CCCT Annual Meeting / June 11, 2012

by Ron Tripp, Chair

The board and members will meet in Elm Street Park in Bethesda on June 11th for the Annual Meeting of the Coalition For The Capital Crescent Trail. All CCCT members are invited, and food and beverage will be provided. Please join us.

The meeting will include briefings on multiple topics. Greg Drury, the chair of our subcommittee on the Light Rail issues will discuss the Wisconsin Avenue tunnel. Peter Gray will report on the River Road Plaza project. CCCT has been working on this project for years and we hope to report great news.

The existing members have expressed interest in continuing to serve on the board of The Coalition For The Capital Crescent Trail. We need more people to serve on the board. Anyone interested in joining is encouraged to attend our board meetings and seek election to the board at the annual meeting.

The present board consists of Peter Gray (past chair), Jenny Sue Dunner, Tony Marra (Vice Chair), Wayne Phyillaier (Treasurer), Charlie Wellander, Jennifer Longsworth (Secretary), Greg Drury, John Dugger and Ron Tripp (Chair). Members are welcome to offer other candidates at the annual meeting as well.

The CCCT is blessed to have the support of those who love the trail. Many sent us donations throughout last year. Our 2011 end-of-year letter request for donations was very successful – with 345 donors responding generously.

Whole Foods Market Bethesda was our biggest donor in 2011, with a $5,388 donation from their June 1 Community Giving Day. Most donations were for much less, but small contributions from many people are as important - they add up and allow us to do our work.

We are an all-volunteer organization. We especially appreciate the generosity that allows us to focus on the trail and to not spend much of our time and resources struggling to raise funds. Less than 5% of our income goes back into fundraising costs.
**Take Note...**

**Lot 31 & 31A**, the County parking lots next to trail by car dealer at Bethesda Ave and Woodmont Avenue, is now closed. The parking lot is now a construction site. Early in this project the trail will be moved to the parking lot near the existing trail alignment to allow for some utility work. This work will require flagging and narrowing of the trail while crews work between the rest plaza and the end of the first side street to the east. After this work is complete, a protective covering will be constructed on the portion of the trail next to the parking lot. The trail will be move back out of the parking long and under this protective cover until construction is complete, sometime in early 2015.
River Road Plaza Construction

By Tony Marra

One of the favorite outdoor spots in our community, the Capital Crescent Trail, is about to get better. But, we need your help to make it happen. The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail has been leading an effort to improve the Trail by developing an attractive entrance to this wonderful ribbon of parkland. It will be located on the north side of the River Road pedestrian/bike bridge. The area is currently an unsightly, gravel covered parking area.

Our plan calls for a beautiful landscaped plaza, which will include seating, a water fountain, a pergola, bike racks, plantings, and an information display. The River Road Plaza will become a welcoming gateway to the Trail, as well as a resting stop for Trail users. It will be a very attractive addition to the streetscape along River Road. The Coalition has committed up to $75,000 for construction of the plaza and the Montgomery Country Parks Department will also contribute to this effort. We have obtained funding commitments from neighbors along the Trail, including American Plant Food, Whole Foods, Security Storage and others. But, we need your help in raising funds to meet the full $150,000 construction cost of the River Road Plaza and additional maintenance expenses.

You can help make this wonderful addition to the Trail happen by making a tax-deductible donation to the construction of the River Road Plaza. You can do this by sending a check, payable to the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, in self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail  
P.O Box 30704, Bethesda, MD 20824

By Peter Gray

After many years of waiting, it looks like the plan for building a plaza/rest area at the junction of the Trail and River Road is moving forward in a meaningful way. After a couple of years of the Coalition navigating the process to gain approval of a specific plan, the Montgomery County Planning Board is scheduled to have a public meeting on the Plaza plan on May 17. At this meeting the Coalition will present its architectural plans and a budget for building the Plaza. Assuming the Planning Board votes that day to approve the plan, the County Parks Department and the Coalition will move forward to let out bids for actual construction of the Plaza. How long exactly the bid process and the actual construction of the Plaza will take is hard to estimate, but approval by the Planning Board is a huge step towards actualization of a years long idea to have a beautiful place for Trail users to stop, get a drink of water and enjoy another rest area on the Trail. Hopefully by this time next year the construction of the Plaza will be started or even near completion. Meanwhile, we need Coalition members and supporters to help raise funds from businesses near River Road and the Trail and from neighborhoods surround the Plaza. (See article on fundraising in this newsletter). Many thanks are due Iris Miller, the plan architect and to Jenney Sue Dunner, both of whom have contributed many hours of effort to get the plan to fruition. Please look at the Coalition web site for renderings of the Plaza plan and for progress updates on completing the plan.
Council Votes to Route CCT Around the Bethesda Tunnel

By Wayne Phyllaier

The new plan will put the Trail across Wisconsin Avenue at-grade.

The Montgomery County Council T&E Committee voted on February 8, 2012 to not support placing the trail over the Purple Line in the Bethesda Tunnel when the Purple Line Bethesda Platform is built. The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) had recently presented a $50M cost estimate to place the Trail over the top of the Purple Line in the tunnel by digging under the Air Rights and Apex Buildings to make room. The T&E Committee expressed even greater concern over the MTA assessment, supported by the opinion of the Montgomery County DOT, that there was a high risk that the digging would destabilize the Apex building to force an unplanned evacuation and building abandonment. Absent finding another way to keep the CCT in the tunnel without digging, the Council decision will reroute the CCT along an alternate surface route along Bethesda Avenue, across Wisconsin Avenue at-grade, and through Elm Street Park.

The full Council tentatively accepted the T&E Committee decision in a straw vote at their March 13 CIP work-session. A final Council decision will come in April with the final reconciliation vote on the CIP budget, but is unlikely the decision will be reversed then.

The CCCT had lobbied hard against this decision. As reported in the CCCT website www.cctrail.org News webpage, the CCCT testified at both the Planning Board hearing and at the T&E Committee hearing on how important keeping the Trail in the tunnel was for the safety and convenience of the thousands of weekly trail users. The CCCT urged that other approaches be used to keep the Trail in the tunnel, including single-tracking the Purple Line. CCCT Board members had also joined with WABA and the Town of Chevy Chase to meet with Council President Roger Berliner to lobby for keeping the Trail in the Tunnel. Unfortunately we could not overcome the Council concerns about the high cost and risk to dig in the tunnel.

The Trail east of the tunnel was funded in the Council budget decision.

The T&E Committee did vote to program $27.6M in the FY13-18 CIP budget to rebuild the CCT alongside the Purple Line as a 12 foot wide paved trail from Bethesda to the CSX corridor at Lyttonsville. This included the estimated cost for a new trail bridge over Connecticut Avenue, a trail underpass at Jones Mill Road, and an off-road connection between the CCT and the Rock Creek Trail at Rock Creek Park. Funding is included for some limited trail lighting at the Purple Line stations and major trail access points, and for enhanced landscaping (plantings) between the CCT and the adjacent neighborhoods. (Funding for landscaping between the CCT and the Purple Line tracks is being included in the separate MTA Purple Line budget.)

The Council vote was designed to have the Montgomery County CIP budget match up with the state’s proposed Purple Line budget, to coordinate trail construction with Purple Line construction. The Council intends to program the funds to build the CCT extension down the CSX corridor into downtown Silver Spring in the next FY15-20 CIP budget, to complete the Trail into Silver Spring in 2020. This would be the same year the Purple Line is planned for completion.

The alternate route through Bethesda will be “enhanced”.

A Council recommendation that comes with the decision to remove the Trail from the tunnel is that the alternate route be enhanced as fully as possible. The Planning Board had recommended that a panel of agencies be convened to study the alternate route design. The T&E Committee agreed, and further is recommending that CCCT be included in the panel to represent trail users. It is the intent of CCCT to bring WABA and other trail user groups into the panel, either as formal panel members or in collaboration alongside the CCCT. The CCCT will advocate for modifying and realigning the crosswalk at Wisconsin Avenue to make the crosswalk straight and very visible to motorists, to restrict motorist turning movements at the crosswalk, and to extend the pedestrian crossing time in the crosswalk to the maximum amount possible. The CCCT will also push for a full width trail fully separated from motor vehicle traffic along Bethesda Avenue and Willow Street, and designed to minimize traffic interferences at driveways as much as
possible. This “enhanced” route must be completed before the tunnel route is closed for Purple Line construction.

CCCT fully appreciates the fact that no route along surface streets can be as safe as a tunnel route. But the alternate route can be far better than the signed on-street route there now and is needed regardless of whether the tunnel remains open to the Trail.

**The door to keep the CCT in the Bethesda Tunnel has not completely closed.**

Even though we have lost this important Council vote, nothing will be final until construction of the Purple Line actually begins. But the state’s proposed schedule to begin construction in 2015 assumes all permits and funding commitments are secured when needed. $1.9B of state and federal funding must be committed to the project before construction can start. The schedule assumes the state can assemble a stable funding plan by 2013 for a “Record of Decision”. The Federal Transportation Administration, for its part, must have an approved federal transportation bill before it can commit the crucial federal funding. Given the state’s inability to find a reliable funding source to replenish its Transportation Trust Fund, and the congress’ inability to pass a new multi-year transportation authorization bill, the Purple Line schedule may slip at least a few years.

A slip in the Purple Line schedule would force the Council to reprogram the CIP funds for the CCT to keep it on the same construction schedule. This delay would open the door for options to the explored that were precluded by the tight schedule assumed in this year’s CIP deliberations (i.e. redeveloping the Air Rights Building). The CCCT is also continuing to push for a more complete study of single-tracking the Purple Line in the tunnel, an option that is not precluded by the Council budget decision but that is opposed by the MTA.

The CCCT will continue to advocate for keeping the trail in the tunnel until Purple Line construction actually begins.
New Georgetown Waterfront Boathouse Study  By Ernie Brooks, former CCCT Chair

After 3½ years on the back burner, the National Park Service (NPS) has re-opened its effort to populate the Georgetown Waterfront with additional public and private (university) boathouses. NPS has stated that this is essentially a fresh start, and is going back to the drawing board with a new feasibility study that can include developments, like the CCT, which didn’t exist when the previous study was done 25 years ago. The study is limited to a zone that runs from a downriver end at the newly opened Georgetown Waterfront Park (approximately 34th & Water Streets) to its upriver terminus 1200 feet upriver of the Key Bridge (that’s about 500 feet along the CCT beyond the Washington Canoe Club (WCC) building.) For those keeping score, the extent of the Zone is essentially identical to that of the study from 25 years back, so, in that respect, no nod to the introduction of the CCT into the area has been made.

A little less than 6 months into the new process NPS has held a well attended Public Information Meeting, a dozen or so interviews with key stakeholder groups, the CCCT among them, and a Stakeholder/Public Workshop which resulted in 10 self-selected “teams” of 6-8 members working on what they thought were possible sites for new boating facilities in the study zone. The next few months have been set aside for NPS to complete the new study without further public comment, with a draft release being anticipated in the early summer.

So, what does all this mean for the Trail? Is it still under as much of a threat as it was when the attempt to build an enormous Georgetown University Boathouse between the CCT & the river on the land upriver from the WCC bogged down in 2008? Until the draft study comes out, we can’t say for sure, but there are indications that the answer will be that the threat has not changed at all, and the presence of the CCT will result in little or no changes in the type of development proposed through the upriver section of the current Boathouse Zone. In the first place, NPS could have acknowledged the presence of the CCT by designating the part of the zone that includes it as an area for less intensive development than the longer section along Water Street. They chose not to do that. At the end of the Workshop meeting, NPS asked for possible consensus points, and the CCCT asked if some sort of limitation on the size of boathouses might be appropriate for that section, and without any debate from the workshop teams, NPS stated flatly that they weren’t hearing a consensus along those lines, and essentially rejected the suggestion out of hand. From the perspective of the Trail, it’s hard to see how the new study differs from the old given that the new zone extends just as far up the CCT as the old, and NPS is unwilling to put limits on what kind of development can take place in that part of the zone. The loss of two of our strongest allies in the attempt to protect the CCT from damaging boathouse development will also make the task more difficult. Congress did not reappoint the federally appointed C&O Canal Commission, which had among its responsibilities reporting directly to the Secretary of the Interior if they felt NPS was not properly managing the C&O Canal NHP, and the WCC has been all but shut down by NPS, due to code violations in their historic boathouse structure. The CCCT will need to help pick up the slack created by the loss of the Commission and the reduced presence of the Canoe Club.

....And Three If By Trail  By the Founding Chair of CCCT

It may not be quite as bad as the English invasion in 1775, but many trail advocates agree that the Capital Crescent Trail and other area pathways currently face an uncommon number of threats to their integrity and continuity.

In April a group of 20 new and grizzled advocates began discussing ways of strengthening the area’s trail constituency, focusing on ideas for a positive, publicity-oriented event.

Called by Peter Harnik, who co-founded the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail in 1985, the planning group included three other past chairs of CCCT as well as leaders of the Coalition for the Metropolitan Branch Trail, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and the Rock Creek Conservancy. It also included folks new to the movement who are passionate trail users.

“We know that the Capital Crescent is among the most beloved spaces in the Washington area,” said Harnik, “and we want to make sure that all the decision-makers recognize how fiercely we will rise to its defense and support.”

Initial concepts included coordinated rallies in different locations, a triathlon, a “Bicycle Beltway Marathon,” floats and balloons, a Children’s Brigade of tricycles and scooters, and a “Briefcases and Pumps” march of simulated bankers and real estate agents signifying trails’ economic value to the region.

For more information or to help out, contact Peter Harnik at harnik@earthlink.net or 703-522.5510.
GET INVOLVED!

Consider contributing 5-10 hours a month by being a CCCT Board member – environmental committee, light rail committee and other needs. Contact Ron Tripp, R.Tripp@comcast.net or 301-237-5079.

Are you thinking of becoming a CCT commuter?

Hundreds of cyclists use the CCT every day to get to work. It is a great way to lose some weight and lighten your gasoline bill. The Washington Area Bicyclist Association has a commuter assistance program to help new cycling commuters get started. See “Getting There By Bike” at their website, www.waba.org.

Now you may donate/renew with your credit card via the CCCT web site!
Visit www.cctrail.org to use our secured method.

Yes! I want to help complete the Capital Crescent Trail and make it safer and more pleasant to use!

Name(s) ____________________________ (H) ________________ (W) ______________________
Address ___________________________________________________________ Apt. ______________
City ______________ State ______ Zip ______________ E-mail ______________________

☐ NEW MEMBER  ☐ RENEWING MEMBER

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS:
☐ $10 Basic Individual
☐ $30 Contributor
☐ $60 Path Finder
☐ $100 Patron
☐ $200 Trail Blazer
☐ $500 Benefactor

A DETAILED FOUR-COLOR MAP OF THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL WITH HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES IS AVAILABLE AS A FOLDING POCKET MAP.
Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:
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P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824
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Make your tax-deductible contribution checks payable to: The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail.
Mail to the address above. Or, visit our web site to donate/renew with a credit card.

Thanks for your efforts on behalf of the Trail! Here's an additional contribution of $ ________.

Membership is good for one year from the 15th day of the month that you join.

We are an all-volunteer organization.

☐ I am interested in volunteering, contact me for: ☐ Advocacy  ☐ Events  ☐ Trail Maintenance

We do not share our membership list with any organization except our affiliate organization, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. CCCT is exempt from federal taxation under section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code and is qualified to receive tax-deductible contributions.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE, www.cctrail.org, FOR ACTION ALERTS and TRAIL UPDATES.
SAFETY ON THE TRAIL

Give warning before passing
It's the law! It's courteous! It's for safety!

Keep your ears open!
Avoid anything like headphones that impairs hearing.

Walk no more than two abreast

Speed limit is 15 mph
Bikers, go slower when the trail is crowded.

Keep right!
Except when passing

Keep dogs on a short lead
Guide them to the outside of the Trail.
Beware of surprise actions by dogs and children.

Enter the trail cautiously!
If stopped, be clear of the Trail.

*Look for us on some random Saturday mornings handing out Bells & Whistles to enhance safety for our cyclists, runners, dog walkers, bird watchers, et al.*