizens.

Second, imagine a Purple Line overpass over the 8400 block of Connecticut Avenue, say, about 20-25 feet above the Avenue. Can you think of any other grand avenue in Washington or its near environs defaced by such an eyesore? I can only think of the bridges of the old rail line which preceded the Trail, passing over 16<sup>th</sup> Street, River Road and Mass. Avenue. But that's because the railroad came in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, before the people arrived. Oh, and then there's the congestion of a station at Connecticut Avenue, with its pickups and drop-offs, but that's a whole other issue.

I ask that you think, think, think -- and imagine -- the permanent defacement and damage ignored in the plodding bureaucratic process that has inched this project forward. Ignoring the "forest", so to speak.

I ask that, if you agree, please use your standing and your well-regarded judgment to redirect this thoughtless enterprise to another route.

Sincerely,

8511 Longfellow Place  
Chevy Chase, MD



My name is Yvonne Finnegan and I live in Kensington, MD. I am here to testify against putting the Purple Line along the Capital Crescent Trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring.

Like tens of thousands of Trail users, I use this Trail all the time. I am a runner, and I bike and I walk. Exercise and the rejuvenating effects of the outdoors are very important to me.

The Trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring is a crucial link in the 20-mile loop that distance runners and bikers use, going from Bethesda down to Georgetown, back up Rock Creek Park and joining the Georgetown Branch portion of the Capital Crescent Trail back to Bethesda. Without this link, our 100+ member training groups are running on the roads—sidewalks are lacking in many areas.

This portion of the trail is particularly quiet and beautiful, lined with very tall, mature trees.

Please come run on the trail with me for those three and a half miles--or just walk--and you will understand why sticking a light rail here is unconscionable.

I wish you could see what I see on my runs. I see a very old gentleman who takes his walk daily, slowly progressing with his walker; he always smiles. I see families with very small children riding their bikes--the dangers here are few, the families can relax. I see people walking their dogs. I see people running, people power-walking, people talking, sitting on benches. I see birds and squirrels and the occasional tortoise.

But there is so much more that I don't see: the oxygen that the trees provide; the lower temperatures that the foliage provides in the summer; the animals that keep a low profile.

Is all this to be sacrificed for a Purple Line that will cost \$1.68 billion dollars as now projected, and probably more?

We can put transit in many places. But we have very few beautiful, continuous Trails like the Capital Crescent Trail. Please say no to the plan to put the Purple Line along the Capital Crescent Trail.

Generations to come will thank you, just like we thank Justice William O. Douglas for saving the tow path along the Potomac River. Thank you.

Yvonne Finnegan  
10903 Orleans Way  
Kensington, MD 20895  
yfinnegan@aol.com  
240-447-6331