



## **ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT**

# **Transit Times**

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland  
Volume 29, Number 2, April 2015

ACT's monthly meetings are held at the Silver Spring Civic Building, One Veterans Place 20910, in the Ellsworth Room at 7:30 PM, the second Tuesday of each month.

The Silver Spring Civic Building is located at the corner of Fenton St & Ellsworth Dr. It is an eight minute walk north from the Silver Spring Metro Station. The nearest bus routes are: Ride-On routes #9, #12, #15, #16, #17, #19 and #20; and, Metrobus routes Z6 and Z8.

Parking is available at the Town Square Garage just across Ellsworth Dr from the Civic Building; it is free after 6:00pm.

For meeting updates check our website listed on pg 2.

**April 14:** Speaker: David Moon, Delegate District 20 - "Purple Line - End-Of-Session Legislative Update"

**May 12:** Speaker: Bill Schultheiss, Vice President, Toole Design Group - "Creating Complete Streets in the Suburbs"

**June 9:** Speakers: Nat Bottigheimer and Matthew Ridgway, Fehr & Peers - "What Montgomery County's Growth Policy Can Learn from California"

- Celebrities Ride Public Transit to Emmy Awards – Is There More Behind It? (p. 4)
- ACT Meets With Acting MCDOT Chief (p. 5)
- Transit Authority Plan Misfires (p. 5)
- Is Bus Driving a Depressing Job? (p. 6)
- ACT Rally for the Purple Line a Great Success! (p. 7)
- ACT Volunteer Thank You Party (p. 7)

## **Broad Coalition Unites in Annapolis to Call for Building the Purple Line Now!**

Purple Line Now! Press  
Release of March 9, 2015

A unified and broad coalition of business, community [including ACT], and environmental groups gathered in Annapolis tonight to call on legislators to build the Purple Line without delay. Over a hundred Purple Line advocates met in the Lowe House Building before visiting their legislator's offices to encourage them to keep fighting for the Purple Line at this time when Governor Hogan has already delayed the Purple Line by several months and will endeavor to carry out his campaign promise to backpeddle on the increase in gasoline taxes to bolster the Transportation Trust Fund, which will pay for the state's share of the Purple Line.

## **Feature Articles**

- Broad Coalition Unites in Annapolis to Call for Building the Purple Line Now! (p. 1)
- MARC Camden Line Adds Three Trains (p. 3)
- ACT Sues Over Secrecy in Campaign Against Purple Line (p. 3)

## Join ACT Now

You can join ACT by remitting membership dues. Your membership dues are based on the category of membership that you choose:

\$10 [rider (code R on mail label)]  
 \$25 [activist (code A on mail label)]  
 \$50 [conductor (code C on mail label)]  
 \$100 [engineer (code E on mail label)]

[the two digits after your category of membership code indicates year paid]

You can join/renew online at our website, or send your check for the chosen category of membership to:

**Action Committee for Transit**

**P.O. Box 7074**

**Silver Spring, MD 20907**

[www.actfortransit.org](http://www.actfortransit.org)

[www.twitter.com/actfortransit](https://www.twitter.com/actfortransit)

[www.facebook.com/actfortransit](https://www.facebook.com/actfortransit)

You may also give your membership dues to Treasurer Dave Anderson at the next ACT meeting. The address on your check will be used as the mailing address unless otherwise indicated.

Your dues support ACT Activities and this newsletter.

*“The Purple Line will create thousands of permanent jobs, generate billions of dollars in new economic activity, and provide a vital east-transit transit connection between the University of Maryland and job centers in Maryland’s suburbs,”* said Ralph Bennett, President of Purple Line NOW. *“The project is shovel-ready and almost \$1 billion of federal funding is sitting on the table waiting for the State to move forward. This project has been in the works for more than two decades, and further delay is not an option,”* he added.

Representatives from the region's business community emphasized the project's economic importance. *“The business community is united behind this project,”* said Miti Figueredo, on behalf of the Economic Partners of the Purple Line, a pro-Purple Line business coalition. Ms. Figueredo, a Vice President of The Chevy Chase Land Company, added, *“We understand that the continued growth of our region’s economy absolutely depends on the Purple Line, and many of our companies have made strategic investments with the expectation that it would be built after so many years of study.”*

Richard Parsons, Vice Chair of the Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance, says *“Employers want to locate near transit, and residents want to live near transit.”* emphasizing that Maryland’s suburbs need more transit options in order to compete for private sector and federal jobs. *“The FBI is looking for a new site and Marriott just announced that it plans to relocate its headquarters near transit,”* Mr. Parsons added. *“Maryland needs the Purple Line to remain competitive, and I’m hopeful Governor Hogan will understand this.”*

## Remembering Harry Sanders

The March 10, 2015 meeting of Action Committee for Transit landed on the five year anniversary of the passing of ACT co-founder Harry Sanders. During the opening of the meeting ACT President Nick Brand paused to honor Harry and his passionate efforts to make the Purple Line a reality. Harry fought tirelessly to advance the Purple Line. He is still missed by those who had the privilege of working with him.

## MARC Camden Line Adds Three Trains

Ross Capon

Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) Camden line expanded service on Monday, March 9. The new schedule's yellow cover promotes the new, earlier departure from Washington's Union Station at 3:30 PM to Dorsey Station in Howard County, 43 minutes earlier than what used to be the first PM departure. The train makes a return trip leaving Dorsey at 4:45 PM, improving schedule choices for reverse commuters.

A media event that day focused on announcing the new, 7:40 AM departure from Union Station to Camden Station in Baltimore. This new trip improves linking the College Park and Baltimore campuses of the University of Maryland. I boarded the first trip at College Park along with its Mayor, Andrew Fellows, State Senator Jim Rosapepe, and State Delegate Eric Ebersole. Maryland Transit Administration officials on board included: Administrator, Robert L. Smith; Director of Governmental Affairs, James Knighton; and Engineering Officer, Suhair Al Khatib. Also present was Eric C. Olson, Executive Director of the College Park City-University Partnership.

Upon arrival at Camden Yards, Smith and the political leaders spoke along with University of Maryland Vice President for Administration & Finance, Carlo Colella; President, University of Maryland at Baltimore, Jay Perman; and University of Maryland at College Park Student Government Association Director of City Affairs, Cole Holocker. Mr. Holocker told me of his group's strong support for the Purple Line. Along with Penn Line passengers displaced by an Amtrak derailment, reporters rode the train and covered the speeches at Camden Yards.

The additional trips are a small, but valuable step forward for public transportation!

## ACT Sues Over Secrecy in Campaign Against Purple Line

ACT Press Release of February 2, 2015

The Action Committee for Transit (ACT), represented on a *pro bono* basis by the law firm of Baker and Hostetler, filed suit in Maryland District Court against the Town of Chevy Chase for violating the state Public Information Act by hiding key information about its campaign against the Purple Line. *"For two decades plus, Maryland law has required towns to disclose whom they hire, for what purpose, and at what cost. The public has a right to know details of the Town's contracts with lobbyists and consultants and what they are doing to delay or block the Purple Line,"* said ACT President Nick Brand. *"The Town may not use exorbitant fees to hide their taxpayer-funded activities."*

ACT estimates that the Town of Chevy Chase, which includes 1,200 households, spent over half a million dollars in public funds on lobbyists and consultants to block the Purple Line. The Town is paying \$29,000 a month to the lobbying and law firm of the brother of House Transportation and Infrastructure Chair Bill Shuster, yet has not disclosed activities undertaken at public expense.

Although the Town's annual budget is about \$3.5 million with a reserve fund nearing \$9 million, ACT's requests for documents have been stalled by demands for fees of over \$170/hr. for staff time and 50¢/page for copying. The suit seeks to order the Town to turn over the requested documents and to enjoin the charging of fees for the documents, per Maryland's Public Information Act.

In a recent letter to Maryland Governor Hogan about the Purple Line, the Town Council of Chevy Chase complained that *"the lack of transparency and tangible information"* is *"discouraging"* and *"unacceptable."* The Town Council added, *"the people of Maryland deserve clear, honest, and objective information on how their money will be spent."* ACT couldn't agree more. The complaint and supporting documents are posted at [www.actfortransit.org](http://www.actfortransit.org)

## Celebrities Ride Public Transit to Emmy Awards – Is There More Behind It?

Quon Kwan

The Emmy Awards took place on Monday, August 25, 2014, at the Nokia Theater L.A. Live! in downtown Los Angeles. This is the first time in 40 years that the Emmy Awards were held on a weekday afternoon instead of a Sunday night. In order to beat the Monday afternoon downtown traffic, comedian, actor, and late night talk-show host Jimmy Kimmel and his wife, writer and producer, Molly McNearney decided to take public transportation.

He chronicled their journey on his web site. Because they live in Hollywood, they took the Metro Red Line subway (heavy rail) from the Hollywood and Highland station to Metro Center at Seventh St. and Flower Ave., transferred to the Blue Line (light rail between Los Angeles and Long Beach), and alighted at the Pico Blvd. station. The Pico Blvd. station is about three blocks from the Nokia Theater L.A. Live! It is also the same station that serves the Staples Center sports arena where the two basketball teams, Lakers and Clippers play. In the snapshots that he posted on his web site, they both wore formal attire while riding the two rail lines.

Is this remarkable event of celebrity Jimmy Kimmel riding on public transportation to the Emmys a one-time-only, isolated event? The answer is NO because there is more behind it: Jimmy Kimmel is an environmentalist and supports public transportation.

Kimmel often discusses global warming in his political comedy. He came up with an unusual idea of filming one of his late-night talk shows (“Jimmy Kimmel Live”) on a transit bus and pitched it to his team. He was excited because it was out of the ordinary plus he liked the idea of being able to go “green” and to celebrate people who were saving money and gas by devoting a show to them in 2007. The challenge of pulling it off thrilled Kimmel’s executive producer. Kimmel’s

staff called several transit agencies to see if they would offer a bus. Most of the transit agencies called were afraid of losing control and the visibility of something gone awry.

Although not the first transit agency approached, *Big Blue Bus* General Manager Stephanie Negriff was excited about the prospect of *Big Blue Bus* being the first transit system filmed on a live television show. *Big Blue Bus* is the logo for Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines, a suburban bus operator in Los Angeles County). *Big Blue Bus* carries 21 million passengers a year on a fleet of 210 buses, of which slightly less than half run on clean-burning liquefied natural gas. When Negriff learned that Kimmel was an environmentalist and understood the benefits of public transportation, she wanted *Big Blue Bus* to work with him. It took two months to prepare for filming the show because of the number of offices involved: legal, risk management, maintenance, marketing, and security. Kimmel’s staff constantly communicated with all these offices to resolve the issues.

To be fair, *Big Blue Bus* held a contest among its drivers to determine who would drive the bus for the filming of the show. Candidates submitted their photographs, along with a short essay on why they would be the best driver for the show. Finalists were narrowed down to a half-dozen drivers with the best driving and customer service records. After interviews with Kimmel, veteran driver Erskins Robinson won. To minimize the chance of an accident, Robinson was not allowed to converse while driving. In order to introduce Robinson to the riders as well as the viewers, a brief video segment called “Meet Your Driver” was played during the show. A 40-foot New Flyer *Big Blue Bus* was modified to resemble a studio with a miniature desk where Kimmel interviewed guests as they sat across from him. Test runs with an empty bus driven by Robinson were conducted three to four times a night.

On May 15, 2007, Jimmy Kimmel filmed his show on a *Big Blue Bus* as it ran its regularly scheduled route through Santa Monica, CA. The same show was re-broadcasted on June 11, 2007

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on the ABC television network. (June 11 was ten days before "Dump the Pump Day.") Robinson was at the wheel during the entire show. Riders boarding the bus become the show's guests, as the bus followed its normal route. Regular riders on that particular bus included a student who was studying to be a heart surgeon and a young couple, who were on their first date.

Guests specifically invited for this particular episode included *American Idol* judge Paula Abdul, rapper and reality-show star Flavor Flav, and recording singer Feist, who were picked up at bus stops along the way. In addition to the band, show regulars Cousin Sal, Uncle Frank and Guillermo went along for the ride. Highlights of the show included Cousin Sal's gas station skit, in which he raised gas prices while customers were filling tanks. The episode included Kimmel, Frank and Guillermo stopping to get food for everyone on the bus.

The show was a win-win for both Kimmel and *Big Blue Bus*. It boosted awareness about public transportation. William W. Millar, who at that time was President of the American Public Transportation Association, complimented Kimmel for both his enthusiastic supporting of public transportation and his innovative publicizing of public transportation by filming the first-ever late night talk show aboard a transit bus. We can definitely expect more shows of support for public transportation from Jimmy Kimmel.

## ACT Meets With Acting MCDOT Chief

Ben Ross

ACT board members Jim Clarke, Tracey Johnstone, and Ben Ross met on March 23 with Al Roshdieh, who became head of the Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation on December 22.

Roshdieh's official title is acting director, but he is likely to hold that post for much or all of County Executive Leggett's four-year term. Leggett has indicated that the search for a new director will not begin until the issue of a county transit authority is resolved - something that will take at least another year and perhaps longer.

In interviews since taking the position, Roshdieh has promised a new focus on non-automobile transportation. To help move that along, ACT gave him a list of pedestrian improvements that could be accomplished quickly at minimal cost (through restriping roadways, changing traffic light timing, signs, etc.).

Policy changes on the list included stopping the use of "beg buttons" that pedestrians must push to get a walk signal, not plowing snow onto sidewalks, and putting up signs showing how to walk to Metro. Also included were 46 locations where we recommended specific modifications to make it easier and safer to walk.

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## Transit Authority Plan Misfires

Ben Ross

County Executive Leggett withdrew a proposal for an independent authority that would operate Ride-On, parking districts, and the future BRT system after it ran into multiple objections in late January.

ACT testified in support of the creation of a transit authority, but objected to the inclusion of parking. We also joined many other groups in asking for more openness in the operation of the new body.

The legislature, which must approve a new authority, is expected to try to convene all interest groups this summer to come up with a more acceptable bill.

## Is Bus Driving a Depressing Job?

Quon Kwan

According to the study, "Prevalence Rates for Depression by Industry: A Claims Analysis," published in *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, Vol. 49 (November 2014), driving a bus is not only a depressing job, but the **most** depressing job in industry. The study was authored by researchers from the University of Cincinnati, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and Emergent Technologies.

What prompted the study was the need for data relating depression and the type of industry. Known so far is that depression is correlated with job strain, defined by low physical activity, low decision latitude, and high demand. Depression is important because it is common and costly: it is an important occupational health priority. Identifying those industries with high depression rates would lead to better targeting for management of depression.

The authors carried out the study by using a large, group medical claims database to determine the prevalence of depression. The group consisted of 214,413 individuals working for 8,235 employers in 55 industries during 2002-2005. The medical claims database came from Highmark, Inc., a Blue Cross Blue Shield insurer covering western Pennsylvania. Individuals enrolled during 2002-2005, classified in the same job in all four years were included in the analysis. This screening ensures a high share of longer-term employees in the analysis because depression is a chronic condition. The screening resulted in the 214,413 individuals, which was one-third of the original sample size. Moreover, there was a sample size of at least 200 individuals within each of the 55 industries to ensure statistical significance. The results of the study showing the top ten industries with the highest rates of depression:

Local and intercity passenger transit	16.2%
Real estate	15.6%
Social services	14.6%
Miscellaneous manufacturing	14.3%
Personal services	14.3%
Legal services	13.4%
Environmental quality & housing	13.4%
Membership organizations	13.3%
Security & commodity brokers	12.6%
Printing & publishing	12.4%

[The industry with the lowest rate of depression was the amusement and recreation industry – only 6.87%.]

Why do local and suburban transit drivers and intercity bus drivers (train operators and station managers are not included) have the highest rate of depression in industry? As aforementioned, depression is correlated with job strain, defined by (i) low physical activity, (ii) low decision latitude, and (iii) high demand. The authors found the level of physical activity was lowest for bus drivers among the top 10 industries with the highest depression rates. Physical activity is important to release muscle tension due to "emotional labor" described below. There is very little opportunity for the bus driver to move about within the ambit of the bus.

As for low decision latitude, the authors found that decision latitude was lowest in the transportation, warehousing, and utility industry sectors. Bus drivers have low decision latitude because they must strictly follow standard operating procedures in terms of dress code, rider communications, route adherence, schedule adherence, reporting incidents, and they must also follow countless safety rules for operating the bus.

High demand is manifested by job-related anxiety, stress, and neurotic disorders; the authors found that the importance of stress tolerance for bus drivers was highest among the top ten industries with the highest depression rates. The authors also point out that the most salient pattern in the results is that these industries involve frequent or complex interactions with people. The authors note that "emotional labor" (i.e., interpersonal conflict and encounters with difficult people) contributes to depression. They found the frequency of conflict situations for bus drivers again was highest among the top ten industries with the highest depression rates. They also found that the frequency of dealing with unpleasant, angry or discourteous people by bus drivers was highest among the top ten industries with the highest depression rates.

Driving a bus constantly involves inevitable conflicts with riders who don't pay their fares, don't want to hear about not eating or drinking, don't want to lower their volume, don't like the rules or who are angry about delays and missed connections,



From Bethesda . . .

. . . to Silver Spring



and beyond, this past Easter weekend the Transit Bunny was busy installing 22 signs at future Purple Line stops.



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## ACT Rally for the Purple Line a Great Success!

Kathy Jentz

A group of more than 30 ACT members and Purple Line supporters gathered on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at the AFI Theater in Silver Spring to rally against a so-called "debate" on the Purple Line held by the anti-transit Maryland Public Policy Institute. The "debate" was a fundraiser that cost \$45 per person to attend, and featured Randal O'Toole, an anti-Purple Line propagandist who just can't get his facts right.

Our efforts made several news reports including NBC 4 News and the Gazette.

After the rally, about 15 "purple" folks gathered at the nearby Tastee Diner for delicious purple (blueberry) pancakes and hot drinks to warm up on that frigid, windy night. There was a round of introductions and some serious networking ensued and we even signed up a new member!

## ACT Volunteer Thank You Party

Kathy Jentz

As a thank you for their service to the Action Committee for Transit in 2014, the ACT Board and Staff hosted a **ACT Volunteer Thank You Party** on the afternoon of Sunday, February 22 at Nick and Carole Brand's home in Chevy Chase, MD. Light refreshments, including purple-themed candies were served. The conversation was lively and inevitably centered on the future of local transit projects. We hope to make this an annual event. Without our active volunteers, ACT would not be the great force that it is today!



Photo by Kathy Jentz



Photo by Kathy Jentz

ACT Board & volunteers chatting and enjoying the spread, compliments of Carol Brand.



Photo by Kathy Jentz

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frustrated about directions, or upset with other riders. The authors observe that bus drivers have comparatively elevated rates of heart disease, hypertension, or stroke, often attributed to job stress. Bottom line (borrowed from New York City Transit): **Be someone who makes it a better ride for everyone. Manners make a better ride.**

**2015 Bike to Work Day**  
is  
**Friday May 15, 2015**

For information and to register:

[www.biketoworkmetrodc.org](http://www.biketoworkmetrodc.org)

or call 800.745.7433



### **Editorial Remarks**

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is **June 12**. Send your materials to Quon at: [qkwan@gmail.com](mailto:qkwan@gmail.com) or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

### **ACT Officers/Staff for 2015:**

President: Nick Brand  
V. Pres (campaigns): Ronit Dancis  
V. Pres (legislative): Jim Clarke  
V. Pres (land use): Dan Reed  
Secretary: Tracey Johnstone  
Treasurer: Dave Anderson  
Board Member: Emily Shetty

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Ralph Bennett: Purple Line Now!  
Sareana Kimia: Student Rep  
Wendy Leibowitz: Safe Walk to School  
Ben Ross: Program Chair  
Miriam Schoenbaum: Upcounty & MARC

Webmaster: Jeri Roth  
Meeting Agenda: Neil Greene  
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