

## Agenda

1. Meeting Began
2. Schedule
3. MTA DEIS
4. Pros and Cons
5. Upcoming Meetings

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**Master Plan Advisory Group (MPAG) Members:** Pat Baptiste, Caleb Kriesberg, Rob Rosenberg, Veda Charrow, Tony Hausner, Jonathan Jay, Karen Roper, Harry Sanders, Michele Cornwell (Alt. - Ed Asher), Mier Wolf, Joe Rodriguez, Peter Gray, Byrne Kelly, Anne Martin, Ted Power, Judy Tso, Bill Mellema, Michael Marsh, Karen FitzGerald, Chris Richardson, and Todd Solomon

**Absent Members:** Andy O'Hare, Sue Knapp, David Saltzman, Gigi Godwin, Fred Schultz, Lisa Fadden, Phil Alperson, and Laurie Kelly

**Others:** Katherine Holt (Staff), Tom Autrey (Staff), Heather Dlhopsky, Ginnane Italiano, Webb Smedley, Tina Slater, and Jon Elkind

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## 1. Meeting Began

Tom Autrey began the meeting at 7:05 pm.

## 2. Schedule

Katherine explained the revised schedule to the MPAG, which was posted on a wall in the auditorium. The schedule was revised per Pat Baptiste comment from the last meeting asking for staff to show when the Planning Board and the County Council are on recess. The schedule also reflects staff changes to the schedule, which moved the first staff draft memo from November 14 to November 21. The current schedule can be seen by [clicking here](#).

## 3. MTA DEIS

Katherine reminded the MPAG that CD copies of the DEIS will be available for MPAG members only on October 21, 2008. Please come to the Park and Planning office to pick up your copy of the DEIS on CD. Katherine may send out an email to everyone informing them that the CDs are available on Friday.

The DEIS will be available on October 17. Anyone can request a copy of the DEIS CD on October 17, 2008 through the following email address: [purpleline@mtamaryland.com](mailto:purpleline@mtamaryland.com). You may view the DEIS online at MTA's [website](#). MTA will provide hard copies of the document and the technical reports for public viewing at Montgomery and Prince George's County MNCPPC, the Silver Spring Regional Services Center, MDOT's regional office in New

Carrollton, and MTA in Baltimore. These are the only places that the hard copies of the tech reports will be available.

The public may purchase a hard copy of the AA/DEIS for \$123 from MTA.

#### 4. Pros and Cons

Tom prepared a different summary (two page paper) of the likes and dislikes of each alignment from the September 2008 meetings. The final decision on the prepared summary was that it would be thrown out. The following is a summary of the discussions that took place on this topic at the meeting.

*What were the criteria used for the likes and dislikes?*

The objective was to provide public officials with a concise summary document.

*What is the number of pages for a typical memo to the Planning Board?*

The number of pages to the Planning Board varies for each topic. The goal was to have a concise summary to point out key items in the memo with the longer version in the appendix or as an attachment. The memo to the Planning Board will also include staff's analysis on the AA/DEIS. It is apparent from the overall response from the MPAG including a summary in the memo is not the way to go.

*It was suggested that staff either go around the room with a time limit to allow each person to speak and make comments on the summary or that this should be handled through email.*

We can do that (see discussion below). With respect to the Pros and Cons, it was decided that (1) no attempt would be made to develop a summary, and (2) the lists of Pros and Cons would be made for the MPAG and the general public.

The following are comments given by MPAG members and audience members on what they think are some of the most important things to take into consideration when reviewing the alternatives and other aspects of the project.

- Veda:**
1. The alignment decision at the Bethesda end must take into account future growth and future traffic (e.g., from BRAC); this is why a decision based on a 20-year-old Master Plan at this end of the route is not adequate.
  2. Both BRT and LRT have been accomplished elsewhere on streets no wider than Jones Bridge Road. Rather than saying the road must be widened, I'd like to know what it would take to make some sort of rapid transit work on JBR. (Narrower buses? Or a middle lane that switches directions similar to Colesville Road?)
  3. Damage to the environment includes not only air pollution, but also destruction of old-growth tree canopy and runoff. The cost of the environmental damage the Georgetown Branch of the CCR needs to be included in any cost-benefit analysis.

4. How can quality of life issues be quantified and compared--e.g., essentially destroying a longitudinal park with a trail to provide a rail with trail, and within an established residential neighborhood?

**Mier:** He feels that the Jones Bridge Road alignment has basically been dismissed by MTA in part because it was an option surfaced by a member of the House of Delegates and not their staff. MTA has ignored "ground truth" by failing to take into account the coming of BRAC as well as the environmental disaster to the Capital Crescent Trail that will occur if they implement a light rail plan they obviously favor for the Purple Line. Fair consideration of the Jones Bridge Road alternative would include the following:

1. "Connectivity" of the trail is inaccurate, since the connection would be of hard surface treeless paths instead of the tree lined linear park we currently enjoy on the Capital Crescent Trail.
2. The trail could be completed in its current linear park form under the Jones Bridge Road scenario.
3. The Jones Bridge alignment is the only route to possibly connect to northern Woodmont which is beyond the walking distance for the current metro connections.
4. On Jones Bridge Road it should be possible to have a dedicated lane that changes based on rush hour demands east of Connecticut Avenue without significant impact to the residential area.
5. It would be safer including for North Chevy Chase Elementary School to have a bus rapid transit go down the middle of Jones Bridge Road, with the advent of BRAC, then exposing that road to more auto traffic.
6. The MTA has not accurately calculated the speed of the bus rapid transit on Jones Bridge Road, in part because of how they treat the Silver Spring portion of the Purple Line for that route.

**Byrne:** The advice of this member of the MPAG for the Planning Board and the County Council is:

1. Go through the motions to get the DEIS approved to get on the New Starts Federal Funding Program.
2. Then revisit the myriad of opinions and suggestions of the MPAG Diaspora of "interested" parties.
3. When reviewing all of that, one can find some majority consensus, some super majority consensus, but probably not 100% consensus.

From my perspective there is at the least a super majority consensus of the following:

- A mass transit "Purple Line" running in an east west arc connecting several major Metro Rail lines, business districts, the UMD and two community colleges, is desired by a majority of the members.
- If money were no object, then the line would be an underground light rail, wherever it is objectionable above ground.

For the following, I believe there is a simple majority consensus:

- LRT is more desirable than BRT
- A single track scenario on the Capital Crescent Trail is a more desirable than a double track, but less popular than tunneling it under that segment.
- Aerial or underground from the proposed Silver Spring Transit Center through the Silver Spring CBD with a stop at either Georgia or Fenton Avenues is more popular than at grade or the proposed southerly bypass tunnel MPAG was presented late in the game.

The following is my opinion that may be shared by some, but most are skeptical at this point to these suggestions.

- Recognizing that obtaining the Federal and State monies to build a Purple Line are the first priority, and essential, once that is completed we, as a County and as individual communities, should seek to fund a higher more satisfactory degree of design and the means to fund it.
- By design this could work, by process only, it could fail.

**Tony:** First, if we can between now and say the next week produce a document that contains all of our comments, that would be very useful. This document would hopefully reflect all of the comments made within each group, but somehow roll all comments into one document. I think there appears to be agreement that not all comments are currently there, but hopefully we can get there. I further think that there is no reason why we can't make additional comments, even if they were not made at the time of the group meetings. We took several iterations to get in all our comments on the outreach report. Given that this document has greater significance, I think allowing for additional input is appropriate.

#### 1. Safety

how does LRT compare to BRT, TSM and no build on safety?

A pro on this would be LRT is better on this.

A con on this would be that LRT is poorer on this.

#### 2. Noise

how does LRT compare on noise levels to BRT, TSM and no build?

A pro on this would be LRT is better on this.

A con on this would be that LRT is poorer on this.

#### 3. How does LRT compare to BRT, etc on providing transportation for low income residents?

A pro on this would be LRT is better on this

A con on this would be that LRT is poorer on this

#### 4. Redevelopment can be both positive and negative for low income residents, too

complicated for simple assessments, e.g., can improve their living situations but could also drive them out. Is there any research literature on this?

#### 5. Environment

how does LRT compare to BRT, TSM and no build on impacts on the environment as to air pollution and energy consumption?

A pro on this would be LRT is better on this

A con on this would be that LRT is poorer on this

#### **Jonathan:**

1. Staff should closely review what could be extremely adverse impacts of the surface route through downtown Silver Spring on traffic congestion – in particular, a 180-foot-long light rail train slowly crossing Georgia Avenue and through the intersection of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street up to every three minutes during rush hour from one direction or another.
2. The community near Wayne Avenue in Silver Spring is very concerned since the plans for the surface route on Wayne call for the widening of nearly two-thirds of the mile on Wayne on which Purple Line light would run. This, combined with shared train and car lanes (taking no traffic away), will result in increasing traffic capacity on Wayne and eventually traffic.
3. Staff should closely examine very questionable daily station boardings that MTA has projected. At the very least, the numbers for the eight Silver Spring stops, especially in relation to each other, appear out of whack with housing, employment, and retail in the respective areas.
4. More attention needs to be paid in evaluating BRT, since MTA has said little about BRT at public meetings and in meetings with the MPAG and as a result little is known about the details of the viability of BRT.
5. Added costs to build a proper mass transit system, and one that has minimal community impact, should be fully considered, such as tunneling through downtown Silver Spring and under Wayne Avenue.

**Harry:** The table should include travel times as a major category with reference to relative speed of travel between important origin and destinations. For example, travel times from Silver Spring to College Park campus are a long 50 minutes for the medium BRT option, which is too long for choice riders. While the medium and high LRT are a competitive 30-34 minutes.

Reliability of service is also a factor for potential transit riders. People who take transit want something that is reliable. The amount of mixing in traffic impacts transit reliability of travel and should be part of the judgment of transit option.

The Federal Transit Administration analysis does not look at the whole range of benefits and put too much emphasis on a cost to benefit number where all benefits are not included. I

prefer light rail for the Purple Line because it encourages more compact development that is needed in order to reduce car trips and car trip lengths in order to combat global warming.

**Ted:** As a two year resident, Jonathan Jay, Karen Roper, and others can best represent specific issues/concerns of the Silver Spring residents. Traffic in the Silver Spring CBD is a concern. I also believe that the County must look at issues of energy sources in the locally preferred alignment for the Purple Line. At a global level, the impacts from diminishing fuel supply and the resultant higher fuel costs must be factored into the selection of Purple Line mode of transportation.

**Pat:** 1. When you start at the wrong place you will end up making a series of bad decisions. The alignment is based on 3 miles of the Georgetown Branch which the county owns and first wanted to use for single lane trolley between SS and Bethesda (3.5 of 5 miles of the route would be county owned, the remaining 1.5 is CSX still not agreed to by them for passenger rail use). Now it represents a very small part of the 17 mile double track Purple Line.

2. Many of the adverse impacts in East Silver Spring occur because the Purple Line needs to get through Silver Spring to reach Bethesda and use the 3 miles the county owns on the Georgetown Branch.

3. Were it not for an irrational desire to use the Georgetown Branch (irrational to all but the Chevy Chase Land company which stands to gain millions in new development rights) all of the goals of the Purple Line (connectivity, mobility, traffic reduction etc) could be accomplished better by creating a route that went north and then east such as the purple line loop proposed several years ago. Alternatively connecting Long Branch, Wheaton/Kensington, Grosvenor and White Flint would yield far more benefits to the county than would be going over to Bethesda.

4. A route that dead ends in Bethesda will never be able to expand service to the western part of the county.

5. Since 14 miles of the proposed Purple Line does not have a dedicated r-o-w, the state should be open to designing a route where it ought to be rather than where a small amount of land is available.

**Peter:** There is enough room in the tunnel under Wisconsin for the trail and LRT. The only way to maintain a continuous CCTrail between Bethesda and Silver Spring is to keep the trail inside the tunnel. It is also crucial to the continuity of the CCTrail to avoid all at-grade street crossings, especially entering into downtown Silver Spring, the Silver Spring Transit Center and connecting to the Metropolitan Branch Trail.

**Rob:**

- Clarification that there are three main alignments excluding TSM and No Build
- How the different alignments support existing business and high density areas
- The title of the section should just be East Silver Spring

- Impact on access to Thayer apartments: Thayer avenue parking and viability of those apartment buildings, impact on affordable housing. Road access to the apartments.
- Safety of tunnel entrances and crossing which happens to be right in front of a major elementary school crossing
- Largest number of properties taken and/or easements on SS/Thayer Ave. A misnomer that was based on an easement that isn't there.
- No discussion of deep tunnel design issues/impacts. Examples include:
  - Air quality, venting
  - Rock blasting
  - Fallout could be more significant as most of the homes in the area are small, turn of the century homes
- Taking of significant portion of park land including a portion which is currently receiving significant investment by both the county and state.
- Significant environmental impacts including crossing Sligo creek

**Karen Roper:** The following is a list of concerns I have with the SS/Thayer route:

- Open portal on residential street next to elementary school
- Loss of parking on Thayer
- Proposed stop and Transit Station Sector Plan impact on minority affordable housing
- Environmental justice issue - about one dozen minority, low income housing buildings will lose parking, affordability and parkland
- Impact on house values on Dale that now face a wooded park, but will be facing a concrete bridge
- Environmental impact of loss of trees - State of Maryland and County Parks Dept just spent quite a bit of money rebuilding, planting over 50 trees, 30 bushes and adding a stone drainage gully
- Impact on Sligo Creek
- Potential for crime where bike path goes under bridge
- Impact on the playground next to the proposed bridge
- Takings of private property to "straighten out" the curve on Thayer before Dale Dr.
- Traffic impacts with train sharing lane with cars on Piney Branch which is only one lane
- Traffic impacts at Dale and Thayer where train would cross
- Impact on backed up traffic on feeder roads to Piney Branch, e.g. Sligo Creek Parkway, Dale Ave, Sligo Ave
- Noise during construction and train after on quiet residential street
- Tunneling under houses at Silver Spring Ave and Grove without taking or moving the residents. Has this been done successfully before? Where?
- Cost of compensation for underground takings

**Karen FitzGerald:** I support what Jonathan Jay said about adverse impacts on the neighborhood and downtown Silver Spring.

The closing of the entrance to the schools' parking lot to accommodate the Purple Line station will dramatically affect the traffic flows at both schools, which serve more than 1,000 families. Closing the entrance to the parking lot will mean rerouting traffic onto side streets

in the neighborhood surrounding the schools, and doing so will exacerbate tensions that already exist between the schools and neighborhood residents around school-related traffic. [As an aside, Valerie Ervin's office regularly calls the principal of the elementary school to complain about traffic, because she gets calls from residents who complain to her about traffic. Closing the entrance to the parking lot will reroute all of this car traffic onto these side streets, and you can imagine how this will increase the number of complaints.]

A street level alignment along Wayne Avenue will reduce property values for homeowners there, as well as corrode our quality of life. **I want to know when the State and County will honestly acknowledge the harm that will be done by this Purple Line alignment, as well talk to us about how we will be made whole.**

**Chris:** I simply wanted to remind everyone that the members of the Master Plan Advisory Group were carefully selected from a wide geographic range that encompasses the Purple Line's serving area, each representing his/her community as local stakeholders. Individually and collectively, this Advisory Group is among the most informed on the Purple Line and its potential impacts – pro and con. I, therefore, advocated for keeping the entire pros and cons summary intact and encouraging Park & Planning staff, who may not live in the affected areas, to consult the collective knowledge within the local stakeholder community.

**Bill:** 1. Red line metro provides direct connectivity between Medical Center and Bethesda. The Jones Bridge alignment, in part, would create a redundant transportation link between these two points.

2. I personally do not believe that an alignment through Bethesda up Woodmont Ave in traffic will be faster than using a dedicated ROW into downtown Bethesda.

3. Investment in electric powered light rail ensures flexibility of fuel sources with no cost adder as new sources of energy come on-line.

BRT requires investment in only one or two fuel sources. Adaptation to new fuels would require conversion at an unknown cost.

4. A purple line alignment down the CCT ensures improvements and funding for maintenance of the trail and public spaces.

5. The lack of focus on alignments east of SS CDB is disconcerting. The MTA has a responsibility to those folks as well.

**Michele:** Right-of-way is the most precious resource that transit planning has. The County purchased the Georgetown Branch ROW over a decade ago specifically for the transit connection between Bethesda and Silver Spring, and the route has been in the BCC Master Plan, Bethesda CBD Sector Plan and the Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment for over 20 years. County resources have already been invested in this opportunity to use valuable existing freight railroad alignment to connect two Central Business Districts by transit, and the businesses and residents have relied on the Plans and resources supporting

this transit/trail connection. The focus of analysis should be on finding the optimal route in the areas east of Silver Spring where there is no existing ROW for the connection. The mode should be light rail, to provide the fastest connection along the entire route, and the highest ridership numbers. We must not lose sight that the route will connect the growing Northern Prince George's County economic engine to Montgomery County's business districts. It will connect housing with jobs. It is about more than a 3 mile long trail.

- Anne:** 1. The Purple Line alignment as LRT along the Georgetown Branch right-of-way from Bethesda to Silver Spring provides a direct transit and completed trail link between the two downcounty central business/employment/housing resource areas and between two heavily utilized Red Line Metro stations (which have bus station connections for those coming from outside the transit station areas);
2. As an organization that participates in the lengthy, public, collaborative process of the master plans, the B-CC Chamber has long supported the alignment for transit/trail on the Georgetown Branch right-of-way that has been in the B-CC Master Plan, Bethesda CBD Sector Plan and the Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment Plan for 20+ years and purchased for such purpose;
3. As I mentioned in the meeting on Tuesday after Michele Cornwell discussed the value of the existing right-of-way, "time" is another valuable resource for residents, employers and employees. The Purple Line alignment as LRT provides the fastest travel times for existing transit users and to encourage new riders to utilize transit, not only between Bethesda to Silver Spring, but for faster, more efficient, and environmentally superior connections to the Langley Park/Takoma transit center and to Metro stations and communities to the east in Prince Georges County (including University of Maryland and the orange line of the Metro).
4. "Economic development"- the ability to improve the quality, value, and character of some of our neighborhood centers and to improve the experience and reduce travel times for our residents and employees using public transit - is a positive factor of the Purple Line. The convenience of being near an attractive, safe, environmentally friendly LRT line on nearby streets can be a positive factor and enhance property values and quality of life.
5. I will echo the comment the gentleman made that the overall Purple Line LRT provides a valuable transit opportunity that should be evaluated as a whole and for the future- the transportation, environmental, economic development, etc. benefits for the County and region in the long term should not be lost in the dissection of segments along a planned right-of-way like the Georgetown Branch. The focus of analysis should be finding the optimal route in the areas east of the Silver Spring Transit Center where there is no existing right-of-way or plans for the alignment.

**Todd:** The 'pro' comments from Long Branch under "traffic and parking" and under "environment" apply equally well to Langley Park.

Under "environment" I would add that the most likely Takoma Langley Crossroads model incorporates a Purple Line into a much greener scenario than current conditions.

I would add as a 'pro' under "connectivity" that the Purple Line will augment the utility of the planned bus depot that consolidates the dozen-odd bus stops of the New Hampshire Ave / University Blvd. intersection into a single safe location.

I would also add under "connectivity" that, given immigrant population predictions and the Takoma Langley Crossroads project, Langley Park will very likely become a 3rd CBD in the next 15 years. Connecting it directly and speedily to the existing down-county CBDs is essential.

The Purple Line is likely to be noise neutral, given the existing noise level along Univ. Blvd.

Under "traffic and parking," the Purple Line will benefit from the current surplus of available parking near the Takoma/Langley intersection. Even in the Takoma Langley Crossroads development plans, parking plentifully provided.

Re: East Silver Spring/Wayne...

I would add under "connectivity" that a Dale Drive station would enhance transit access for over a hundred faculty and staff to the 2 public schools (SCES, SSIMS) at Wayne and Dale.

Under "economy" I would add that homes in the East Silver Spring area currently advertise their proximity to transit as a positive feature. To suggest that homes would decline in value if a Purple Line came through is counter to the historical evidence of other areas served by Metrorail.

**Joe:** The system seems to be two separate systems. From Bethesda to Silver Spring if it is to go along the trail, it is fast and with few stations at strategic points. From Silver Spring East, the system is at surface level with many stations and much slower. I believe that in the long term in order for the system to be successful, speed is essential. Also for the future efficiency of the system it must be Light Rail in order to use electric power and potentially use fuel more efficiently and from different sources. Therefore, I would like the staff to look at the possibility even if eventually the choice is not the most expensive light rail, to look at the possibility of mixing up the choices between the High and Low end light rail east of Silver Spring in order to provide, at least in Montgomery County, an efficient and faster moving system. We do not have a mandate to study anything further into Prince Georges beyond the County Line.

**Caleb:** My first response to the whole Group on the Pros and Cons chart shown at the meeting is as follows:

- I like Tony's comment: "redevelopment [sic] can be both positive and negative for low income residents, too complicated for simple assessments, e.g., can improve their living situations but could also drive them out. Is there any research literature on this?"

I wish we could know whether an alignment in a particular neighborhood would lead to gentrification or not.

- Speaking of alignments, the chart doesn't compare proposed alignments in a neighborhood. I think that's alright: the chart isn't intended to do that.
- I don't agree with Tony that this chart really is or should be about pros and cons. I mentioned that to Tom and Katherine by e-mail. Please note that the file itself, unlike the subject of the e-mail it's attached to, is called not "pro's and con's" but "likes and dislikes". "Likes and Dislikes" is a more appropriate description of the chart's content. The chart is not trying to present arguments for or against a particular mode or alignment, nor compare proposals to status quo, but, I think, picks out some of the Group's opinions about the project that are particularly relevant to the Staff. . . .
- I think I agree with e-mail comments by Ted and Tony that members of the Group, possibly in part by e-mail, can add to this chart. I don't see that the chart is trying to express consensus, nor does it indicate what proportion of the Group holds each opinion. It shows what the staff is hearing thus far, and maybe the Staff can hear and include more.

On the pros and cons, a few important editorial questions / comments. Most of these are about sub-groups I wasn't a part of; their comments, perhaps as a consequence, seemed especially unclear to me as a reader:

- I think one problem with the table and processes is that "pro" and "con" are the wrong words. The table is not necessarily arguing for or against a policy. The words might better be "likes" "dislikes". The column is listing positives and negatives. Either column could be BRT or LR. The introduction to the table should say so! The "con" side is not necessarily in opposition to anything specific on the "pro" side.
- "Bethesda": if this means Bethesda Metro Station (as opposed to Medical Center, which is also in Bethesda), please say so.
- Why is "Trail in Tunnel" both "pro" and "con"? Are we comparing here the status quo tunnel with the low-ceilinged proposal? Please specify.
- "Type of emissions" should probably include "Fuel sources for BRT vs. LR" These are related but different issues.
- "increase economics" seems meaningless to me (what does "economics" mean, here? I don't think it can increase.)
- "Falklands. . .are near alignments" -- I don't see why this is a "con"
- "pedestrian safety" is not a "con"! "Hazards to pedestrians" would be
- For me and many other residents LIBRARY STATION IS A "CON," NOT JUST A "PRO"
- The "500 Block of Thayer Station" could also be a "con" if it leads to gentrification ("loss of affordable housing"), as is elsewhere in the comments. I think I'm the only one in the Group who lives in an apartment, and I live on Thayer. My rent goes up a lot each year. The new "moderate income" or "workforce housing" to be built in the area of my neighborhood and near the PL alignments would, arguably, not be affordable to many current residents. In the list, we can consolidate all the comments about Thayer gentrification vs. development, along with the request for more information. It might

also be possible to consolidate talk of gentrification for other neighborhoods, elsewhere in the list.

- Comments about "trees" could also be consolidated.
- Why is "Dale Drive station" a "con"? Please specify.
- Why is "Georgia Ave. Crossing" both a "pro" and a "con"?

I don't know if the two columns of the table are comparing alignments, or comparing transit modes, and if the latter, whether it's comparing the status quo with the PL. In part, this could be cleared up by almost always using complete sentences -- with subjects and verbs ("expensive" -- what is? "Not in traffic" -- what isn't?) -- and by assuming the reading audience is people who have never heard of the PL. I realize this may seem unnecessary, but it leads to clear writing.

**The following MPAG members did not attend the meeting, but did email in their comments to be included in the summary.**

**Laurie:** I fully support the proposed Purple Line alignment along University Boulevard in any mode since it will benefit the residents of Takoma Park and Langley Park. The multicultural working poor here depend now, and will even more in the future, on public transportation in its most efficient form. Whether light rail or express bus, residents need the Purple Line and its associated transit center at the Takoma-Langley Crossroads. These projects will bring economic benefit to current and future residents. Local activists like me will make sure that affordable housing is preserved.

**Phil:** Speaking from the BRAC perspective... It is a faulty assumption that BRAC can justify a particular Purple Line alignment.

I am not discounting other reasons for or against any alignment, but BRAC by itself will not generate enough ridership to determine the best alignment. The alignment should be selected based on region-wide ridership, cost, environmental and other criteria.

In fact, the Jones Bridge Road BRT alignment would make congestion worse rather than relieve it. Expansion at Navy Med will result in roughly 4,000 additional visits to the campus each day. There will still be plenty of traffic along Jones Bridge Road despite our best efforts to discourage single occupancy vehicles. Much of Jones Bridge Road is too narrow for additional dedicated BRT lanes. The road east of Connecticut Avenue is simply too narrow now, and the ability to add BRT lanes west of Connecticut Avenue is restricted by the proximity of the Hawkins Lane historic district and security-conscious Navy facilities. Removing one or two lanes to accommodate dedicated BRT lanes will worsen congestion along the entire length of Jones Bridge Road.

In addition, Woodmont Avenue cannot bear the loss of two lanes for dedicated BRT, even if on-street parking is removed. Woodmont Avenue terminates very close to Navy Med; therefore, BRT on that road would make traffic worse around the campus.

Again, there are many reasons to justify or oppose a particular alignment, but BRAC alone is not one of them.

**Michael:** Per my neighborhood:

"Land Reclamation" for the areas that experience the environmental damage that the Purple Line construction will cause if it is on the Georgetown Branch alignment - i.e., at the Connecticut Avenue & Georgetown Branch Train section (behind the cleaners) - to create a "neighborhood park" for the Chevy Chase Hills neighborhood that will be effected by the tree/animal displacement, construction, traffic and noise. This was not listed anywhere in the summary.

There are NO parking garages planned along the Purple line as it leave the SS Metro station and comes our way. I don't know about farther east. I have no idea how they expect anyone to take it if there is no place to leave their car. Yes, buses, but it makes it less likely for people to get on.

Regarding the Sierra Club, they officially support a Purple Line Loop, not just the proposed Bethesda - New Carrollton Purple Line (link below). This is an important distinction, as the proposed Purple Line is not scalable to reach Northern Virginia. In fact, my understanding is that the proposed Purple Line would be in lieu of any further connections.

In addition to the obvious disruption caused to the affected communities, the environment, and the trail, there are at least three significant problems with the proposed Purple Line light rail.

- a. Rapid transit solutions should be scalable - the proposed Purple Line is not.
- b. Rapid transit solutions should reduce automotive traffic - the proposed Purple Line does not.
- c. Rapid transit should reduce travel times, and supplement, not replace, existing bus service - the Purple Line does neither of these.

I think we are all in favor of responsible mass transit. However, the Purple Line as proposed is environmentally and fiscally irresponsible, and fails to meet any of the standard criteria required for such a project.

**The following are comments received from audience members at the meeting.**

**Jon:** What is striking is that if one listens to the MPAG members, one does not hear any solutions to the problems that face our communities – only problems. A second observation: Are MPAG members' concerns based on opinions or based on facts? For example, MTA's traffic projections, which are admittedly only professional, educated guesses, show that traffic along Wayne Avenue would be better in the future, not worse. If cost were no object tunneling would be the right answer for many of us in Silver Spring. But in reality cost is always important, so we have to think about what options are realistically on the table.

Finally, we need to make sure that we are making valid comparisons of what our future would be like with, and without, the Purple Line. If we do not have the Purple Line, we face a congested and polluted future. Is that what we really want?

**Webb:** Safety is very important. Light rail is the safest transportation option according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics data comparing different transit modes per the FTA website. It is far safer to ride a light rail train than to ride in an automobile.

Trail safety will improve when the Purple Line is built; currently the trail is unsafe between Bethesda and Silver Spring because of the at-grade crossings at Connecticut Avenue, Jones Bridge Rd, 16th Street, Spring Street and Colesville Rd. The DEIS includes grade separations for the trail at all of these locations, and an exclusive trail right of way between the end of the Georgetown Branch and the Silver Spring Metrorail station.

In addition to transit connectivity, the Purple Line brings trail connectivity with the Capital Crescent Trail joining the Metropolitan Branch trail and both being connected via the Green Trail to the Sligo Creek Trail.

Service to transit dependent low income residents is an important consideration under FTA's "new start" guidelines.

There are successful and safe LRT lines that travel through neighborhoods in the country and property value are rising faster for transit accessible areas than non-accessible ones in the DC metropolitan region and elsewhere.

**Tina:** The Purple Line will provide an east-west transit connection serving thousands of riders along its 16-mile route. Instead of a "hyper-focus" on small segments of the corridor which may inconvenience some residents, focus should be on the thousands of commuters who will benefit from faster connections to the Metro stations, Marc rail lines, and better transportation than today's slower and segmented bus routes. Of course tunneling is needed where grades are too steep for light rail, however any optional tunneling should be discouraged as too expensive and as not serving ridership, as there will be no underground stations. Given that the purpose of mass transit is to move the most people, the Purple Line must have stops in the CBD areas (both Bethesda and Silver Spring) and the route should go down the railway right-of-way in the Master plan --- not only is it the shortest route, but the paving of the trail will allow more pedestrians and bicyclists to commute safely between Bethesda and Silver Spring. Furthermore, a Wayne Avenue above-ground alignment will serve residents along the route and provide an avenue to the Silver Spring CBD and the new library.

## 6. Upcoming Meetings

As a reminder, the tentative upcoming meeting is **October 28, 2008**. The next meeting after the month of October is tentatively scheduled for **December 9, 2008**.

Note: There will be **no MPAG meetings in November** because:

- The MTA public hearings are in November
- The elections are in November
- Thanksgiving week is in November
- We need to be close to finishing our staff memo in November