
February 27, 2020

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chairman, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 876 – Transportation – Purple Line Marketing Program (Purple Line Marketing Act)

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 876 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

House Bill 876 requires the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), alongside Purple Line Transit Partners, Amtrak, the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), local governments, development agencies, and other stakeholders, to develop and implement a marketing plan that will generate interest in the Purple Line, as well as promote the project to maximize future ridership. House Bill 876 includes a mandatory statutory appropriation of \$1 million in fiscal years 2021-2024 to develop and implement the marketing plan and requires MTA to report on the progress of the marketing plan in December 2020, 2021, and 2022.

The Purple Line is a 16-mile light rail line that will extend from Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George's County. It will provide a direct connection to the Metrorail Red, Green, and Orange Lines at Bethesda, Silver Spring, College Park, and New Carrollton. The Purple Line will also connect to MARC, Amtrak, and local bus services. The Purple Line will begin operations in Prince Georges County between the New Carrollton and College Park - U of MD Metro stops by the end of 2022. The remainder of the alignment from College Park to Bethesda is scheduled be operational by June 2023.

House Bill 876 would require a marketing plan be developed and reported on, three years before the completion of the Purple Line, a year and a half before any marketing plan would ordinarily begin to be developed. Preparing and implementing an action plan too far in advance could confuse the public and may present challenges to its effectiveness for a variety of reasons. Promoting the many advantages of utilizing the Purple Line a full two years before the opening of its first phase – and three years before its final completion – risks missing the opportunity to fully take advantage of the news cycle in both 2022 and 2023. MDOT MTA will develop a marketing and communications plan that works in concert with local partners, businesses and other stakeholders, as well as build on synergies between MDOT MTA and MDOT's other Transportation Business Units. Timing is critical to ensure that partner and audience interest in the message does not peak prematurely.

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The Purple Line Outreach Team remains actively engaged with the affected communities and businesses to provide guidance and support. Additionally, the Purple Line Outreach Team, in conjunction with the Purple Line Transit Contractors, host meetings with representatives of eight Community Advisory Teams (CATs), offering construction updates and schedules; CAT members then relay project information to interested community members and business owners. The general public remains engaged with the progress of the project through public meetings, where citizens and business owners are encouraged to sign up for updates through the project's website, as well as to reach out via telephone or email hotlines, both of which are monitored daily.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 876.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles E. Lattuca
Executive Director
Transit Development & Delivery
Maryland Transit Administration
443-326-7574

Jeff Tosi
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-841-2850