

February 14, 2025

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support with Amendments – House Bill 527 – Maryland Transit Administration - Purple Line - Free Ridership and Advertising

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

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

As drafted, HB 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 3 months after transit service commences. Additionally, the bill requires MTA to provide advertising space on the Purple Line transit vehicles and at Purple Line stations, at no cost, to businesses located near the corridor.

MTA appreciates the intent of HB 527 and is committed to working with the sponsor on language that accomplishes the goals underlying the bill. Concerning the ridership provision, MTA recommends reducing the time for free ridership from 3 months to 1 month. This amendment balances recognition of the community with the need to develop an expectation of fare service.²

MDOT recently launched its small business grant program to support small businesses impacted by construction along the Purple Line alignment. The program provides grants of up to \$50,000 to offset revenue loss and provides funding for marketing support to these businesses. MTA recommends using 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 along the corridor, as opposed to advertising on Purple Line Transit Vehicles and at stations. MTA will work closely with businesses along the corridor to offer opportunities for highlights

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.

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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 months after the Purple Line is operational.³ 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 during its deliberation of House Bill 527 and issue a favorable report with the suggested amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

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³ Presently and unlike the ridership provision, there is no cap on the requirement to provide advertising services. While MTA commits to advertising efforts that begin in advance of revenue service, MTA recommends including a limit on the advertising provision after transit service begins.