

Testimony.HB527_Delegate Lorig Charkoudian.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Lorig Charkoudian

Position: FAV

LORIG CHARKOUDIAN
Legislative District 20
Montgomery County

Economic Matters Committee

Subcommittees

Public Utilities

Chair, Unemployment Insurance



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 220
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3423 · 301-858-3423
800-492-7122 Ext. 3423
Lorig.Charkoudian@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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

TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE LORIG CHARKOUDIAN
FEBRUARY 14, 2025

Chairs Barnes and Korman, Vice Chairs Chang and Boyce, and Members of the Appropriations Committee and Members the Environment and Transportation 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, 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 ¼ of a mile of the line will receive a pass to ride the Purple Line for free for three months.
- Businesses within a ¼ of a mile of the line will receive advertising space on Purple Line transit vehicles and at Purple Line stations at no cost to the businesses.

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/.

HB527_ Maryland Transit Administration - Purple Li

Uploaded by: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

Position: FAV



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

Lowe House Office Building, 6 Bladen Street, Room 200 · Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Phone 410-841-3374 | 301-858-3374 · 800-492-7122 Ext. 3374 · Fax 410-841-3342 | 301-858-3342
latino.caucus@house.state.md.us · www.mdlatinocaucus.org

ASHANTI MARTINEZ, CHAIR
GABRIEL ACEVERO, VICE-CHAIR
DENI TAVERAS, TREASURER
JOE VOGEL, SECRETARY
JASON A. AVILA GARCIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
Delegate Regina T. Boyce, Vice Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee Members
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus
DATE: February 14, 2025
RE: HB527 – Maryland Transit Administration – Purple Line Free
Ridership and Advertising

The MLLC supports HB527 – Maryland Transit Administration – Purple Line – Free Ridership and Advertising

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB527.

This bill provides residents within a ¼ mile radius of the Purple Line with a pass to ride the Purple Line for free for three months and businesses with free advertising on the Purple Line for the first three months of its operation.

Residents and businesses who live and work along and near construction of the Purple Line have endured daily disruptions including road closures, traffic detours, rough roads, and construction noises. Local businesses along the route have experienced significant declines in customers as construction diverts traffic, blocks roads, and generally gives the appearance of the area being closed.¹ 32% of individuals along the Purple Line corridor census tracts are Latino and 26% of individuals are Black. With Black and Latino communities making up a large portion of the population along the Purple Line route, they have been disproportionately impacted by the daily disruptions of construction.²

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB527.

¹ ['We're Still Hanging on!': Businesses and Residents in Silver Spring on the Continued Purple Line Construction](#)

² [Preserving Communities Along the Purple Line](#)

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAVHB527_.pdf

Uploaded by: Michelle Zelaya

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 14, 2025

HB527

**Maryland Transit Administration - Purple Line - Free Ridership and Advertising
Environment and Transportation 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**.

MSCRF_ support letter_house1.pdf

Uploaded by: Rama Modali

Position: FAV

Rama Modali
REPROCELL USA
9000 Virginia Manor Rd., Suite 207
Beltsville, MD 20705
rmodali@reprocell.com
301-470-3362

Dear Chairman of House Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee members:

My name is Rama Modali, a resident of Anne Arundel County and I work as CEO at REPROCELL USA. My company is in Prince Georges County. As a CEO and grant awardee of MSCRF, I am seeking your support to maintain MSCRF funding at \$20.5 million for fiscal year 2026. This investment is essential to sustain Maryland's economic growth, innovation, and healthcare advancements and retaining talent in the state.

Over the last few years, MSCRF's investment of \$1.4 million in Reprocell has yielded tens of million dollars in sales revenue, with annual revenues approaching 10 million dollars each year. Notably, 80% of the REPROCELL's annual revenue comes from customers outside of Maryland, contributing to the economy of Maryland. This investment from MSCRF has also helped REPROCELL to expand our workforce from 10 to 26 employees with high paying salaried positions. We were able to recruit scientists from renowned institutions such as Johns Hopkins, Yale, University of Michigan and Case Western Reserve.

MSCRF support is enormous, particularly when we talk about bringing some unique products and services to Maryland. In May 2024, REPROCELL inaugurated a state-of-the-art GMP biomanufacturing laboratory facility partially funded by MSCRF through its Manufacturing Assistance Grant Program. This facility meets the growing needs of companies and scientists propelling the development of stem cell therapies and treatments. We expect to provide GMP clinical-grade products and services to companies around the globe, which will drive our revenues and bolster Maryland's economy. Furthermore, we expect this growth trajectory to continue, with the company's operational footprint and workforce in Maryland projected to expand by 50% over the next five years. MSCRF provides resources beyond funding to companies and researchers in Maryland. It fosters collaboration by connecting its grantees who share similar interests, thereby enhancing the life science ecosystem in Maryland. This support has directly benefited REPROCELL, enabling us to sign two collaborative agreements with scientists at Johns Hopkins and another at Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences. Such public-private partnerships nurture a vibrant ecosystem where innovation flourishes and lives are transformed. MSCRF is instrumental in propelling Maryland toward becoming the leading innovative economy in regenerative medicine. Given this mission, I respectfully advocate for state's continued commitment in sustaining MSCRF budget of \$20.5 million.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rama Modali

CEO

El Comalito HB527 Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Silvia Huevo

Position: FAV

HB 527 - SUPPORT
Silvia Huevo
El Comalito
lopezhuevo@gmail.com (240) 505-8878

HB 527 SUPPORT
Maryland Transit Administration - Purple Line - Free Ridership and Advertising

Environment and Transportation Committee
February 14th, 2025

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee and Chair Ben Barnes and Vice Chair Mark Chang of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Silvia Huevo. I am a resident of Montgomery County, an ex resident of Prince George's County and a business owner along the purple line corridor in both of our beautiful counties. I am the second generation owner of El Comalito, a Salvadoran restaurant with a 20 year history in our community. I am writing today in support of Bill HB527. My story is unique in that I have been able to witness the impact of the purple line construction all the way from Riverdale Park to Bethesda.

It's clear to me that there are communities along the purple line route that are being more negatively affected by this construction than others. In particular the Langley Park/Takoma Park and Riverdale Park areas. In Riverdale Park, the congestion along Kenilworth Avenue has made it difficult for our customers to reach our side of Riverdale. The same congestion and disruption to traffic patterns, both vehicular and pedestrian, have had a serious impact in the Langley Park/Takoma Park District. Our location has seen a decrease in sales since the beginning of the construction project. Pedestrians who live within walking distance of our establishment, cannot safely access our side of the Hampshire Langley Shopping Center. It almost feels as if our community has been split up between the four corners of the University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue intersection. Customers within driving distance are actively avoiding our location and are opting for visiting us in other locations that are further away because of the difficulty in accessing our business. I am lucky enough to sit on the board of the Takoma Langley Crossroads Development Authority, and have heard from fellow board members who are also business owners in this district how their stores literally cannot be accessed due to cones blocking the entrances of their shopping centers. Some of our neighbors have seen 20% to 30% decrease in sales. Some may be more and others are already being displaced. It is my hope that this bill could help provide marketing opportunities for some of the businesses that are clearly hurting due to this construction project. Imagine being a small business owner who made it out of the pandemic, barely able to bounce back and now have major construction happening right outside your door. We are hopeful that this project benefits everyone along the corridor, especially those in more vulnerable areas. I appreciate your time and for considering this testimony as you deliberate on bill HB527.

HB0527 - LOSwA -MTA - Maryland Transit Administrat

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FWA

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.

The Honorable Marc Korman
Page Two

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,

Holly Arnold
Administrator
Maryland Transit Administration
410-767-3943
Harnold@mdot.maryland.gov

Matt Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-404-9846
Mmickler@mdot.maryland.gov

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.

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

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
House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 14, 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.