

## **Purple Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Purple Line?**

The Purple Line LPA is a 16-mile light rail line that would extend from Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George's County providing transit service for people moving east-west in the corridor. It will link both branches of the Washington Metro's Red Line at Bethesda and Silver Spring, the Green Line at College Park, and the Orange Line at New Carrollton. The project would also connect all three MARC commuter rail lines, Amtrak, and local bus services.

The Purple Line would be largely surface-running with one short tunnel section, one aerial section, and several underpasses and overpasses of busy roadways. The Purple Line will operate mainly in dedicated or exclusive lanes, allowing for fast, reliable transit operations.

### **Who would the Purple Line serve?**

One of the key objectives of the Purple Line is to provide a faster, more efficient and more reliable transit option for those traveling east-west in the corridor, as well as those who want to access the existing north-south rail lines. In meeting this goal, the Purple Line LPA will improve connections to the regional Metrorail system and to other rail and bus services. The project will also improve access to jobs by providing better connections between the central business districts and major activity centers along the corridor, including Bethesda, Silver Spring, Takoma/Langley Park, University of Maryland/College Park, Riverdale Park, and New Carrollton. The Purple Line will also serve the large populations in the corridor that are heavily dependent on transit, help to support smart growth initiatives and promote community revitalization and transit oriented development where planned.

### **How will the Purple Line improve transit in the Washington DC region?**

The Purple Line represents the next generation of mass transit in the Washington region. Rather than a radial line to downtown Washington based on the needs of the citizens in Prince George's and Montgomery counties, the Purple Line connects vital Maryland communities. The Purple Line will fill the void that is currently missing in the Washington DC region of an east-west transit line. By not only connecting to the current Metro system, but also to MARC commuter rail lines, Amtrak and local bus services, communities will be better connected and have a faster and more reliable route to get to where they need to go.

### **What is the planning process for a project like the Purple Line?**

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) recently completed the first phase of the project, the Planning – Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) phase. The announcement of the LPA will be followed by the Preliminary Engineering/Final Environmental Impact Statement (PE/FEIS) phase. During this phase more detailed environmental studies, and financial and construction plans will be completed. Upon completion of the PE/FEIS process a "Record of Decision" (ROD) will be sought from the Federal Transit Administration. The ROD formally transitions a project from the planning and environmental process into design and construction.

### **Were communities involved in the planning process?**

Yes, the Purple Line project team launched numerous initiatives to reach out to local communities during the study process. The MTA held open houses throughout the study area to inform the public about the progress and direction of the project, and to solicit input from local residents. Six rounds of public meetings have been conducted for the project so far. Public hearings on the Purple Line AA/DEIS were then held in November 2008.

The team also convened eight location-specific focus groups that have met throughout the study. These groups are composed of representatives of the local community and civic organizations, who provided valuable insight and input on the development and evaluation of alternatives. Additionally project team members have met with many individual community associations throughout the project.

### **When will construction begin?**

Under the current schedule, construction on the Purple Line would begin in 2013 following the completion of the planning and engineering phases of the project. Operation of the Purple Line could begin in 2016. However, this date is contingent on the availability of federal and state funding.

### **How much would it cost to build the Purple Line?**

In 2009 dollars the cost to build the Purple Line would be approximately \$1.5 billion.

### **Why was Light Rail Transit (LRT) selected?**

Despite its higher costs, light rail offered several key benefits compared to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options. Light rail provides for faster travel times; this resulted in ridership projections for light rail that are approximately 10,000 daily transit trips higher than for the BRT alternatives. By attracting more riders and new transit trips than BRT, light rail would generate more user benefits and reduce more auto trips from roadways.

Due to its ability to provide a higher passenger-carrying capacity, light rail meets long-term capacity concerns because of its ability to accommodate future ridership growth beyond what is projected for 2030. An investment in public infrastructure of this scale must look beyond a 25-year time frame. Light rail offers economic development and community revitalization benefits by providing improved mobility and accessibility to the station areas, thus encouraging community investment. Because of these benefits, there was strong support for light rail, and particularly for the Medium Light Rail Alternative from the public, both counties, and most of the local jurisdictions in the Purple Line corridor.

### **How will a LRT system fit into our community?**

Light Rail Transit is an electric railway system that operates single cars or short trains and is designed to operate either in exclusive right-of-way or in mixed traffic. LRT gets its power from overhead electrical lines. LRT vehicles are designed to fit well within a travel lane, and are required to travel no faster than the posted speed. LRT systems do not need the third rail like heavy rail systems, so pedestrians and vehicles can safely cross them. Stations will be designed

through a collaborative process with communities, so that they fit into the community and are places where people come together.