Inefficient Public Transport Project Should Be Reevaluated

March 20, 2015

A proposed light-rail line in Maryland called the Purple Line is both expensive and will likely fall short of its estimated benefit to the community. Ironically, the line's own environmental impact statement (EIS) supports this claim.

The Purple Line's many disadvantages include:

- An average speed of 15.5 miles per hour, which could cause many line commuters to lose valuable time;
- A loss of over 12 million hours per year for car owners due to the line causing traffic congestion;
- Up to 160 million barrels of oil to build the line, and 300,000 barrels annually to operate it;
- An adjusted cost upwards of $2 billion;
- And an estimated 65,000 people who will use the line each day, when similar light-rail establishments such as New Jersey's Hudson-Bergen line have four times the population density in the surrounding area and only 43,000 riders.

Businesses and individuals will eventually need to pay for the infrastructure, and so the pairing of high costs and such low return may even lead to a stagnation of economic activity.

It is already very clear Maryland will take a financial hit due to the line, with cancelation costs expected to be $900 million in federal funds, but the cost of creating an incredibly inefficient public transit system could haunt the state for much longer.

Source: Randal O'Toole, "Proposed Purple Line Will be Slow, Increase Congestion, Waste Energy," Cato Institute, March 17, 2015.