



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 80 — DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEPARTMENT OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT — PURPLE LINE TREE REPLACEMENT PLAN

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

JANUARY 21, 2021

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

Constructing the Purple Line has required the removal of mature trees in several areas along its route. While an expected outcome, the subsequent replanting of trees has not been in the communities where the removal took place. This change in placement leaves the affected communities vulnerable to environmental factors such as lowered air quality and increased heat island effect. The heat island effect occurs when buildings, roads, or other infrastructure absorbs heat and releases it into the area, resulting in increased temperatures.

The original plan regarding replanting was to do so within the affected communities. However, as things moved forward that plan changed, resulting in trees being planted miles from the original sites. While displacement follows the letter of the Forest Conservation Act (Natural Resource Article 5 - 1601-1613) it leaves communities without shade, making the pedestrian experience more difficult in the summer, worsening local air quality, and exacerbating the heat island effect in communities already burdened by multiple environmental justice challenges.

I have been advocating for tree replanting in the communities from which the trees were removed for over a year. I have asked agencies to work together to coordinate this effort. However, since this does not fall under any one agency's jurisdiction, progress has been very slow and, to date, no action has been taken.

HB80 would require the Department of Transportation, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment and the Department of Natural Resources, to create a plan to replant trees removed during the construction of the Purple Line in the communities from which they were removed. The bill requires that communities with greater environmental justice issues and those suffering from the heat island effect are prioritized for the initial replacement of trees. The aforementioned departments will need to consult with representatives of the communities - businesses, local governments, residents - so as to best serve them.

The passing of this bill and full implementation of its requirements will improve the living conditions and environmental circumstances of those who live along the Purple Line route.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB80.