



Purple Line Supporters To Protest Monday Night Debate

By Aaron Kraut

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A group of Purple Line supporters plan to protest a Monday night debate of the 16-mile light rail.

Members of the Action Committee for Transit will hold a rally in front of the AFI Cultural Center in Silver Spring, where a think tank called the Maryland Public Policy Institute is hosting “a nonpartisan debate on the proposed Purple Line and its alternatives.”

But ACT lashed out at the Policy Institute (MPPI) for including “anti-transit propagandist” Randal O’Toole, a senior fellow at the right-leaning Cato Institute who will argue against the project. Rich Parson, a lobbyist and vice chair of the Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance, will argue for the Purple Line.

ACT also criticized the \$45 ticket price for the event.

“Given these biases and the \$45 ticket, debating transit at an MPPI sponsored event is like playing football with the New England Patriots — and asking the Patriots to bring the football,” read an ACT press release.

Acting Maryland Secretary of Transportation Pete Rahn was scheduled to attend the event and give opening remarks. But MPPI President Christopher Summers said Rahn had to back out because of his ongoing nomination process in Annapolis.

ACT members said they pressured Rahn to back out because of MPPI’s slant in opposition of the project. Rahn, Gov. Larry Hogan’s pick to take over as transportation chief, is reviewing the Purple Line for more cost efficient options.

The pro-Purple Line protestors plan a 6 p.m. press conference before the 6:15 p.m. event. At 7 p.m., ACT says it will move to the nearby Tastee Diner for a free “public panel discussing the Purple Line, complete with Purple Pancakes.”

Summers said he hopes some of the ACT protestors do make their way into the debate, which will feature a question and answer session with the audience.

“The more the merrier,” Summers said.

While the MPPI hasn't taken an official position on the Purple Line, Summers did say the think tank doesn't feel the project is worthwhile "given the estimated cost."

He also said he feels the "ridership numbers are well overinflated."

"More important, it's a project that does absolutely nothing to alleviate congestion," said Summers, who is expecting more than 100 people to attend the debate.