



P.O. Box 30703
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September 20, 2007

Testimony to the Montgomery County Planning Board
on the Proposed Lot 31 and Lot 31A Development

The Board of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT) has been following the development plans for the proposed Lot 31 and Lot 31A project closely. This project is immediately adjacent to the heart of the Capital Crescent Trail at the Bethesda trailhead. The integrity of the CCT at this location is of great importance to our 2200 members, and to all those who use the trail. There are over 23,000 uses of the trail each week in this area.

We have met with the development team three times over the last year to discuss our concerns. We believe that those issues that impact the CCT directly are being addressed by the developer. The plan will keep the trail intact. Access to the trail will be provided with the proposed drop off area on Woodmont Avenue and the public pathway along the south side of the Lot 31. Access to the trail from the underground parking garage is provided by an elevator adjacent to the trail. Landscaping and bicycle parking are provided at the trailhead. The developer promises that the Trail will remain open throughout the construction period. Keeping the Trail open during the long construction period is a very important issue for us, and we request that the Planning Board make this a condition for project approval.

One part of the project plan under the control of DPWT is very unsatisfactory. DPWT asserts that the crosswalk that will carry the CCT across Bethesda Avenue should be placed as near to Woodmont Avenue as possible and should parallel Woodmont Avenue. The theory is that the crosswalk will be safer if it is placed where motorists can most easily see the pedestrians from the intersection. But this crosswalk location forces trail users far away from their most natural path straight across Bethesda Avenue. Trail users coming off the Trail from the south must turn down a congested sidewalk for some distance to reach the crosswalk. This configuration is even more indirect than is the existing crosswalk and will only increase the dangerous J-walking behavior that is very common there now. A crosswalk will not be safe if it is placed where many pedestrians will not use it.

We strongly support the M-NCPPC staff recommendation that the Bethesda Avenue crosswalk be aligned much closer to where the CCT comes out at Bethesda Avenue. We

further recommend that this crosswalk be much wider than is typical for crosswalks, and that the crosswalk be strongly marked by a different pavement color or texture to further increase the statement it makes to motorists. These measures can address the DPWT concerns about crosswalk visibility while still placing the crosswalk where it will be effective. This crosswalk will carry the busiest trail in the County where it has its heaviest traffic. This crosswalk warrants special attention. Similar measures are needed for the nearby crosswalk at Woodmont Avenue.

We note that DPWT is proposing a reduced width left turning lane for turns from southbound Woodmont Avenue onto eastbound Bethesda Avenue to accommodate an alternate trail route on Bethesda Avenue. CCCT would welcome improvements to Bethesda Avenue to better accommodate bicycle and pedestrian use, so long as it is clearly understood that this is in addition to maintaining the CCT in the Bethesda Tunnel and is not a replacement for the trail in the tunnel.

We are not advocating that this project should go forward – many of our members have concerns regarding how the project will impact other aspects of the local environment, such as traffic congestion and open space. But we do conclude that this project will have an acceptable impact on the CCT if it does go forward. We appreciate the efforts the development team has made to include us in their planning process early and to address our major issues.

Respectfully submitted,


Wayne Phyllaier
For the CCCT