

Dear Elected Official:

In response to a recent exchange of reports between The Town of Chevy Chase and its consultants, Sam Schwartz Engineering (SSE), and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), and meetings with Secretary Porcari and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), new information regarding the Purple Line project has come to light which we want to bring to your attention.

- **New BRT Alternatives** – The State has done a preliminary reassessment of the Jones Bridge Road alternative and has “found” 10,000 more riders for the alignment by taking SSE’s recommendations and giving this alternative the same treatments east of Jones Mill Road as all other alternatives under consideration. SSE still notes several irregularities with MTA’s calculations and asserts that that number could and should be even higher, potentially another 6,000 riders. While the price tag goes up, this is still the lowest cost alternative under consideration by MTA -- \$597 million (by MTA estimate) – half the cost of MTA’s Medium-Investment Light Rail Alternative along the Capital Crescent Trail. This new JBR alternative will still receive a highly favorable rating from the FTA. Unfortunately, it is not clear if the State will be including this analysis in the DEIS nor if it plans to share this information with the public.
- **Underestimated Ridership** – SSE continues to find serious deficiencies with the State’s analysis of trips associated with the BRAC relocation of Walter Reed to National Naval Medical Center. Combined with miscalculations of the area MTA asserts will be served by the Master Plan alignment into Bethesda, the Town believes that the State’s analysis of the ridership potential of the Jones Bridge Road alignment to NNMC, north Woodmont, and Bethesda is acutely undervalued. Using MWCOG estimates, the Medical Center and North Woodmont areas will be home to 40,619 jobs in the year 2030 and will be directly served by only the Jones Bridge alignment. By contrast, the portion of Downtown Bethesda within walking distance (1/2 mile) of the Bethesda Purple Line Station will be home to 32,944 jobs.
- **Delay in FTA Approval** – The DEIS process is being delayed in part because the Federal Transit Administration had many comments/questions on the original draft that MTA has not yet satisfactorily addressed (we now hear it may be released at the earliest in mid-October rather than late September as announced by the State last week). We have also raised some of our concerns with FTA. We believe the released document will be a better one for FTA scrutiny.
- **Real Impacts on the Capital Crescent Trail** – In a recent meeting with residents of the Edgevale community, which abuts the Capital Crescent Trail’s 66-foot right of way (ROW), MTA representatives acknowledged SSE’s assertion that the entire ROW in this area will have to be clear cut of trees to accommodate transit. They have also told representatives of the biking community that, as SSE suggested, the trail through the tunnel option is unsatisfactory and too costly, and the trail will most probably be rerouted on to city streets and an at-grade crossing of Wisconsin Avenue. Yet MTA continues to present misleading artists renderings and videos lush with trees. After spreading a “don’t worry” message for almost a year, MTA has lulled many residents into believing that Purple Line on the Trail will be benign.
- **Woodmont Plaza Will Be Bisected by Purple Line CCT Alignments, Whether Light Rail or BRT** – The Woodmont pedestrian plaza is at risk. If bus rapid transit is chosen for the Master Plan

alignment, buses will run all day long – every 6 to 10 minutes – through the Woodmont Plaza area in front of the Bethesda Landmark Theaters and Mon Ami Gabi. This will compromise the use of this area as a public meeting and community green space, for which the community fought so hard. Every MTA light rail alternative uses the Capital Crescent Trail alignment, and includes tail tracks extending west of Bethesda Station that will bisect the plaza and be used for the temporary storage of out-of-service trains. We believe trains will be present there much of the time, and will similarly impair the intended public use space.

- **Public Opposition** – Over the last two weekends, volunteers gathered over 2,000 signatures (in 4 days) in support of saving the Trail and moving the Purple Line off this alignment. This, combined with the 15,000 signatures already collected over the last few years, should let you know what a cherished resource the Capital Crescent Trail is to the greater community.

Given our current and projected economic crisis, it is unclear that any transit project will get federal funding. It is also unclear if the State has the money to contribute as a match. Yet, we also know we need to explore transit alternatives for the region. This is a time to be creative and look for solutions. As our elected officials you have to ask yourself if there is funding for multiple transit projects and how this money should be allocated. The following are questions that we ask you to consider:

- **BRAC is Coming** – Why miss an opportunity to provide a Purple Line alternative that will provide some relief to the BRAC problem? With the BRAC Action, more traffic is coming to already crowded roads. Current thinking for solutions is focused on the old, failed approaches – widen roadways and intersections to try to handle more traffic. The Jones Bridge Road BRT Purple Line may not be the silver bullet that will solve all BRAC-related traffic problems, but it will help by attracting BRAC employees/visitors to use transit, thereby reducing the number of cars and the need for costly and disruptive road widening. It won't cost taxpayers more for Purple Line to service the Medical Center area. . . it actually costs less. As you know, BRAC did not exist when the Master Plan alignment was developed, but it does today.
- **Funding the Purple Line** – Why would we advocate for an alternative that has a low chance of getting federal funding? The Purple Line is needed. Yet, if the advocates who insist that it be light rail prevail, we may never see it as it is more costly, and has a lower FTA cost-effectiveness score and is, therefore, less likely to obtain FTA funding. After 20 years of contemplation and debate, the State has decided this is the time to move forward. We are setting ourselves up for failure if we proceed with advocating for light rail.
- **Two Transit Lines for the Price of One** – Why should the region place one needed transit project over another? The Purple Line and the Corridor Cities Transitway both have the potential to effectively serve this region by responding to mounting traffic problems. By selecting the Jones Bridge Road alignment for Purple Line, and BRT along the Corridor Cities Transitway, the region could have two needed transit projects for the price of one Purple Line light rail alternative.

In response to the Town's updated Alternatives Analysis of June, 2008, the State issued two white papers and an "internal" report dated August 14, 2008. The Town has recently responded to those white papers and reports, and the full documents are available on-line at www.townofchevy Chase.org under the heading "Purple Line". We encourage you to look at those reports carefully. We ask that you view these reports in

light of recent developments relating to the budget and BRAC, as we may be able to find affordable solutions by giving the Jones Bridge Road Bus Rapid Transit alternative a full and fair consideration.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and to answer any questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Kathy Strom

Kathy Strom
Mayor