

Statement on Purple Line Favoring Light Rail Crescent Trail Alignment 1.09.09
Duplicates Testimony at Purple Line Hearing, 11.18.08
National 4H Center, 7100 Connecticut Avenue, Bethesda, MD

I am Ralph Bennett. I represent the Affordable Housing Conference of Montgomery County. We are affordable housing advocates who sponsor three events each year to stimulate interest in affordable housing in Montgomery County and to provide occasions where advocates and providers meet for education advocacy and networking.

We are enthusiastically in favor of a fixed-route rail option for the Purple Line and believe it is long overdue.

The ability to afford housing relates to the cost of living and, while convention suggests that no one should spend more than one-third of their gross income for housing, we know that many families in the region which will be served by the Purple Line pay much more than that.

Transportation typically consumes another 15% to 20% of such families' total budgets and is essential for access to employment.

At current prices, Metrobus costs \$2.50 per day from College Park to Bethesda, a total of \$625.00 for a year. Great price - poor service – the trip takes more than one hour, leaving the car as the only viable alternative. Car ownership costs between \$6,000 and \$7,000 per year – 10 or 11 times the cost of public transportation.

According to a consultant for the Town of Chevy Chase which is expensively opposed to the rail alternative, light rail is faster than bus rapid transit. The consultant contends that a trip to Bethesda to College Park will take 30 minutes on the Light Rail Transit and 50 minutes on Bus Rapid Transit along the opponents' favored route.

Alternatives to bus and car are clearly needs for the region for the 21st century – many American cities have shown that Light Rail Transit is the answer.

The convenience and low-use cost of Light Rail Transit are obvious and overdue for all of us, but the benefits will most dramatically affect the lives of our lower income neighbors who now commute to work and school around the 495 Capital Beltway.

Please build the Purple Line on the Crescent Trail alignment – soon.

Thank you.

Ralph Bennett
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