How The Purple Line Came To Be

Makeover Montgomery Conference
Silver Spring, Maryland
May 11, 2018

Nick Brand
Gus Bauman
Ben Ross
How the Purple Line Came To Be

Part 1

Nick Brand
From Georgetown Branch Trolley to Purple Line

30 years of working to plan & fund a cross-suburb light rail line
Bethesda & Red Line (west leg)
Silver Spring, Red Line (east leg), MARC, Transit Center
Langley Park & Transit Center
College Park, University of Maryland, & Green Line
New Carrollton, Orange Line, MARC, & Amtrak
The original Georgetown Branch rail line

- Opened from Silver Spring to Georgetown, through Lyttonsville, Chevy Chase, Bethesda, & D.C. in 1909
- Delivered coal, building supplies, chlorine, etc.
The original Georgetown Branch rail line

Crossing the Columbia Country Club, 1947
from Washington Star, courtesy Ben Sullivan
The original Georgetown Branch rail line

Under East-West Highway, in Town of Chevy Chase

Photo by William Duvall, 1972; courtesy Ben Sullivan
The original Georgetown Branch rail line

- Declining rail traffic in the 1970s & 80s led to including the line as a potential transit line in County plans
- In 1985 the railroad stopped service and soon abandoned the line
Georgetown Branch Trolley & Trail
Bethesda – Silver Spring - 1986

• County study of joint trolley & trail started
• Coalitions form for and against trolley and for trail
  • Neighborhood associations and towns
  • Greater Bethesda Chevy Chase Coalition
  • Columbia Country Club
  • Action Committee for Transit
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Part 2

Gus Bauman
From 4-mile trolley to 16-mile light rail
Georgetown Branch Trolley & Trail Progress 1988 - 1990

- 1988 - rail line bought by Montgomery County – Council vote unanimous
- 1988 - MDOT study found GBTT most cost effective light-rail project in the State
- January, 1990 - Master plan adopted by County for the Trolley and Trail
Georgetown Branch Trolley & Trail Progress 1988 - 1990

• 1990 – Governor Schaeffer announced $70 million available for construction, & legislature included in capital program

• Planning and design begun by State MTA
Political stalemate and steps backward
1991 - 1994

• 1991 - cost increases and transportation funding shortfall stop design work

• 1992 – State decision to apply for Federal funding – beginning years-long study period

• 1993 - Interim trail proposed by trail groups and trolley opponents- would take up tracks

• Interim historic trolley alongside trail proposed by ACT – would keep tracks

• 1994 - anti-trolley County Executive elected; planning stops
The Purple Line emerges

- MD DOT widening the Beltway study (1997-2002) includes light rail alternative
- Light rail line recommended, with expansion from Silver Spring to College Park & New Carrollton
- Named as a color to highlight interaction with Metro lines
- Support coalition greatly enlarged by addition of Prince George’s county and University of Maryland
How the Purple Line Came To Be

Part 3

Ben Ross
Back from the Dead After 1995

Two-Pronged Revival Strategy

- Grass-roots membership group (Action Committee for Transit)
- Broad coalition (Purple Line Now)
- ACT first built support, then business & labor got active in coalition
# Candidate Scorecard

Where the Candidates Stand on Transit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Purple Line</th>
<th>Ride-On Bus</th>
<th>Corridor Cities Transitway</th>
<th>People Before Cars</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At Large (DEM)</td>
<td>George LEVENTHAL</td>
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<td>Hans RIEMER</td>
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<td>District 1 (DEM)</td>
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<td>County Executive (REP)</td>
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<td>Douglas ROSENFIELD</td>
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**Key:**
- Purple Line: + supports light rail or planned without qualification.
- Ride-On Bus: + gives high priority to preserving bus service.
- Corridor Cities Transitway: + supports building of transit line from Shady Grove to Clarksburg before widening onto roads.
- People Before Cars: + agrees that building walkable neighborhoods near Metro should not be held back to increase capacity.

You may bring this chart with you into the voting booth.

Ratings are based on voting records, questionnaires, and public statements. Candidate responses unranked in parentheses are not shown here. Full answers to all candidate questionnaires received are on web.

For more information, visit acfortransit.org
The Purple Line is a proposed light rail Metro line that will run parallel to the Capital Beltway. It will connect suburban communities and job centers, providing a quality alternative to driving on the congested Beltway. The line would serve the town centers of Bethesda, Silver Spring, Langley Park, College Park, and New Carrollton, with two stops on the University of Maryland campus. It will tie together four Metro lines and three MARC commuter lines.

By linking major suburban centers and existing rail and bus lines, the Bethesda-to-New Carrollton light rail line will cut travel time for tens of thousands of area residents. For example, travel time from Langley Park to Bethesda will drop to about 15 minutes.

In the future, the Purple Line could be extended westward to Tysons Corner and eastward to Largo. A second segment could cross the new Wilson Bridge from Suitland through Oxon Hill to Alexandria, leading eventually to a rail line that encircles the city.

Internet: WWW.ACTFORTRANSIT.ORG and WWW.INNERPURPLELINE.ORG
Neighborhood Letters

- Signed by resident in each neighborhood
- In envelope with color flyer, coupon & return envelope
- Passed out door-to-door
- 50,000 homes over 6 years
- ACT paid membership peaked at 1200
Strategy of 99% vs 1%

- Purple Line benefits all, not just the poor
  - Emphasize travel to Bethesda restaurants in neighborhood letters
- Demonstrate that opposition comes from a small privileged minority
Bring Country Club Out from Behind the Curtain

On Connecticut Ave Sidewalk in Front of Country Club
Purple Line Now Coalition

- Business, labor, environmentalists, transit advocates
- Honesty
- Mutual trust
- Agree to disagree on other issues
- Shared annoyance at ability of small group to obstruct
Governor’s Announcement - 2001

We don’t travel carts & Mercedes
NEED THE RAIL

BUILD LIGHT RAIL
BETHESDA TO MARC CARDS

Legend
2002: Opponent Elected Governor

Gov. Ehrlich at a fundraiser at Columbia Country Club
2006: Supporter Elected Governor

Gov. O’Malley announces funding for the Purple Line
2014: Purple Line Again Issue

Maryland gubernatorial hopefuls debate Purple Line but rarely discuss traffic relief
New Governor Reverses Course
Purple Line Moves Ahead
Current Status