



HB 80 SUPPORT

Department of Transportation and Department of the Environment - Purple Line Tree Replacement Plan

Environment and Transportation Committee

January 21st, 2021

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I work on behalf of two organizations: the non-profit MHP, which develops affordable housing, provides a wide range of other neighborhood-building services; and the Long Branch Business League, an association of small business owners in East Silver Spring. I am here today to express my strong support for HB80.

One month prior to learning of this bill, I had led the charge on planting five street trees in the Long Branch neighborhood, to replace missing trees in empty tree boxes in the heart of this neighborhood's commercial district. Because the existing trees throughout the Long Branch commercial district are past their prime, and often broken and diseased, it is high time to start a much wider process of tree replacement. When, a month later, I learned that Del. Charkoudian had come up with this urgently-needed legislation on tree replacement, I was literally overjoyed. It seemed providential.

This bill provides for the replacement of trees lost due to Purple Line construction, though not necessarily in the same locations. Long Branch's commercial area makes a perfect fit, in terms of environmental justice, the heat island effect, and because the area has been strongly impacted by the Purple Line construction that runs right through it. The numerous immigrant-owned businesses in Long Branch have already taken a hit from construction-related loss of parking and other disruptions. Furthermore, in recent decades, investment into the public infrastructure needed to make this commercial area thrive has been sorely inadequate. Replacing this area's many diseased and broken trees and adding more would be a huge step forward.

If the funds are allocated for this program, the organizations I work with stand ready to do our part to facilitate the tree planting in Long Branch. Indeed, we would welcome the opportunity. It is a joy to bring healthy new trees to any area, and particular to such a well-loved neighborhood as Long Branch.

I urge a favorable vote on HB 80.

Sincerely,

Paul Grenier

MHP