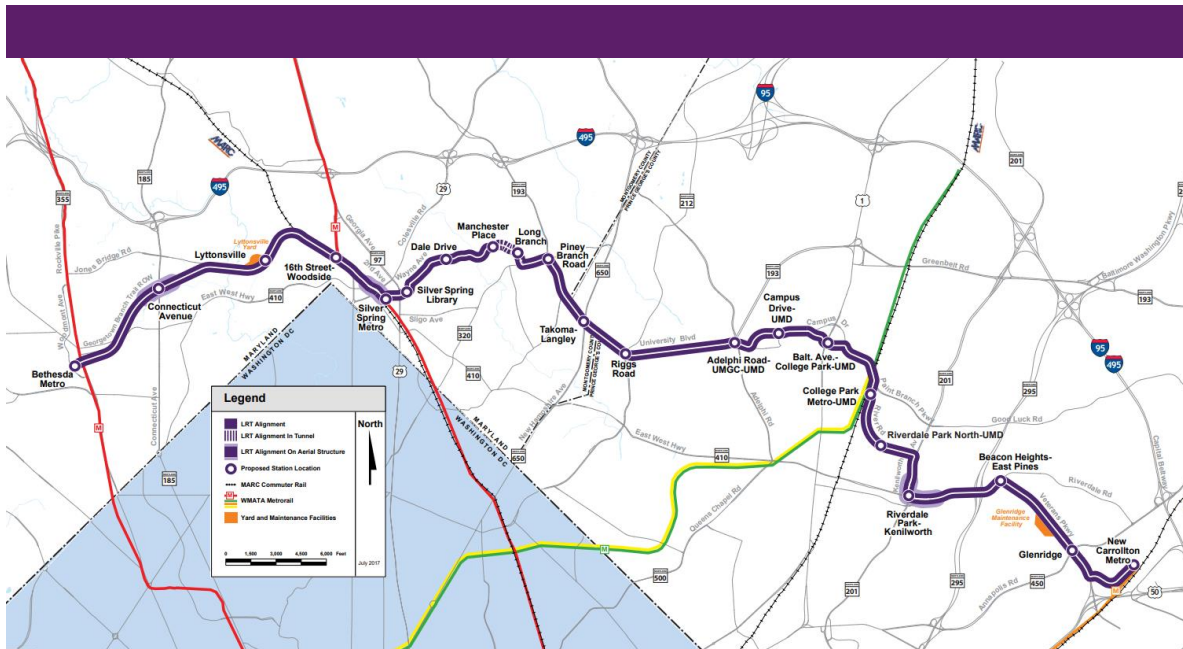


# PURPLE LINE NOW NEWS

COMMEMORATIVE 100<sup>TH</sup> EDITION ISSUE



We pause our regularly scheduled bi-weekly newsletter to celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> edition and hope you enjoy this commemorative issue. As promised, we will look back on those early years through photos and memories submitted by many of you.

As we celebrate our milestone, please join us in remembering those who are no longer with us, but whose determination in the early days helped to ensure a quality light rail connection for our community and our state.



## REMEMBERING THESE EARLY PURPLE LINE CHAMPIONS



**TOM FUCHS  
KEITH HALLER  
PAMELA LINDSTROM  
HARRY SANDERS  
BARBARA STECKEL**



We asked those who were around when the idea of the Purple Line was born to share memories, photos, and milestones of the years before the project was funded and construction had begun. Over the next few pages, you will read some of their memories and hope you enjoy all these poignant photographs. We are also tickled to share responses from *Purple Line NOW News* readers who anxiously await their first ride on the Purple Line!

"The two most powerful warriors are patience and time."

--Leo Tolstoy

We know the champions of the Purple Line have patience in abundance! As our Board Member Barbara Sanders says in the photo to the right, we've been waiting 30 (plus!) years for the Purple Line to become reality. With the signing of the new builder last year, we finally have a firm opening date (autumn 2026) when the leaves will be bright gold, the air crisp, and the stage set for opening day!



Barbara Sanders,  
Groundbreaking, 2017

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO WHEN THE PURPLE LINE OPENS?

(BESIDES THE ABSENCE OF CONSTRUCTION, THAT IS!)

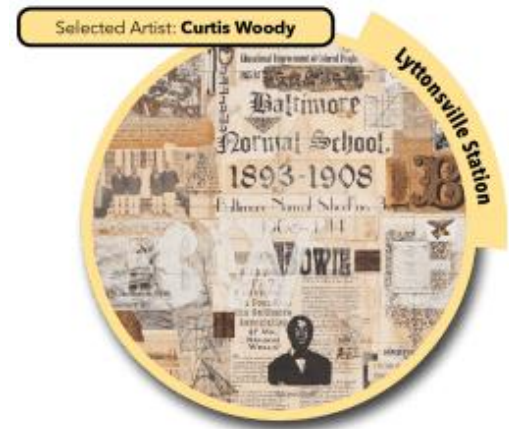
We asked readers to respond to a series of questions we posted in our newsletter over the last few issues. Here are some of their replies:

*"The station artwork"*

*"Small businesses returning to the area"*

*"Riding to College Park for events"*

*"Shorter work commute"*



## Who remembers the Purple Line NOW Art Competition back in 2012?!

The competition was open to students of all ages. Now, a decade later, we think the vision of these young folks has stood the test of time! Here's just a sampling of some of the entries.



## FROM 4-MILE TROLLEY TO 16-MILE LIGHT RAIL 1988-2006

(WITH THANKS TO GUS BAUMAN, BEN ROSS, AND NICK BRAND FOR USE OF THEIR TIMELINE)

### GEORGETOWN BRANCH TROLLEY & TRAIL PROGRESS 1988 - 1990

#### 1988

- Rail Line bought by Montgomery County by unanimous vote
- MDOT study found Georgetown Branch Trolley & Trail most cost-effective light-rail project in the state

#### 1990

- Master Plan adopted by County for Trolley and Trail
- Governor Schaefer announces \$70 million available for construction & legislature included in capital program
- Planning and design begun by Maryland MTA

### POLITICAL STALEMATE AND STEPS BACKWARD 1991-1994

#### 1991

- Cost increases and transportation funding shortfall stop design work

#### 1992

- State decision to apply for Federal funding - beginning years-long study period

#### 1993

- Interim trail proposed by trail groups and trolley opponents which would remove tracks
- Interim historic trolley alongside trail proposed by Action Committee for Transit which would keep tracks

#### 1994

- Trolley/Light Rail skeptic elected County Executive Duncan, planning stops

### THE PURPLE LINE EMERGES 1997-2006

#### 1997-2002

- MD DOT widening the Beltway study includes light rail alternative
- Light rail line recommended, with expansion from Silver Spring to College Park & New Carrollton
- Named as a color to highlight interaction with Metro lines
- Support coalition greatly enlarged by addition of Prince George's County and University of Maryland
- Two-Pronged Revival Strategy:
  - Grass-roots membership group (Action Committee for Transit) - ACT first built support, then business and labor became active in coalition
  - Broad coalition (Purple Line NOW) created to include business, labor, environmentalists, transit advocates with mission of honesty, mutual trust to build the Purple Line and complete the trail, and to agree to disagree on non-Purple Line specific issues

#### 2001

- Governor Glendening's Announcement - 2001

#### 2002

- Skeptic of light rail elected governor

#### 2006

- Governor Ehrlich who supports Purple Line elected
- Governor O'Malley announces funding for the Purple Line



*"Perhaps my point in time is a memory from a public meeting at Oakview Elementary School.*

*My spouse Don and I had recently moved to a house near downtown Silver Spring (having previously lived near the YMCA and Beltway).*

*We attended the public meeting at Oakview to learn more about the Purple Line, of which we knew basically nothing.*

*The cafeteria where the meeting was being held was very, very crowded. They had cafeteria tables (the kind with benches attached) spread throughout the room.*

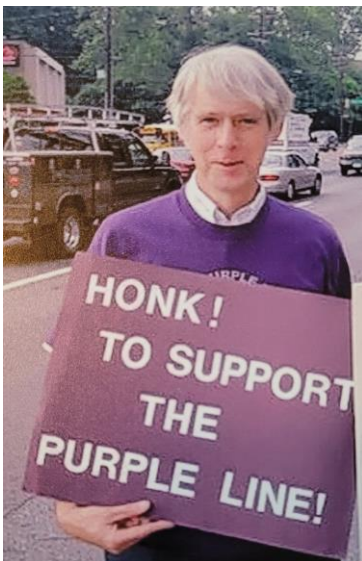
*We got there a few minutes late (I'm always late!) and finding no immediate place to sit, two very kind gentlemen slid down their bench to make room for Don and me.*

*Turns out that the two were Harry Sanders and Webb Smedley!*

*They were very much in favor of the Purple Line and encouraged us to get involved.*

*Which we did. And, that was my start with Purple Line NOW! --- pure serendipity and happenstance!!"*

--Tina Slater, Purple Line NOW Treasurer



Harry Sanders

Former Purple Line NOW Board Member John Carroll, an early and continuing supporter of the project who was instrumental himself in getting us organized and on the path to advocacy, sent in this photo of Webb Smedley, who along with our beloved Harry Sanders, and former councilmember George Leventhal, helped found Purple Line NOW. In the photo below, Webb is researching Baltimore's Light Rail in 2003.



Harry and others decided an advocacy group, dedicated solely to making sure the Purple Line was built, would be an important part of the process. While our group has been around in one form or another since that idea was born, Purple Line NOW formally registered as a nonprofit organization in 2002.





*Transit advocates gather on State Capitol stairs to advocate for the gas tax*



*PLN Board President,  
Ralph Bennett*

After Harry Sanders passed away in 2010, Ralph Bennett agreed to serve as the PLN President, a role he has enthusiastically and tirelessly held through over a decade of project roadblocks and progress. Ralph sent in his telling of one of the major hurdles we had to scale: The Purple Line and the gas tax.

*"Ten years ago on March 14, 2012, I testified on behalf of Purple Line NOW in support of a proposed increase in the motor fuel tax in Maryland - the passage of this tax, initially \$.03 per gallon, was to be indexed to inflation. The bill passed the legislature and was signed by then-Governor O'Malley. It was felt that substantial federal funding for the project would be jeopardized if the State couldn't show increased support for its portion of the then \$1.93 billion project. Ten years later, Maryland remains among the small number of states who were willing to do what had been last done in 1993 - index the tax and recognize its importance to fund all forms of transportation in the state.*

*Governor Hogan's election in 2014 posed a larger problem for the project by his opposition to it during the campaign, and his initial opposition to the tax after his election. Through the support of the entire Congressional delegation, business interests and the public, he came around, supporting the solicitation of contractor proposals to start construction - which we expect to restart soon.*

*We tend to forget the struggles involved in the project - it's now hard to believe that a \$.03 increase in the cost of gas was an obstacle to getting the project started."*

--Ralph Bennett, Purple Line NOW Board President

*"In 2007, Barbara Steckel, a long-time friend of Harry and Barbara Sanders, approached me when I was the president of the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County to tell me about the Georgetown Branch Trolley. She explained that the county had purchased an old railroad right of way for the purpose of building a light rail to connect Bethesda to Silver Spring and said that the County Council was considering converting it to a hiker biker trail that could be used until the final plans and funding for the trolley could be secured. Barbara (Steckel) was afraid that once the trail was converted for recreational use, users would protest converting it to a transportation corridor. She asked the League to testify against improving the trail. She couldn't have been more prescient in her speculation. The biggest opponents to the project and the group responsible for the lawsuit that delayed construction loved that trail and were dead set against using the right-of-way for a light rail."*



*Barbara Steckel*

--Nancy Soreng, Purple Line NOW Board Secretary



*"My favorite memory would probably be the 2013 rally in Bethesda where [Lt. Governor Anthony Brown on behalf of] Governor Martin O'Malley announced funding for the Purple Line. While there were protesters, and the excitement would be short lived when Larry Hogan was elected the next year, it was such a hopeful day, and many years in the making."*

--Dan Reed, AICP, justupthepike.com



*We spy former PLN board members Miti Figueredo & Ginanne Italiano, and Action Committee for Transit's Ben Ross, as well as lots of other Purple Line advocates enduring the hot summer sun that August afternoon to celebrate the announcement!*



*PLN Board Member Darian Unger and son*



*An appearance by the Purple Line is always a highlight in the annual Thanksgiving Day Parade*

*"One of my more distinct memories from my involvement in advocating for the Purple Line was being glued to the television in June 2015 when Governor Hogan gave the greenlight to proceed with the Purple Line. This was perhaps the biggest moment of truth in the project's entire history as the Governor could have single-handedly killed it. Governor Hogan was a Purple Line skeptic during his campaign for Governor but never signaled if he would cancel the project if he were to be elected. Advocates worked hard to persuade him on the project's benefits. At this announcement, the Governor also made it clear that the project would be pursued as a public-private partnership, which signaled a new direction for how the project would be funded and built. With this roadblock removed, it was full steam ahead for the Purple Line, and we could breathe a sigh of relief."*

--PLN Board Member Chris Gillis



*Purple Line NOW Board Members appealing to a cardboard cutout of Governor Larry Hogan before we knew what his decision would be!*



*Celebrating the Governor's greenlight for the Purple Line!*



If Harry Sanders was the father of the Purple Line, there is no doubt that his wife, Barbara Sanders is certainly its backbone, carrying on his legacy, along with their only son, Greg Sanders, in seeing the project to fruition. Barbara continues to serve as a PLN Board Member and Greg is our Vice President. We asked Barbara to share a memory or two with us of those early years. Here's what she wrote:

*"Here are some of my comments on the beginning of Georgetown Branch, fondly referred to as the BESST by supporters (Bethesda-Silver Spring Trolley) and BEAST by its opponents, until finally later, the Purple Line.*

*In the late half of 1980s, walking the Right of Way (ROW), including the railroad bridge across Rock Creek before it was closed, we along with our son's cub scout den began picking up trash. One day, the group found a wallet with all the ID cards, but no cash. Three of the boys took the wallet back to the lady who lost it and the troop was awarded with a small gift. They learned about possible transit choices in their future, besides the Metro and buses. These boys are now in their 40s -- it has been a while!*

*We also used a rail work vehicle that could be transported to the site in a pickup truck to pick up major junk that had been discarded. The vehicle came from a Frederick County historical tourist rail line. It also provided a fun ride for the youngsters.*

*I spent a couple decades of field trips on vacations to visit existing light rails to check out all the points and document existing features that were being raised as negatives by opponents of first, the Georgetown Branch trolley, later the inner Purple Line, and later still, the Purple Line. Things like light rail would destroy the value of their neighborhood, they said. Or, it couldn't exist beside a trail and be pleasant, or it was impossible for school age children to cross. And, even now, a point that continues to be brought up, a light rail project is destroying their park and trail.*

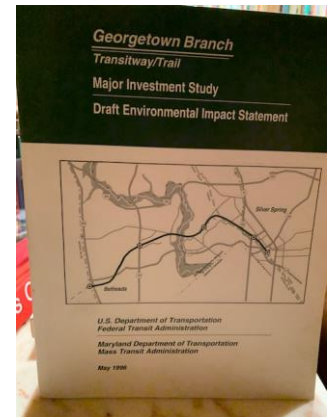
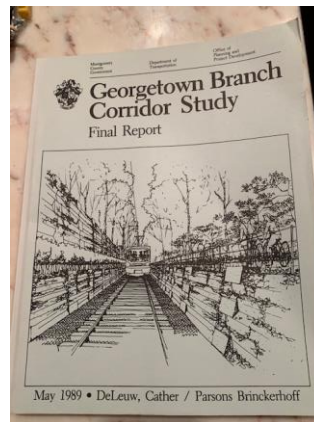
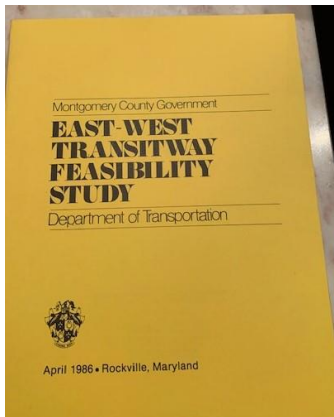
*The fact is, it was never a park, despite shouts to the contrary during light rail rallies. Second, it would not have been just a trail, and the proponents request for signs saying future rail and trail combination should have been implemented at the very beginning to explain the intention.*

*Well, according to the councilmembers who agreed to buy the abandoned part of the Georgetown Branch in the late 1980s, it was only prudent to purchase it as a combined transit/trail ROW. Without transit, it was not a feasible purchase for the County. The backyard fences of adjoining houses probably would have continued to creep into the ROW and keep others from walking it, too."*

--Barbara Sanders, PLN Board Member







*“OMG, so many memories, I wouldn’t know where to begin. But I did save the three seminal documents regarding the Georgetown Branch, the precursor to the Purple Line.*

- *The East-West Transitway Feasibility Study (1986), an internal County DOT study that I managed recommending a busway between Bethesda and Silver Spring. This was before the proposal for the CCT.*
- *The Georgetown Branch Corridor Study (1989), also done by County DOT (that I managed) that recommended a single-track light rail line between Bethesda and Silver Spring. The overview of the study was conducted by a Technical Advisory Committee of interagency staffs, a Citizens Advisory Committee that your dad was a member of, and a Steering Committee of elected and appointed officials. This was the basis for Council’s approval of the Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment in 1990.*
- *The Georgetown Branch Transitway/Trail Draft EIS conducted by MTA (1995). This did not lead to anything directly, but it was the start of the State’s direct involvement in the project and was the predicate for Governor Glendening’s announcement of support for the Purple Line concept in 1998.*

*Your dad played the pre-eminent role in expanding the Georgetown Branch concept to the Purple Line concept. But, of course you know that!”*

--Glenn Orlin writing to PLN VP Greg Sanders

### The Amicus Brief

The Purple Line has survived multiple setbacks, in no small part because a large number of individuals citizens, elected officials, and groups, business and labor, environmentalists and construction firms, civic groups and developers, that sometimes disagreed about other issues came together to support the project and did not waver when the going got tough. One example of these groups coming to support the project was an amicus brief filed by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association arguing that the appeals court should overrule Judge Leon’s decision against the Purple Line. Many experts, not all of them in the employ of the state and county or even being paid at all, have put in their time developing the Purple Line as a concept than a reality or making substantive arguments on its behalf.

*"The Purple Line, and the Georgetown Branch before it, has been a big part of my life since my parents and early advocates had meetings in our living room around when I was starting elementary school to convince Montgomery County to purchase the right of way between Bethesda and Silver Spring to use for light rail and a trail.*

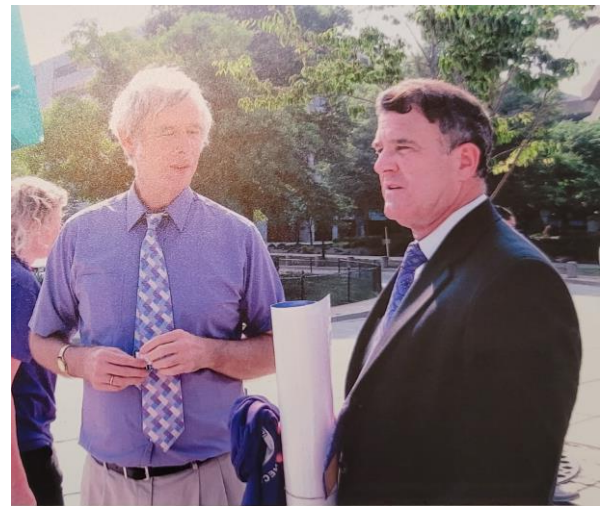
*Growing up, I had the chance to see trolleys in the wild, how they benefit communities, and see the exciting reality as well as how it countered many of the fears of neighbors. I helped out the cause in various small ways over the years and through the highs and lows, including lobbying a skeptical President of the University of Maryland when I was an incoming student in 1998. Over the years, I had the blessing of meeting with a range of supporters that made concrete the benefits of the line.*

*I became a board member of Purple Line NOW after my father who founded the organization passed away in 2010. We went through a lot together, from going to Annapolis with a broad range of allies including Baltimore Red Line advocates to pass the gas tax revenue for the transportation trust fund, making the case to Governor Hogan to build the line, and then making the case to keep the faith while the project faced legal delays.*

*My father wasn't the only one we lost along the way, early advocates like Tom Fuchs, a boundless source of energy, and visionary ideas from folks like Keith Haller both who have also passed on before seeing the first ride. My strongest memory is the sheer number of people that have put in their time and effort to build the Purple Line, even when prospects looked dark and the rewards seemed distant."*

--Greg Sanders, Vice President Purple Line NOW

Purple Line NOW wants to acknowledge and thank current and former MDOT MTA and concessionaire leaders and staff, as well as all the hardworking crews we try to highlight each and every newsletter. We appreciate the communication, information, and availability of staff to answer questions and assist with issues that arise. We are grateful for their participation, from local staff on up to the Secretary of Transportation for being a part of our public forums as we support communities along the alignment.



*Harry Sanders with MDOT MTA's Mike Madden back in the day*



*Like father, like son. PLN VP Greg Sanders with MDOT MTA's Matt Pollack*





*"One of the memories I have regarding the project and some of its hurdles was the 2017 press conference Purple Line NOW organized at the new Silver Spring Library. The memory stands out for a number of reasons, but because of the involvement of a broad coalition of Labor, elected officials, and transit advocates, the day proved effective in nudging the federal judge who ordered the project stalled to dismiss the case post haste. We're not saying we were the sole reason for the dismissal, but given the enthusiasm and support (not to mention the press coverage), we feel it was a fait accompli!"*

*The lawsuit by opponents of the Purple Line had kept the project on hold since August 2016 when the Court issued a stay. The main objective for our press conference in May 2017 was to call upon the Court to rule as expeditiously as possible. At that point, the risks of further delay were mounting and worse, the lawsuit was only the latest instance of stalling tactics that prevented better east-west connections for decades.*

*Purple Line NOW invited Congressman Jamie Raskin, then Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett and then Prince George's County Executive Rushern Baker, Montgomery County Council President Roger Berliner and Prince George's County Vice Chair Dannielle Glaros, and Dennis Desmond from LIUNA to speak at the event, which they did with passion and purpose, demanding a legal decision. Representatives of our federal elected officials were also on hand to show support, including Senators Van Hollen and Cardin and Representatives Delaney and Raskin. Delegates David Moon and Marc Korman, council members from both counties and Takoma Park as well as a strong coalition of organizations, including Action Committee for Transit, CASA the Fair Development Coalition, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, Coalition for Smarter Growth, DC Area Ironworkers Movement for Justice, Laborers Local 11, Montgomery, Greater Bethesda and Silver Spring Chambers of Commerce, Purple Line Corridor Coalition, Sierra Club - Maryland Chapter, City of Takoma Park, and Washington Area Bicyclist Association.*

*What a day that was!*

*--Christine Scott, PLN Executive Director*



*Congressman Jamie Raskin with PLN President Ralph Bennett, Prince Georges County Councilmember Danielle Glaros*



*Former MC Councilmember George Leventhal*



*The crowd gathers to rally under the future Purple Line tunnel at the new Silver Spring Library*





In 2017, we celebrated the Purple Line ground-breaking, a day long in the making for so many. The day was not short on elected officials from federal, state, and local entities, including the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, the Maryland State Transportation Secretary, Governor Hogan, and Senator Van Hollen, but also included many Purple Line advocates who had been waiting decades to scale this milestone.

We look forward to the day in late 2026 when we will all gather again to celebrate that first ride, together!





We hope you have enjoyed this brief walk down memory lane as we celebrate reaching the 100<sup>th</sup> issue milestone for the *Purple Line NOW News*. We'll leave you with a few more photos of some of the many people that had a positive impact on the project, some of whom continue their work today with an eye to the future.

Finally, as PLN's executive director since 2009, I also want to mention our dedicated executive committee, whose volunteered elbow grease and clear-eyed vision has seen this project through some dark days over the past 3+ decades. Their knowledge and leadership, as well as that of our larger board of directors, have been key to making sure the project stayed on track. Their commitment is unmatched by any volunteer effort I have witnessed in my many years in the nonprofit sector. Thank you to each of them, but especially our executive committee, which includes Ralph Bennett, Tina Slater, Nancy Soreng, Barbara Sanders, and Greg Sanders.

--Christine Scott



Harry & Barbara Sanders



Ashlie Bagwell at PLN Forum



PLN Board Member Nancy Soreng



Monica Meade



Carla Julian & Greg Sanders



Former Board Member Miti Figueredo with Purple Line supporters at press conference