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**Committee: Finance**

**Testimony on: SB 97 “Purple Line Marketing Act”**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: January 27, 2021**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB 97. It would require the Maryland Transit Administration, in partnership with local governments and transit systems, to develop and implement a marketing plan for the Purple Line now under construction that will connect communities from Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George’s County.

The bill also would require the Governor to include in the annual state budget an appropriation of \$500,000 from the Transportation Trust Fund for each of the fiscal years 2022 and 2023 to fund the development of the marketing plan.

The plan would highlight the Purple Line’s many features such as its interconnections with other local and interstate mass transit systems including Amtrak, Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) Train service, Metrorail, Metrobus, and agencies that provide local bus services. The marketing plan also would identify pedestrian and bicycle access to Purple Line stations, and include a public safety education program to prevent collisions, injuries and fatalities on or around railroad tracks, rail grade crossings and light rail tracks.

Having a marketing plan to generate interest in the 16-mile light rail Purple Line before the start of operations and to promote use of the transit line after the start of operations makes a lot of sense because it would increase ridership and awareness of the many benefits of the Purple Line.

The more that ridership can be increased by the marketing plan, the greater the foot traffic that will be generated to support local businesses near the stations, the more transit-oriented development will be encouraged which is integral to smart growth, and more people will be able to get to jobs some distance away from their homes that they are unable to access now.

Another major benefit of developing and implementing a marketing plan is that it would encourage more people to use transit and leave their car at home, which would lessen the amount of air pollution emitted from vehicle tailpipes. The transportation sector is Maryland’s number one generator of greenhouse gas as well as other health-damaging toxic emissions, so the more people use transit and not their cars, the better it is for our health and the environment. Increasing ridership on the Purple Line also would lessen traffic on many roads which should decrease traffic congestion.

In summary, developing and implementing a Purple Line marketing plan would generate interest in the light-rail line and increase ridership once the transit system is in operation. Developing such a plan would be a worthwhile investment, and we urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.