



STATEMENT OF THE COALITION OF THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail is a Washington area community group whose primary mission is to preserve, protect, and improve the Capital Crescent Trail. Our main focus has always been on the safety of those using the Trail.

We are very concerned that the proposed County budget doesn't include funding for a Trail tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue, which the County Government has promised would be part of the Purple Line project.

In planning the Purple Line, officials have always assured Trail users that we would continue to have access to a tunnel for a safe passageway under Wisconsin Avenue. For thirty years, the former Baltimore and Ohio Railroad tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue had been available for Trail users. That tunnel was used to avoid navigating through Bethesda and crossing an extremely busy and congested thoroughfare. When the railroad tunnel was given to the Purple Line, residents became concerned. However, we were assured by the County Government that we would continue to be able to safely travel through a new tunnel to be constructed between Woodmont Avenue and the Elm Street Park. **The Parks Department has plans for a new Trail tunnel, but there is no money in the proposed budget for the tunnel.** Instead we are getting a surface route between Woodmont Avenue and Elm Street.

We need a tunnel to have a safe route between Woodmont Avenue and Elm Street. The Trail is the most popular and heavily used trails in the County. In fact, it is one of America's most popular trails with upwards of a million visitors annually. It is used recreationally and as a commuter route. Trail usage will increase dramatically with the opening of the newly paved section between Bethesda and Silver Spring, parallel to the Purple Line. Without a tunnel, thousands of daily Trail users will be forced to negotiate a surface route between Woodmont Avenue and Elm Street in Bethesda and try to safely cross Wisconsin Avenue. This arrangement is totally inconsistent with the County's 2020 Vision Zero Action Plan, which seeks to eliminate serious and fatal collisions on our roads. For the safety of pedestrians, runners, and cyclists, we need funding for the tunnel.

We urge the Council to fund the Trail tunnel.

February 9, 2020