

Senate Testimony.HB527_Delegate Lorig Charkoudian.

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Position: FAV



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 527 - MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION - PURPLE LINE - FREE RIDERSHIP AND ADVERTISING

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN
MARCH 27TH, 2025

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Finance Committee,

Once built, the Purple Line will bring many benefits to the communities through which it travels.

However, the Purple Line construction itself has been a years-long debacle, especially for the residents and businesses who live along and near the construction site. They have endured daily disruptions of all kinds: road closures, traffic detours, pedestrian hazards, accessibility violations, rough roads, construction noises, etc. Frustrations for residents continue to mount as the finish line is delayed and repairs aren't made as construction progresses¹. Local businesses along the route have seen significant declines in customers as construction diverts traffic, blocks off roads, and generally gives the appearance of the area being closed. Some are barely hanging on, hoping to make it to the opening of the line². Residents and businesses deserve some acknowledgement for the harms they have suffered as the line, which will benefit the entire region, is being built. The state can provide that and develop excitement for the line with this legislation.

This bill will:

Provide a very modest gesture of gratitude to the residents and businesses along the route who have been harmed by the construction.

- Residents within a $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of the line will receive a pass to ride the Purple Line for free for one month.
- Small businesses within a $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of the line will receive free promotional materials and services beginning on October 25th, 2025 and until three months after transit service on the purple line begins.
- The Maryland Transit Administration will use internal resources available to implement this program, including:
 - Websites maintained by the Administration.
 - The printing and design services of the Administration.

- The Administration will not be required to procure private advertising or marketing services.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 527.

¹ Broom, Scott. "Pressure on Purple Line to Speed up Road Repairs While Construction Is in Progress." *WUSA9*, 27 Sept. 2023, www.wusa9.com/article/traffic/mission-metro/purple-line-construction-frustration-for-maryland-suburb-residents/65-dd22ed98-61dd-452c-8090-847fa1021869.
² Ryan, Kate. "'We're Still Hanging on!': Businesses and Residents in Silver Spring on the Continued Purple Line Construction." *WTOP News*, 16 Mar. 2024, wtop.com/montgomery-county/2024/03/were-still-hanging-on-businesses-and-residents-in-silver-spring-on-the-continued-purple-line-construction/.

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAVHB527_ SENATE CROS

Uploaded by: Michelle Zelaya

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 27th, 2025

HB527

**Maryland Transit Administration - Purple Line - Free Ridership and Advertising
Finance Committee
Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of **House Bill 527**. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 527 requires the Maryland Transit Administration to implement a program offering free ridership on the Purple Line transit vehicles for the first three months of service to residents living within a quarter mile of the Purple Line track. Additionally, the bill provides free advertising opportunities on Purple Line transit vehicles and at transit stations for businesses located within the same quarter-mile radius. This initiative aims to support local communities and promote economic engagement in areas directly affected by the Purple Line's development.

From the lens of Catholic social teaching, this legislation embodies several core principles. The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable is evident in its efforts to alleviate the financial burden of transportation for those living near the Purple Line. Providing free advertising space for local businesses aligns with the principle of subsidiarity by supporting small-scale economic development. Moreover, the program's emphasis on public transit highlights our moral responsibility to care for creation by reducing environmental harm and promoting sustainable practices. Addressing environmental burdens that disproportionately affect communities near transit projects demonstrates a commitment to the common good, ensuring that development enhances the dignity and well-being of all residents, particularly those most impacted by such projects.

House Bill 527 directly benefits communities surrounding the Purple Line by fostering greater accessibility to public transportation while alleviating potential financial burdens during the initial transition period. By offering free advertising space to nearby businesses, the program promotes economic growth, particularly for small businesses that are integral to local economies. The legislation also encourages public transit use, which reduces congestion and pollution, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more sustainable environment.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference urges a favorable report on **House Bill 527**.

HB0527 - MTA - LOS - Maryland Transit Administrati

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FAV

March 27, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support – House Bill 527 – Maryland Transit Administration – Purple Line – Free Ridership and Promotional Materials and Services

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports House Bill 527 as amended and offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

As amended, House Bill 527 requires the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to develop and implement a program to provide free ridership on the Purple Line to individuals residing near the corridor¹ for the first month after transit service commences. Additionally, the bill requires MTA to use its in-house resources, including the Purple Line website, MTA website, print shop and design services, and other applicable resources to support advertising for businesses located near the corridor.

MTA appreciates the sponsor's willingness to work on amendments to the bill in the House of Delegates. The amendment to the ridership provision balances recognition of the community with the need to develop an expectation of fare service.² Concerning the advertising provisions of the bill, as amended – MTA will work closely with businesses along the corridor to offer opportunities for highlights on the Purple Line and MTA websites, as well as flyers or other applicable materials. This effort will begin this year and continue through the initial three months after the Purple Line is operational. MDOT remains committed to supporting local businesses during construction to ensure that businesses can remain open and thrive once Purple Line service begins.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information and issue House Bill 527 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Arnold
Administrator
Maryland Transit Administration
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Matt Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
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¹ Specifically, the provisions in the bill apply to individuals and businesses within a one quarter-mile radius of the Purple Line track.

² During the COVID-19 pandemic, many transit services went fare free to entice individuals to utilize transit. Ultimately, the industry discovered that it was harder to transition back to a fare-for-service model the longer free service is offered.

Takoma Park 2025 - HB 527 FWA - Purple Line - Sena

Uploaded by: Talisha Searcy

Position: FWA



CITY TAKOMA OF PARK MARYLAND

**Support with Amendments House Bill 527 – Maryland Transit Administration - Purple Line -
Free Ridership and Advertising
Senate Finance Committee
March 25, 2025**

The City of Takoma Park supports and urges favorable consideration of HB 527 with amendments.

The construction of the Purple Line has greatly impacted the businesses and neighborhoods in its vicinity for nearly 8 years. In the City of Takoma Park, traffic volume has skyrocketed through adjacent residential neighborhoods, with one community experiencing over 18,000 cars weekly on its tertiary road. Commute times have been unpredictable though almost always longer. Residents have had to navigate ever-changing detours and closures to reach their homes and the businesses they'd like to patronize. Moreover, the route due to construction is often plagued with safety hazards like potholes or blocked sidewalks that impact pedestrians and drivers alike.

While all will benefit from this new form of public transportation, steps could be taken to compensate for the disproportionate burden those closest to the development have endured. Bill HB 527 strives to address this need by allowing residents who live within a 1/4-mile radius of the Purple Line track to ride for free upon its launch. The bill will also support businesses that have been impacted through free advertising. Advertising for the businesses along the transit line will be mutually beneficial - boosting sales to local businesses while also encouraging the use of the Purple Line to reach services.

However, **the City of Takoma Park recommends amending HB 527 so that residents who live within a 1/2-mile radius of the Purple Line track would be eligible for free ridership.** Because of the size of the commercial lots adjacent to the Purple Line, many of Takoma Park's most impacted residential neighborhoods fall slightly outside of the 1/4-mile radius. This act would not just show appreciation and provide a measure of compensation for the hardships endured - it would jumpstart ridership once the Purple Line has opened.

The success of the Purple Line will depend upon public trust and usage, and those closest neighbors will be a critical share of users. The City of Takoma Park supports HB 527 with amendment and urges a favorable committee vote.