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*Purple Line*

Recently placed girders along Riverdale Road

# PULSE

Your guide to Purple Line news, information and events

JULY 2020

## CAT MEETINGS SEE RECORD PARTICIPATION

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic forced a new, virtual format for Community Advisory Team (CAT) meetings this past spring, with viewership of the online presentations far surpassing the public's usual participation in the bi-annual project updates.

More than 850 people went online in April and May to view the presentations posted for the eight CAT groups, compared to the roughly 150 people who regularly attend the meetings at select sites along the 16-mile corridor.



Construction of the Rock Creek LRT Bridge



Manchester Place Station with completed concrete roof

After the meetings, viewers were invited to submit questions to be addressed in the Question and Response documents made available following each CAT meeting on the project website: <https://www.purplelinemd.com/public-involvement/community-advisory-teams-cats>.

CAT presentations are still available for viewing at [purplelinemd.com](https://www.purplelinemd.com) and summarize construction over the previous six months and provide details on construction activities anticipated over the next six months.

Acting Project Director Vernon Hartsock said the video presentation productions were well produced and well-received. Whether the format will continue in the next round of CAT meetings will depend

upon how quickly the region rebounds from the COVID-19 pandemic, he said.

The Purple Line team is committed to maintaining open dialogue with the communities surrounding the Purple Line via CATs with the objective of building a long-term relationship and working with community stakeholders to minimize impacts during construction.

The CATs are member-driven teams with representatives appointed from neighborhood and civic associations adjacent to the alignment. There are also representatives from business associations and local governments within each CAT. The CATs were launched in 2017, and the meeting schedules are based on construction activity within the area.

Sign up to receive construction notifications at [purplelinemd.com](https://www.purplelinemd.com)



“We have found in Matt Pollack the type of leader the Purple Line project needs to succeed,” said MDOT MTA Administrator Kevin Quinn. “We look forward to him guiding this light rail system toward launch mode.”

## Matthew Pollack, PE, PMP, named new MDOT MTA Executive Director of Transit Development and Delivery

**The Purple Line welcomed longtime transportation industry executive Matthew Pollack last month as Executive Director of Transit Development and Delivery for the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA).**

Pollack's top task will be overseeing construction of the 16.2-mile Purple Line Light Rail System for the state of Maryland.

“We have found in Matt Pollack the type of leader the Purple Line project needs to succeed,” said MDOT MTA Administrator Kevin Quinn. “We look forward to him guiding this light rail system toward launch mode.”

Pollack joined MDOT MTA on June 17, replacing Charles Lattuca, who resigned in April to serve as president and CEO of GoTriangle in North Carolina.

A Montgomery County native, Pollack said he is excited about returning to his home state to help usher in the major light rail project –

and one of the country's largest public private partnerships (P3), being built between Bethesda in Montgomery County and New Carrollton in Prince George's County.

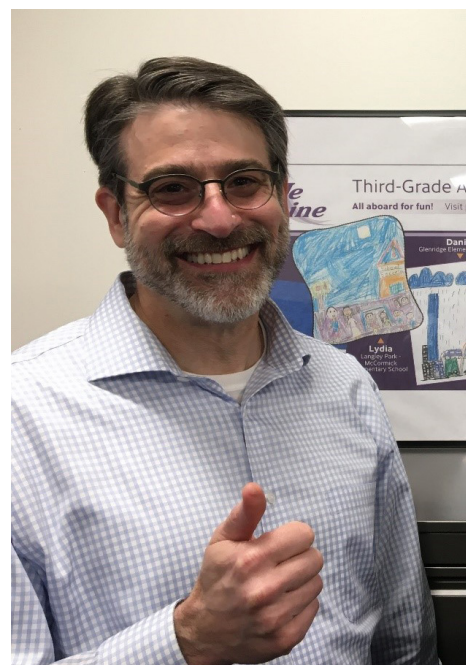
“The Purple Line is my first chance to expand mobility choices in Maryland,” Pollack said. “Basically, I'm really excited for Maryland and the entire region. I've been blessed to work on major transit projects across the U.S. and abroad. It is even more fulfilling to work on a project where you're from.”

Pollack sees his role as “re-prioritizing the third P in a P3 project - the Partnership. The State of Maryland and our concessionaire, Purple Line Transit Partners, will ultimately be successful by maximizing our collaborative efforts. We share the common goal of delivering this transformative transit system while demonstrating the benefits of the innovative P3 model. We are all on the same team.”

Pollack, a Professional Engineer (PE) and Project Management Professional (PMP) with over 30 years of experience in management, operations, project delivery, problem solving, and team building, joins the

project after six years as a Vice President with HNTB, a national transportation infrastructure design firm. During his time at HNTB, he worked on light rail projects in Charlotte and Durham, North Carolina, and infrastructure renewal projects for MDOT MTA and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

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# Recent Progress...

Abutments for the Connecticut Ave. Bridge



Northeast Branch Bridge Deck



Glenridge Operations and Maintenance Facility



## Phil Thomas is retiring from the MDOT MTA after 30 years

When two buses collided on a southwest Baltimore street on the morning of November 1, 2016, Phillip Thomas was the lead investigator on the scene for the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA).

Thomas had to corral the forces of the National Transportation Safety Board, the state and local police to investigate the horrific crash that took six lives. He also had to contain his emotions.

Thomas knew Ebonee Baker, the 33-year-old MDOT MTA bus driver from Baltimore who died in the collision.

"I trained her when she started at the MDOT MTA as a fare collector and supervised her at Eastern bus division. It was personal," he said.

Thomas' intimate relationships with MDOT MTA personnel combined with his vast experience and deep commitment to safety, led to his move in 2017 to the Purple Line Light Rail Transit Project, where he oversees safety and security for the MDOT MTA Office of Transit Development & Delivery (TDD).

"We needed someone of integrity, compassion and experience for this important project," said MDOT MTA Administrator Kevin Quinn. "I could think of no one more qualified to lead safety on the Purple Line than Phil Thomas."

Thomas plans to officially retire from the MDOT MTA on Sept. 1, after more than 30 years with the agency. "Public safety has been my calling; I'll miss being where the action is," Thomas said.

Thomas launched his career in the MDOT MTA as a bus operator in 1990, driving weekends on the old nos. 8, 3, 15 lines – from Security Square Mall to White Marsh – while working weekdays as a manager for the old Dorman Electric company in Baltimore.



The Baltimore native and graduate of Frederick Douglass High School and Prince George's Community College, had "traveled the world" while in the U.S. Navy from 1977-87, rising to the rank of Chief Petty Officer with a 60-person staff. Thomas later traveled throughout the U.S. and the world representing the MDOT MTA Office of Safety.

He ultimately became MDOT MTA Chief Safety Officer, leading all accident/incident investigations involving the Light Rail, Metro, Bus and MARC Systems.

Thomas, a World Safety Organization Certified Safety Executive (WSO-CSE), a Transit Safety and Security Professional (TSSP), said he appreciates the opportunities afforded him in three decades with MDOT MTA.

"The best thing is that it allowed me to progress through my career, to seek other jobs and be rewarded other jobs because of my ability to lead."

# A Safety Team Member Weighs In On Working Through COVID-19



**By Nakisha Gaddy**

System Safety Certification Specialist  
MDOT MTA

Working during COVID-19 has changed the interaction and exchange among people we work with. As safety professionals, our focus has become about more than industry standards and incident investigations. Now more than ever, it is imperative to include public health information and education in our “New Normal” and daily operation.

The coronavirus (COVID-19), as a public health pandemic, has impacted the daily routine of millions. Life suddenly stood still. The question of “What is this virus?” quickly turned into, “What do we do next?”

As the world began to shelter in place to stem the global outbreak, many, including me, had to adjust to the sudden change in the way we conduct business and our jobs.

Employees were designated “Essential” or “Non-Essential.”

“The office” – even those on the Purple Line – transitioned into home offices, and family members became “co-workers” in the battle to keep COVID-19 at bay. Teleconferencing and video

chats became the new, crucial method of staying connected. Business attire evolved into a favorite T-shirt and face mask/coverings, an instrumental safeguard for you and others from COVID-19 contamination.

But work in the field continued.

Since Governor Larry Hogan’s initial emergency declaration related to the spread of COVID-19, the Purple Line team has been ensuring the work environment conforms to guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and the Maryland Transportation Builders & Materials Association (MTBMA <https://mtbma.org/covid19/>).

MDOT MTA and Concessionaire safety departments have emailed regular coronavirus safety updates to staff; and Purple Line Transit Partners/Constructors (PLTP/C) construction crews have received daily, detailed briefings on coronavirus awareness, including social distancing and additional safety precautions.

Project officials have increased the supply of the required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – including gloves and protective eyewear. And facemasks have been

added to regular gear. Field staff carries hand sanitizer for personal use; and PLTC has added additional handwashing stations across the alignment.

Implementing practices and procedures to protect the public and employees from injury and illness in the workplace now has the added challenge of planning for prevention of transmission of the biological danger, the novel coronavirus.

Construction and public transit are vital components of the community; and employees in this industry have had to press on, safely. As safety officers, we are consistently watching the World Health Organization and the CDC to stay abreast of the latest findings and ensuring that we implement prevention strategies to keep our employees safe by reducing the amount of risk, hazards, and infection rates within our control.

I am often asked, “What does health have to do with safety?” The rapid spread of COVID-19 combined with the need for occupational safety and infection prevention is a prime example of how the two correlate. While these are trying and difficult times, we are forging forward to do the very best we can do to ensure the safety of our project family, friends, and community. -Stay Safe!!

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Before that, he spent more than 19 years with the multinational engineering firm AECOM as a transit design engineer, construction manager and program manager. His major project assignments included the Stage II light rail expansion in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Tren Urbano, a design-build-operate-maintain (DBOM) metro system in San Juan, Puerto Rico; and subway renewal projects for the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority in Georgia.

Pollack started his career designing integrated defense systems for Westinghouse Electric (now Northrop Grumman) near BWI Marshall Airport but soon discovered that his passion was in public transportation. After five years with Westinghouse, he spent two years with Booz Allen, working on light rail systems in

St. Louis, Missouri and London, UK before moving on to AECOM.

He has a Master of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from The Johns Hopkins University and a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering & Math from Carnegie Mellon University.

Pollack said his personal leadership style is based upon empathy, adaptability, systems thinking, and shared visioning. He strives to bring open, competent, and ethical communications to all endeavors.

“Our nation’s transit infrastructure plays a critical role in everyday lives, regardless of one’s mobility choices. I am excited about keeping the Purple Line project rolling and providing a much-needed service to the citizens of Maryland,” Pollack said.



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