

**Town of Chevy Chase  
Purple Line Mitigation Advisory Group Meeting  
with  
Maryland Transit Administration**

**Thursday, January 7, 2010**

**Minutes by John Burnes**

Group Members Present: Mary Anne Hoffman, Chair; Pat Burda, Council Liaison; Jacob Bardin, Rich Brancato, John Burnes, Joan Rood, Andy Hill, Leslie Hill, and David Salzman

Maryland Transit Administration Representatives: Michael Madden, Purple Line Project Manager; Jacobs Engineering Consultants (Dierdre Smith)

Town Residents: Jim Roy, Bronwyn Mathis, John Lee, John Whitty, Alex Papageorge, Dedun Ingram, Howard Feldman. Also attending were Jim Onder (Kensington Chamber of Commerce), Thomas Clark (Bethesda resident) and Andrew Ujifusa (Gazette Newspaper)

The Mitigation Advisory Group (MAG) asked the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to discuss the findings of its study which determined that the pedestrian trail should be located on the north, rather than the south side of the transit way.

**Meeting Summary**

1. Introduction of MAG members and MTA representatives
2. MTA Study and Recommendation to place trail on north side of the transit
  - Background: The original 2003 County Master Plan for the Purple Line was for 4.4 miles of single track between Bethesda and Silver Spring, with the Trail on the south side, closest to town residences.
  - According to MTA, when the Purple Line project was changed from 4.4 miles to 16 miles between Bethesda and New Carrollton, double tracks became necessary.
  - Following a review and community focus groups in 2007, the MTA determined that the location of the Trail should be changed from the south to the north side of the transit way. As a result, the two-track rail bed and trains will be located on the south side, closest to town residences abutting the right of way.

- MTA representatives stated that the main reason for placing the Trail on the north side is because that maximizes the vertical and horizontal separation between the trail and the trackbed. The decision was not based on specific engineering or cost analyses. Locating the Trail to the north of the trackbed better follows the existing elevation of the surrounding land and keeps the Trail three to four feet above the trackbed, where possible. According to MTA, this would provide a better “trail experience”.
  - MTA representatives cited the following benefits of placing the Trail on the north side:
    - improved aesthetics
    - a buffer screen for plantings between the trail and track
    - minimizes retaining wall heights, resulting in reduced construction costs
    - minimizes environmental and construction impacts
    - creates greater comfort level for trail users when train passes
    - increases safety by preventing Trail users from crossing trackbed except at designated crossings
  - The MTA recognized two disadvantages of placing the Trail on the north side:
    - residences on the south side of the transit way would lose their current direct access to the trail
    - the trains would be closer (by approximately 25 feet) to the residences on the south side
  - MTA acknowledged that visual impacts caused by closer proximity of the transit way to residences would have to be addressed and mitigated but said noise “will not be an issue.”
3. MAG members and Town residents raised a number of concerns about MTA’s decision to change the location of the Trail from the south to the north side of the transit way, including:
- The lack of an engineering basis for the decision.
  - The failure to consider that keeping the trail on the south side closest to the town could allow the trail to buffer and mitigate the impact of the transit way.

- The validity of the noise study that led MTA to conclude that trains will produce noise levels no higher than the ambient noise levels measured along the Trail.
- The need for further study of noise impact and mitigation, including size and design of sound barriers
- The impact on trees and shrubbery located on private property and the need for consideration of mitigation measures to reduce visual impacts resulting from closer proximity of the transit way to residences
- Water drainage issues
- Safety issues along planned pedestrian crossings, particularly Lynn Drive
- Design of the Trail and transit way through Wisconsin Avenue tunnel

4. Information Learned

- The determination to place the Trail on the north side is still preliminary, and may be changed, but MTA has made it clear that at this point it sees no compelling reason to change
- MTA is willing to continue to meet with MAG and Town residents to discuss issues, better understand concerns, explain the basis for MTA preliminary designs, and consider impacts and mitigation measures. Further meetings will be scheduled to discuss issues, including, among other things, tunnel design, pedestrian crossings, and visual screening mitigation
- MTA does not believe that plans to double-track the Purple Line will change but is willing to schedule a meeting with MAG to discuss operational issues/challenges of single tracking

5. MTA is willing to continue the dialogue with MAG on trail issues, including location, and wants as much input as soon as possible. MTA emphasized, however, that the trail issue is only one of many issues concerning the Purple Line project and that the Town is only one of many stakeholders that MTA will hear from.

6. Mary Anne Hoffman reminded MTA that MAG has not yet received three information items requested at the Dec. 5 briefing: (1) tunnel plans from the high investment scheme that are now part of the Locally Preferred Alternative (2) MTA's canopy analysis and (3) Houses affected by the elevated ramp leading to the east end of the Wisconsin Avenue tunnel

7. Following departure of MTA representatives, MAG members discussed a number of issues, including
  - The most efficient means to communicate concerns and requests for information to MTA
  - The need to establish a process for involving community residents
  - The need to communicate and coordinate with the County on Trail issues
8. MAG members also agreed in principle on six (6) general mitigation goals as a framework for continued interaction with MTA. Different MAG members volunteered to take responsibility for different goals. The goals and responsible MAG members are as follows:
  - Provide maximum pedestrian and rail safety  
*(Jacob Bardin, Leslie Hill)*
  - Abate noise, vibration and other environmental impacts  
*(Rich Brancato, David Salzman)*
  - Provide access to the trail and transit system that promotes the Town's livability  
*(Joan Rood)*
  - Maintain the property values of homeowners adjacent to and near the Line  
*(John Burnes, Andy Hill)*
  - Provide an aesthetically pleasing view of the Line for pedestrians and homeowners  
*(John Burnes, Andy Hill)*
  - Ensure the best possible trail experience for the thousands of area residents who use the Georgetown Branch every week  
*(Jacob Bardin, Leslie Hill)*
9. Next Steps
  - A meeting will be held in the Lawton Center Conference Room on Thursday, January 21, 2010 from 7-9:30 to discuss these and other issues. The meeting is open to the public.