



# UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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The Honorable John D. Porcari  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
7201 Corporate Center Drive  
P. O. Box 548  
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Dear John:

The University of Maryland has substantial concerns about the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA's) preferred alignment for the Purple Line through the campus along Campus Drive. I hope you will work with me to find an alternative alignment that serves both State needs and those of the University. The Purple Line needs an alignment that protects the long-established intent of a pedestrian and bicycle friendly central campus core, preserves the beauty and ambiance of the campus, and meets MTA's goal to provide rapid and reliable mass transit.

The University of Maryland Facilities Master Plan for 2001-2020 calls for a campus central core that "encourages and invites pedestrians to move freely and safely across campus." It specifically excludes cross campus commuter transit and "allows only restricted auto access" primarily to service campus buildings that would be unreachable by vehicles otherwise. The spirit of the plan is to provide a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment that minimizes conflict with vehicles. The prohibited area for cross-campus vehicular traffic is bounded by Regents Drive on the east, Valley Drive and its extension into Lot 1 on the north and west, and the edge of campus on the south.

The Master Plan calls for an internal shuttle to move people around the perimeter of the central core and down its center along Campus Drive. Along the perimeter and internal shuttle route are several Campus Neighborhood Hubs where Shuttle UM Commuter Buses would stop. Shuttle UM Commuter Buses are excluded from Campus Drive between Valley Drive (Lot 1) and Regents drive.

A dedicated transit route for the Purple Line that would come down Campus Drive and through the center of this vehicle-restricted area is in direct contradiction of the Master Plan both in spirit and recommendations. The Campus Drive alignment violates our Master Plan and destroys a core asset of the University.

Many coming to the University are moved by the striking beauty of the campus. All agree it is among the most cherished assets of the University. Visitors and prospective students are usually captured by this ambiance, friendliness and beauty. The "M" in the

circle at Regents-Campus Drive is a signature for all Marylanders. Routing the Purple Line up against the M, with its unavoidable barriers, overhead wires and dedicated tracks, would ruin both the beauty and the symbolism of this icon. When first entering the campus from Route 1, instead of seeing the green vistas and welcoming M, one would see overhead wires, dedicated tracks, barriers dividing the campus and a campus core dedicated principally to serving a cross-county commuter transit system rather than a university community.

According to a recent MTA study a UM Commuter Shuttle comes down Campus Drive every two minutes. A Purple Line route to the campus may reduce some of this bus transit to campus, but the growth of the UM Research Park at the Metro, the new student housing developing around the University in areas that will not be served by the Purple Line, and the increasing demand for access to the UM Commuter Shuttle by College Park residents, all point to the number of UM Commuter Shuttles not diminishing significantly and more likely continuing to increase. According to MTA's plan, a Purple Line train would pass through campus every 3 minutes during peak hours and every 6 minutes at other times. Dedicated tracks down Campus Drive would become permanent and prohibit the campus central core from becoming the pedestrian and bicycle friendly zone envisioned.

MTA is aware of the pedestrian safety problem created by the Purple Line. Its study showed that today, twenty-five thousand people cross Campus Drive between the Cole Student Activities Center and Regents Drive daily. While twenty-five thousand pedestrians is a significant safety challenge for trains running through campus at 16 mph (50% faster than current traffic), that number under-predicts the pedestrian crossings expected in the near term. With the planned new University Teaching Center on Campus Drive serving 10,000 students daily, the completion of the Tawes renovation serving 8,000 students per day, the renovations of central campus buildings, and the new bioscience research building, the pedestrian crossings of Campus Drive will increase substantially. MTA's plan to channel pedestrian crossings to one half of the current locations does not work for the massive pedestrian streams crossing Campus Drive. The plan does not show how the Purple Line trains will respond to pedestrians; nor does it address pedestrian crossings at points that are not designated crossings; nor does it address the intent to have a pedestrian friendly campus core. Either the foot traffic will be put at risk, or more likely pedestrian crossings will be prevented by substantial barriers and fences that split the campus. Neither of these alternatives is satisfactory. The only other apparent option, which appears extremely unlikely, would be for the trains to yield to pedestrians as is currently the practice with all traffic.

Also, the Campus Drive alignment passes through Parking Lot 1 and traverses all or parts of lots C1 and perhaps C3, causing significant parking loss. Replacement parking in garages costs more than \$15,000 per space. The campus drive alignment also takes part of our Engineering Fields and other spaces. In considering the costs of putting the Purple Line on the campus, I presume that MTA will add the additional campus costs resulting from any selected route into the total project costs. Your assurance of that presumption would be appreciated.

So what are the alternatives to MTA's preferred alignment? As an alternative route, the Stadium Drive alignment is close to the spirit of the Master Plan. While it traverses the central core of the campus, pedestrian access across it is already limited by Byrd Stadium, the football practice fields and the baseball stadium. The connected buildings housing chemistry, physics and engineering are also pedestrian barriers. It appears that the Stadium Drive alignment would not impinge on the M or on the Engineering Fields. Compared to other routes, locating the Purple Line along this alignment would be much less disruptive to the spirit of a free and open central core for pedestrian and bicycle travel.

An open question with any route is the impact on ground motion and electromagnetic fields induced by the light rail on the increasingly precise (nanoscale) work being undertaken in the laboratories in engineering, biosciences and physical sciences. Mitigation of these issues may be necessary to preserve the hundreds of millions of dollars in annual research in this campus core. At least one of our professors has talked of impacts on his research from light rail at another university.

Another alignment is one coming in on Adelphi Road onto Campus Drive, then turning right down Mowatt Lane to Knox Road, then to Paint Branch and on to the College Park Metro. Stops could be located at the Art Sociology circle and Route 1. This alignment would not penetrate the central core of the campus thus satisfying the Master Plan, would not create ground motions in the engineering and science sectors, would not disrupt the vistas and beauty of the campus, would be the most direct route to the Metro and would provide excellent transportation to the campus and to downtown College Park.

The suggested alternative alignments deserve careful consideration. I would hope to continue the Purple Line discussion with you, and look forward to your comments. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Douglas M. Duncan  
Vice President  
for Administrative Affairs

cc: William E. Kirwan, Chancellor USM  
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