

Dear Doug,

I've had the pleasure of speaking with you on several occasions and have been graciously invited to the Vice President of Administrative Affairs office by you, Frank Brewer, and John Porcari. I hope this email can continue that dialogue. Specifically, I am writing you because I would hate to see miscommunication, misperceptions, misinformation, and misunderstandings lead to more missed opportunities for transit in College Park. I hope to head off some ill-conceived compromise by pointing out the clear oversights of your Nov. 19 th letter to John Porcari about the Purple Line (attached).

I helped found "RethinkCollegePark.net" because I believe that a lack of communication and inconsistent information across stakeholder groups needlessly hinders crucial improvement to College Park. That is precisely what happened with the College Park Green Line station and it is precisely what is happening now with the Purple Line.

I've always held that the Administration's insistence on a route other than the MTA proposal on Campus Drive is motivated by a fundamental misunderstanding of light rail. The Administration has not given the MTA's current recommendation the consideration it deserves and without careful consideration, the Administration risks repeating the Elkins administration's failure advocate that the Green Line be brought to campus. In the early 1970s, the Maryland Dept. of Transportation considered several Green Line stops on campus, but then-President Elkins failed to advocate any of these locations out of fear that it would bring unwanted change to campus. (<http://rethinkcollegepark.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/CollegeParkStationStudy.pdf>).

The Campus Master Plan was signed almost 7 years ago by the Board of Regents. Given that planning for the Purple Line was at a very preliminary stage at that time and given that much of the transportation proposals in the document have not been pursued to date by the Administration, I see little reason to quibble over specifics of that plan. Suffice it to say that the spirit of the plan overwhelmingly favors transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists over single-occupancy automobiles. Facilitate transit, move people (not cars) and limit automobile/pedestrian conflicts by pushing cars to the campus periphery. That is the basic thrust of the Master Plan and anyone who examines the document will plainly come to the same conclusion (<http://www.facilities.umd.edu/Masterplan/Complete/>) if they don't read it with an agenda.

The MTA's traffic analysis of Campus Drive revealed that on any given school day from 6am and 7pm, 750 buses traverse the quarter mile of Campus Drive between the 'M' circle and Union Lane. What is striking is that buses account for a mere 11% of all traffic on the roadway. A full 78% of traffic is from automobiles, many of which carry only one occupant. In other words, a relatively small portion of the campus community accounts for a disproportionately large use of the roadway. The status quo leaves buses snarled in traffic and pedestrians in much more danger than under a Purple Line scenario.

Your letter stated several factual errors:

- You state that the Purple Line will travel at 16 mph through campus – "50% faster than current traffic". MTA's proposal expressly states 10-12 mph.

- You note that the University is constructing several new buildings and renovating others. What your letter does not take into account is that the total campus population will not appreciably change from these projects and that the real noteworthy shift in pedestrian traffic comes from the next stop down the line from Campus Drive – the East Campus Development Initiative.

- You also state that MTA plans to channel pedestrians to one half the current crossings on Campus Drive. MTA's plans specifically show that 8 crossings exist now and they would like to consolidate them down to 4-6, but are flexible.

I won't pretend that MTA's plan is perfect, nor would I call it particularly visionary at this point. They have done an especially poor job of explaining how the Purple Line can have priority at signalized crosswalks on Campus Drive, while buses will presumably have to stop. What I will say is that Campus Drive is plainly the best option. It is the most prudent and the most, if not the only feasible alignment through College Park.

Federal law requires the MTA to avoid and mitigate all impacts and costs to the University. The fact that the Administration still doesn't understand this (as indicated by your request for assurance that the MTA will pay for lost parking spaces) only further proves that the Administration still does not fundamentally understand the Purple Line planning process. This comes nearly six months after student leaders demanded University accountability on the project (<http://rethinkcollegepark.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2007/05/Purple%20Line%20-%20University%20of%20Maryland.pdf>) and more than 5 years since MTA started working with the University to achieve consensus on the project alignment and stops. MTA can only satisfy university expectations and produce the best plan possible through collaboration and understanding, not smoke and mirrors.

Let's plan for a Campus Drive Purple Line as the backbone of a new, more coherent campus transportation system and champion it. Let's ensure that replacement trees, parking and sidewalks are included in a manner that really creates an attractive corridor through campus, one that is a source of pride for alumni, current students and an environmentally-oriented Maryland citizenry. A university president was critical in getting the recently opened Charlotte light rail funded and the University of Minnesota is very actively engaged in promoting a light rail on that campus.

Now that we are beyond the outdated Campus Master Plan and we've gotten beyond certain misperceptions, let's acknowledge that real proposals with real political support are upon us. Recent positive ridership estimates released by MTA should finally show the Administration that this is a real project with real money (a significant step). It is my understanding that the 42,000 to 47,000 ridership estimate for the medium to high level Purple Line does not even include a factor for students, so there is every reason to believe

the total number of daily riders will exceed 50,000 with the Purple Line being a major factor in campus transportation management in coming decades.

To summarize, I'll leave you with some questions that I trust the Administration will provide detailed answers to (and each stakeholder CCed here) if it continues to oppose the Campus Drive alignment:

- 1) If Stadium Drive is a convenient transit route, why don't all the current campus transit (Shuttle UM and commuter) routes run along it? Long ago the university located its main transit hub in the heart of campus, where most commuter students, faculty and staff wish to go. What specifically about light rail necessitates parting with history?
- 2) The Administration actively opposes an alignment which connects some of the area's key existing daily destinations (the Green Line Metrorail station, the Student Union, UMUC) with important future activity centers (East Campus and M-Square). Can the university really justify a more circuitous route (Stadium Drive or Mowatt Lane) that bypasses key campus activity centers and plainly hurts ridership?
- 3) If the Administration is so concerned with pedestrian safety on Campus Drive, why has it not pursued any of the transportation suggestions of the nearly seven-year-old Campus Master Plan? (e.g. closing Campus Drive and other roadways to automobiles, initiating an internal a high quality internal campus shuttle loop, replacing the dangerously low level of lighting, and paying for other major streetscape improvements.)
- 4) Considering the dreadfully worn state of Campus Drive, how can the Administration forgo an estimated \$2 million in streetscape improvements--- street treatments, street lights, crosswalks, landscaping, a potential bikeway--- that would accompany the Purple Line?
- 5) In light of MTA's traffic analysis, what makes MTA's proposal for Campus Drive more dangerous than the status quo? Many cities across the nation and internationally successfully accommodate Light Rail in heavily populated places, even in busy public plazas. What makes the University of Maryland an exception?
- 6) Considering the importance of the ridership, which group will maximize use of the Purple Line--- Terp fans or daily commuters? Certainly the Administration and the MTA should prioritize the needs of the thousands of daily commuters over occasional, though passionately loyal, visitors.
- 7) You note in your letter that the Master Plan calls for minimizing Shuttle-UM busses on Campus Drive in favor of an internal campus shuttle that links to commuter routes that would stop on the periphery of campus. Why isn't the university pushing the internal shuttle and what would the added transfers mean for existing Shuttle-UM ridership? How is the Purple Line not consistent with this plan were it to ever actually be implemented?

8) Does the Administration have enough confidence in its "analysis" to continue to go against a highly standardized, multi-year, multi-million-dollar public planning process? The MTA studied alignments based on what experts' opinions (not armchair analysis) believe to be the most useful and that which is most likely to receive Federal funding. Is the Administration prepared to reject the Purple Line in any viable form?

I hope the Administration will support the Purple Line on Campus Drive. As part of the mitigation package, I hope the Administration will also support a parallel bikeway and pedestrian boulevard from UMUC, down Campus Drive, through East Campus, and all the way to M-Square via the Green Line station. I can think of no stronger acknowledgement of the pedestrian nature of college campuses and no firmer commitment to environmental sustainability than such a plan.

Sincerely,

David Daddio

CC: John Porcari, Michael Madden, Eric Olson, Eric, Dernoga, Tom Dernoga, Willia, Campos, Ann Wylie, Jim Rosapepe, Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Laura Moore, Andrew Friedson, Rob Goodspeed, Sapienza Barone, bkirwan@usmd.edu, kryan@usmd.edu, Joe Nagro