

**Maryland National Capital Purple Line
Bethesda to New Carrollton, Maryland
Preliminary Engineering
(Rating Assigned September 2011)**

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Light Rail Transit 16.3 Miles, 21 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$1,925.46 Million
Section 5309 New Starts Share (\$YOE):	\$962.60 Million (50.0%)
Annual Forecast Year Operating Cost:	\$58.00 Million
Ridership Forecast (2030):	60,100 Average Weekday Trips 15,900 Daily New Trips
Opening Year Ridership Forecast (2020):	51,200 Average Weekday Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium-High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium-High
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium-High

Project Description: The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) proposes to build the Maryland National Capital Purple Line, a light rail transit (LRT) line between Bethesda in Montgomery County and New Carrollton in Prince George’s County, passing through Silver Spring, Takoma/Langley Park, College Park/University of Maryland, and Riverdale. The route would cross several major arterial roadways and existing transit routes that travel between Maryland and Washington, DC, inside the National Capital Beltway (I-495). The National Capital Purple Line would include dedicated or semi-exclusive fixed guideway on surface streets that allow cross traffic. The route would include approximately three miles of semi-exclusive guideway on the Georgetown Branch right-of-way, an abandoned railroad corridor between Bethesda and Silver Spring. The project includes 16 at-grade stations, three elevated stations, and two below-grade stations; the purchase of 53 light rail vehicles and construction of two rail car maintenance facilities. The project will not include any new park-and-ride facilities. Service would be provided 19 hours per day on weekdays, 20 hours per day on weekends, with six-minute headways during peak periods, and 10- to 20-minute headways during off-peak periods.

Project Purpose: The National Capital Purple Line would provide fast and reliable transit service in this cross-county corridor, improving access to several business districts and activity centers along the route. It would connect passengers via transfers to existing radial transit routes including branches of the Metro heavy rail Red, Green, and Orange lines operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The project would connect with three commuter rail lines of the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) system at Silver Spring, Greenbelt, and New Carrollton, and with Amtrak on the Northeast Corridor at New Carrollton. While the project corridor has extensive radial transit service crossing the proposed route, the only existing transit available for travel along the length of the corridor is bus service. This bus service is slow and unreliable—much of it operating at less than 10 miles per hour on circuitous routes. The National Capital Purple Line would provide significant travel time savings; for example, a peak period bus trip on parallel roads between Bethesda and Silver Spring will take 40 minutes in 2030, while the same trip on the National Capital Purple Line will take only 10 minutes. This reduced travel time would improve access both to National Capital Purple Line destinations and to connecting transit services along the route.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: Following publication of the draft alternatives analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in October 2008, the State of Maryland selected as the locally preferred alternative a LRT line between Bethesda and New Carrollton in August 2009. The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) approved the Purple Line in the TPB's 2006 financially constrained long-range transportation plan (CLRP) in October 2006. TPB subsequently amended the CLRP to include updated capital cost estimates for the project in October 2009 and May 2011. FTA approved the National Capital Purple Line into preliminary engineering in October 2011. MTA anticipates approval of the Final EIS in late 2012, receipt of a Record of Decision and entry into final design in mid-2013, receipt of a Full Funding Grant Agreement in mid-2015, and start of revenue service in mid-2020.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan		
<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal: Section 5309 New Starts	\$962.60	50.0%
State: Maryland Transportation Trust Fund (TTF)	\$962.86	50.0%
Total:	\$1,925.46	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium

The land use rating reflects the population and employment densities within ½-mile of proposed station areas.

- Average population density in all station areas is 8,170 persons per square mile. Total employment within the project station areas is 141,770.
- The project corridor connects the inner ring suburbs north of Washington, D.C. Land use ranges from the Bethesda and Silver Spring Central Business Districts (CBDs) to the University of Maryland campus, with other station areas dominated by strip commercial development and residential neighborhoods of single family homes, garden apartments, townhouses, and intermittent high-rise apartment/condominium buildings. The character of land use is clearly transit-supportive only in the three station areas in Bethesda and Silver Spring.
- Parking supply is constrained in the Bethesda and Silver Spring CBDs. Free parking generally is available, however, in most of the other station areas. The daily parking rate is in the \$10-\$15 range in the Bethesda CBD and \$8 in the Silver Spring CBD.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium-High

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium-High

(50 percent of summary economic development rating)

- State policies support the concentration of growth in existing cities and towns. The entire Purple Line corridor is located within a Priority Funding Area eligible for growth-related State infrastructure funding.
- Montgomery County has a growth policy that directs development to areas where public services are in place. Prince George's County has identified most of the Purple Line Corridor for concentrated growth and provides incentives for high-density housing and mixed-use infill and redevelopment. Plans for new development and redevelopment with transit-supportive character have been developed for over half of the station areas.
- Land use plans generally are implemented through zoning and development project approvals. Zoning in the Bethesda and Silver Spring CBDs allows development at transit-supportive densities. Prince George's County has recently enacted new zoning policies to encourage higher-density and mixed-use development at a number of locations, including Purple Line station areas.
- The State of Maryland provides significant incentives to promote compact development patterns with transit supportive characteristics. In addition, local governments have the authority to use tax increment financing and special taxing districts to pay for transit-oriented development infrastructure. Six of the project station areas are in designated Enterprise Zones, in which businesses are eligible for tax incentives. Prince George's County has enacted policies to encourage high-density, mixed-use transit-supportive development, including financing, tax deferral, streamlined development review processes, and affordable housing tax credits. A tax increment financing district has been established in the New Carrollton Station area.

Performance and Impacts of Policies – Medium-High

(50 percent of summary economic development rating)

- Prime examples of successful transit-supportive development are the Bethesda and Silver Spring CBDs, where land use policies have played a key role in rejuvenating the areas around Metrorail stations. Over 3,500 residential units and 2.8 million square feet (sq. ft.) of office, commercial, and institutional development currently are either approved or proposed in project station areas within Prince George's County.
- Substantial population and employment growth is forecast for the corridor, particularly in station areas. Expanded transportation capacity and new transit connections in the corridor are expected to increase employment opportunities for residents and help to concentrate growth.

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Factor	Rating	Comments
Local Financial Commitment Rating	Medium-High	
Non-Section 5309 New Starts Share (20% of summary financial rating)	Medium	The New Starts share of the project is 50.0 percent.
Project Capital Financial Plan (50% of summary financial rating)	Medium-High	
Capital Condition (25% of capital plan rating)	Medium-High	The average age of Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) bus fleet is 7.2 years, which is in-line with the industry average. The most recent bond ratings, issued in June 2010, are as follows: Moody's Investors Service, Aa1; Fitch's, AA+; and Standard & Poor's Corporation, AAA.
Commitment of Funds (25% of capital plan rating)	Medium-High	More than 25 percent of the non-Section 5309 New Starts funds are budgeted, with the remainder planned. The source of funds is the State Transportation Trust Fund.
Capital Cost Estimates, Assumptions and Financial Capacity (50% of capital plan rating)	Medium	Revenue assumptions are mostly consistent with historical data. The capital cost estimate is reasonable. The financial plan shows that MTA along with Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has the financial capacity to cover cost increases or funding shortfalls equal to at least 25 percent of estimated project costs.
Project Operating Financial Plan (30% of summary financial rating)	Medium-High	
Operating Condition (25% of operating plan rating)	Medium	MDOT's current ratio of assets to liabilities as reported in its most recent audited financial statement is 1.4 (FY 2010). There have been no service cutbacks or cash flow shortfalls in recent years.
Commitment of Funds (25% of operating plan rating)	High	More than 75 percent of operating funding is committed, while the remainder is budgeted. The main revenue sources include Section 5307 Federal formula funds, MDOT operating subsidy, farebox and other operating revenues.
O&M Cost Estimates, Assumptions, and Financial Capacity (50% of operating plan rating)	Medium	Assumed growth in operating expenses and farebox collections is consistent with historical experience. Projected cash balances and reserve accounts exceed 12 percent (1.5 months) of annual system-wide operating expenses.

Purple Line Locally Preferred Alternative

