



Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail

P.O. Box 30703

Bethesda, MD 20824

www.cctrail.org

January 8, 2022

Councilmember Mary M. Cheh
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 108
Washington, DC 20004

Re: Access to the Capital Crescent Trail in Ward 3

Dear Councilmember Cheh,

On behalf of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (Coalition), I am writing to you to ask for your assistance in addressing a serious, but solvable, problem facing Ward 3 residents. If a Ward 3 resident wants access to the Capital Crescent Trail, unless the resident has a car, there isn't a safe and convenient, ADA compliant way to get to the trail. This is truly a shame, because the Capital Crescent Trail provides residents with a wonderful opportunity to engage in many healthy and safe outside activities, such as walking, running, or biking, along a beautiful stretch of the trailway that overlooks the Potomac River and C&O Canal. The Capital Crescent Trail is the most popular multiuse trail in the metropolitan DC area, and one of the most used trails in the country. It is located in Ward 3, but unfortunately it is difficult for Ward 3 residents to use the Capital Crescent Trail.

The Coalition is a local, metropolitan DC area, community-based organization whose primary purpose is to preserve, protect, and improve the Capital Crescent Trail. We have thousands of members, mostly in NW DC and Montgomery County, and many have told us about the difficulties in accessing Trail in NW DC. In discussions with residents, we know that several solutions, involving existing pathways, have been identified in the Palisades area. These solutions have been communicated to the National Park Service (NPS), which has jurisdiction over the DC section of the Capital Crescent Trail, and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT), which oversees pedestrian and bicycle travel in DC. I understand that these proposed solutions have also been shared with you and the Coalition hopes that you support them.

Access to the Capital Crescent Trail in Ward 3 can be improved by upgrading three existing pathways to the Capital Crescent Trail from the Palisades neighborhood:

Norton Street Path. The first access path begins as an unimproved relatively flat dirt path at the corner of Potomac Avenue and Norton Street, in the Palisades neighborhood. It travels parallel to the Dalecarlia Water Treatment Plant fence and gradually slopes downward to meet the Capital

Crescent Trail. It is one of only three access paths to the Capital Crescent Trail in Ward 3 and has been used by pedestrians and cyclists as a link to the Capital Crescent Trail from MacArthur Boulevard. However, this path is neither safe, nor convenient, and is not ADA compliant, making it impossible for persons with disabilities to access the Capital Crescent Trail. Persons with strollers also have difficulty. It is difficult to traverse this pathway due to protruding roots, stones and gullies. The path also presents chronic and serious safety issues whenever it rains. Water runs down the path, carrying mud and gravel which pushes out across the surface of the Capital Crescent Trail. In 2020, a cyclist travelling up the trail slipped on the mud and was hospitalized for several days with broken bones and other serious injuries. More recently a runner slipped and fell on the mud as she was trying to stay on her side of the trail to avoid other users. We have urged the NPS to work with DDOT to make paving this connector path the highest priority due to safety issues. We understand that DDOT will be starting work on design plan for this improvement.

Arizona Avenue Connector. The second access path is parallel to Arizona Avenue where it runs into Canal Road. In its current state, the pathway is dirt, very steep, narrow, and barely passable and very difficult to navigate. In 2019, after public input, DDOT approved a project to create a paved, ADA compliant pathway. DDOT received funding to advance the 30 % design stage for the project to connect Arizona Avenue to the Capital Crescent Trail. Right of way discussions between DDOT and the NPS are ongoing and the project is on hold until a resolution can be reached. We have urged the NPS to work with DDOT to keep this project on track.

Manning Place Steps. The third access point is located at Manning Place. Some years ago, a long set of wooden steps, with two gravel landings, was built by the NPS from Potomac Avenue near Manning Place, so that trail users would have access the Capital Crescent Trail from the Palisades neighborhood. The steps were built with a bike rail on the right side. However, these steps do not provide ADA access. They are now worn and the dirt landings are eroded, making the steps more difficult to use. Due to the high step height and steepness, it is virtually impossible for a child, senior, or anyone other than a very fit adult, to navigate the steps while pushing or carrying a bicycle. We have asked the NPS to work with DDOT to improve this accessway to the Capital Crescent Trail.

We know that you have supported the Arizona Avenue Connector in your capacity as Chairperson of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment of the DC Council and hope that you will also support upgrades to the Norton Street Path and the Manning Place Steps. There is strong community support for improving both the Arizona and Norton pathways as evidenced by the January 6, 2021, letter from the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D to DDOT. The letter expressed support for improving these pathways and urged expeditious action by DDOT to work with the NPS on both paths. DDOT responded to the ANC letter on October 5, 2021, and confirmed that the Arizona Avenue right of way issues with the NPS were being resolved and that design work will begin this year. DDOT also said it has plans for the Norton Street pathway and expects to begin the design phase for the pathway this year. There is also community support for improving the Manning Place Steps and we have asked the NPS to work with DDOT to repair the damaged steps and pathway.

Because of the major improvements scheduled to be made by the NPS on the Capital Crescent Trail, it is timely to move forward on improvements for all of the pathways to the Capital Crescent Trail in the Palisades. Last year, the NPS announced that a \$449,190 grant has been made available for the design

and planning for the repaving and rehabilitation of the almost four mile section of the Capital Crescent Trail in DC. This will provide the community with a newly paved, smooth trail, having a width of at least 10 feet and clear shoulders of two feet on either side of the trail. It would be wonderful if Ward 3 residents have a safe, ADA compliant means of reaching the newly improved Capital Crescent Trail.

We have worked with you in the past on Capital Crescent Trail matters and you have been extremely helpful. After we contacted your office last year about the serious erosion on the Capital Crescent Trail caused by water runoff from Potomac Avenue, you were instrumental in persuading the NPS and DDOT to fix the problem. We hope that you can again help with a solution to the Capital Crescent Trail access problem in Ward 3.

I am happy to answer any questions or provide any information that your office may need. I appreciate the opportunity to work with your office on this important matter. Thank you.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Marra". The signature is written in dark ink and has a fluid, connected style.

Tony Marra, Chair
Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail
amarrasr@gmail.com
301-704-5909