



The Crescent

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

SPRING 2009

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The Purple Line Advances as Light Rail on the Trail

The Montgomery County Executive and Council sent a joint letter to Maryland Secretary of Transportation Porcari on February 2, 2009 announcing their recommendation that the Purple Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) should be light rail transit. The letter followed a 90 day public review period on the State's Purple Line Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS).

The full text of the letter is available online at the CCCT website, www.cctrail.org, at the News and Events page. The recommendations in the letter regarding the Capital Crescent Trail are quoted below (in italics):

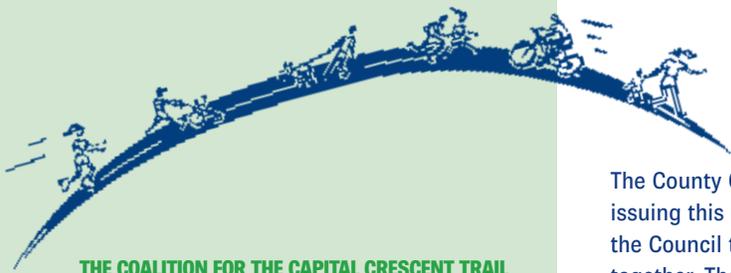
1. *Select Light Rail Transit (LRT) as the transit mode for the Purple Line.*
2. *Select the Medium Investment LRT that uses the master planned Georgetown Branch right of way between Bethesda and Silver Spring, with the modifications noted below:*
 - *Incorporate the High Investment LRT design for the Capital Crescent Trail through the tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue.*
 - *Curtail the tail tracks west of the Bethesda stop so that they would extend no further than 100 feet west of the portal of the Apex Building, and less than 100 feet west if possible.*
 - *Plant grass between and to each side of the tracks where the line is parallel to the Capital Crescent Trail and not on a bridge or in a tunnel.*
 - *Expand the pavement width of the Capital Crescent Trail to a minimum of 12 feet, and, where existing right-of-way is available (i.e., between the western end of the Columbia Country Club to the east end of Rock Creek Park) and cost and tree loss would not be significant, expand the pavement width to up to 16 feet with a wider buffer between the LRT and the trail.*

And also:

3. *Perform the following analysis during the preliminary engineering phase:*
 - *Examine the feasibility of using hybrid light rail vehicles (or dual powered vehicles) that do not require wires, poles, and electrical substations.*
 - *Identify more access points to the Capital Crescent Trail than those currently appearing in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (e.g., from the Coquelin Parkway right-of-way in Chevy Chase and from the Grubb Road/Terrace Drive intersection in Silver Spring, and others).*
 - *Investigate design and building techniques to maximize the retention of existing trees in the corridor.*



Council recommends Purple Line tracks not extend more than 100 feet from Bethesda Tunnel.



The Purple Line Advances as Light Rail on the Trail *from page 1*

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

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The Crescent is published three times a board year (June-June) by the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT), P.O. Box 30703, Bethesda, MD 20824, phone (202) 234-4874.

CCCT is a non-profit citizens' group promoting a first class development of the 11.2 mile rail-to-trail conversion from Georgetown, D.C. to Silver Spring, MD for multi-purpose, recreational use.

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We request that all submissions for *The Crescent* be sent to the post office box or e-mail noted below.

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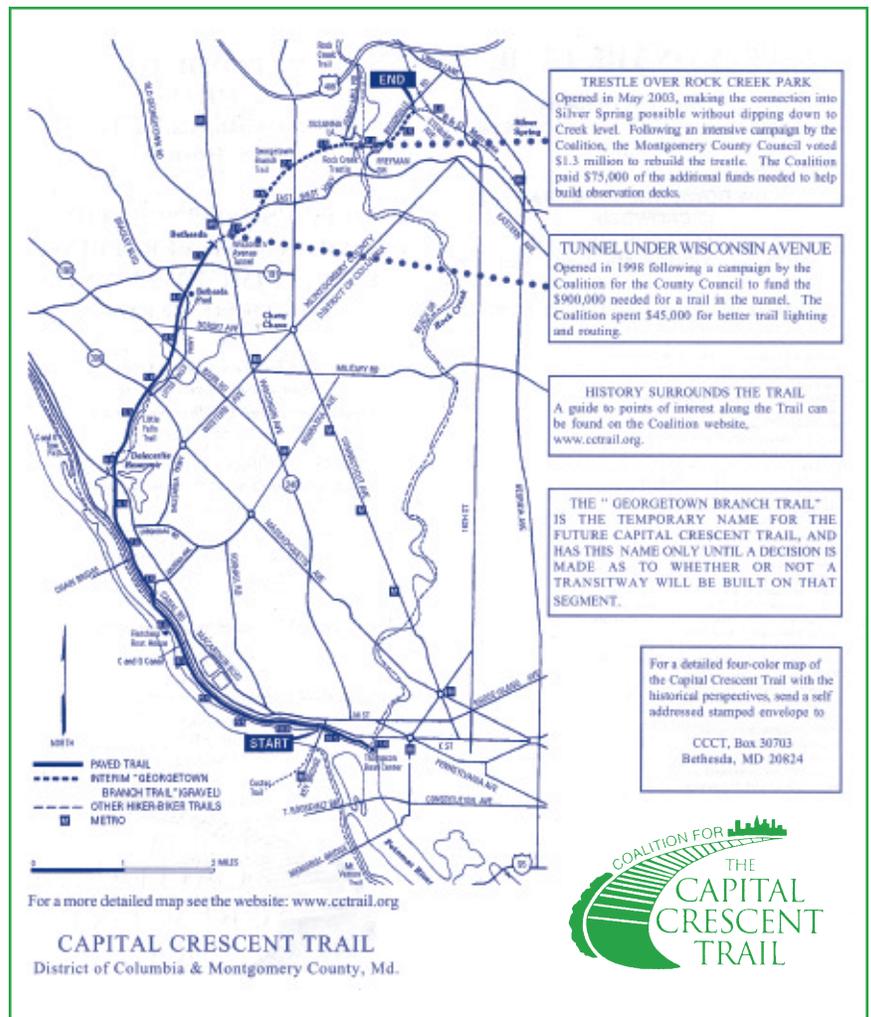
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The County Council expressed their strong view during their discussions with MTA prior to issuing this letter that the trail must be an integral part of the project. MTA staff assured the Council that the State has always regarded the trail as integral, and they will be built together. The source of funding is uncertain. The State will continue to encourage the County to seek other funding sources (such as federal Transportation Enhancement Trail funding programs) to pay for some of the trail related expenses in order to make the remainder of the project more cost competitive for funding under the federal transit "New Starts" program, but MTA assured the Council that building the trail has never been contingent on getting separate funds.

There has been a large increase in support for a wider trail since the AA/DEIS was released. When CCCT first raised this issue at our March 2008 meeting with MTA, MTA and the M-NCPPC planning staff showed little interest. But since that meeting the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), Purple Line NOW (PLN), the Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCCFH), and the East Bethesda Citizens Association (EBCA) all submitted testimony to MTA in support of a wider trail, even though their positions on the Purple Line itself are very different. Now the Planning Board, County Council and County Executive are all on record in support of a wider trail.

continued on page 4



January 8, 2008

Dear Mr. Hanson:



Below is written testimony, on behalf of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, given at the January 8, 2009 Planning Board public hearing on the Purple Line DEIS/AA.

My name is Peter Gray and I am the chair of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail Board. The Coalition spearheaded the effort to have Montgomery County and the National Park Service obtain the Georgetown Branch railroad right-of-way abandoned by the B&O railroad in the 1980's and to then build the current Capital Crescent Trail, including the portion between Wisconsin Avenue and Stewart Avenue over which the Purple Line may one day run. We have also engaged in continuous advocacy efforts to ensure that the Trail is usable and safe for all users, including my personally representing the Coalition on the Montgomery Purple Line Advisory Group meant to advise this very Board on the Purple Line itself.

Unlike every other group represented on MPAG, the Coalition did not come into the process advocating a certain outcome with respect to the building of the Purple Line. We have never stated a preference for or against building this project nor for or against a certain mode or route. Our intent has been all along to represent the interests of all users of the Capital Crescent Trail, regardless of what the Board decides on the overall transportation project.

I wish today to comment on the recommendations contained in the December 22 MPAG staff report memo to the Board. We endorse the staff memo recommendations that IF LRT is the preferred mode:

- 1) The plan should incorporate the High Investment LRT design for the Capital Crescent Trail through the tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue. This design change will maintain the Trail as a continuous one for users between Silver Spring and Bethesda. It is imperative, no matter what Purple Line mode is chosen, that the CCTrail maintain this continuous status and so effectively connect both sides of Wisconsin Avenue avoiding any at-grade crossings of that busy state road.
- 2) The plan should expand the Capital Crescent/Georgetown Branch Trail from the previously planned 10 foot to a 12 foot paved width with two foot useable shoulders on each side (as in the trail west of Bethesda Ave.) IF the Purple Line is built along that Trail corridor. A 12 foot wide paved Trail with shoulders will be significantly safer than a 10 foot width and will more help avoid user conflicts between different types of Trail users.
- 3) Further analysis should be conducted for the Final Environmental Impact Statement to developing design details, not currently included in the DEIS/AA, for the Capital Crescent/Georgetown Branch Trail, including:
 - a. detailed plans for all access points
 - b. retaining walls and privacy fencing
 - c. loss of trees and landscaping along the Trail corridor
 - d. aesthetic treatments for the bridges crossing Rock Creek
 - e. signing and marking along the Trail
 - f. bicycle facilities at all Purple Line stations (including parking and access for bicycles); and
 - g. a public plaza at the Woodmont East terminus.

I want to again stress that as we noted in comments to MTA, dated November 18, 2008, which were provided to the Planning Board, that the Coalition in representing all Trail users is not expressing any mode or route preference, though we did note that of all the build alternatives, the "Medium Investment BRT on Jones Bridge Road" would have the least adverse impact to the Trail while still providing direct Trail access into Bethesda through the Wisconsin Ave Tunnel on the west, and a direct Trail access through the CSX tracks into Silver Spring on the east. However, due to lack of specifics for this and other options, the Coalition is not prepared to endorse any mode or build option.

The Purple Line Advances as Light Rail on the Trail *from page 2*

The proposed design of the trail with the Purple Line at the Bethesda Tunnel also appears to be improving since the AA/DEIS was released. As a likely result of CCCT lobby efforts, MTA now believes that it is not necessary for the trail tracks to extend more than 100' west from the tunnel portal. The planned public plaza, Giffords Ice Cream, and movie theater entrance all lie more than 100' west of the portal. Storing transit cars in the center of the plaza area will be eliminated.

The newer concept for the trail in the tunnel overhead is much wider than that shown in the old concept – the trail can be more than 12' wide in the tunnel. The ramps that would elevate the trail to the overhead at both ends of the tunnel remain as undesirable as before, however. The ramp design at the west end that is proposed with the Woodmont II development project remains especially undesirable, being a switchback with less than the minimum recommended 12 foot trail width and with very tight turns.

Governor O'Malley is expected to announce which Purple Line alternative will be the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) this February or March. It is widely expected that the Governor will

respect the decisions of the County Councils and Executives of both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties that the LPA should be LRT on the Georgetown Branch. The Purple Line project will be submitted to the federal government this summer or fall for consideration for funding under the transit "New Starts" program, along with Baltimore's Red Line project. The Corridor Cities Transitway project will soon follow. Federal funding is very competitive and uncertain. The earliest that construction could begin would be 2012.

The CCCT continues to neither oppose nor endorse the Purple Line, so long as the Trail remains in the corridor as a first class trail continuous into Silver Spring. The Purple Line presents difficult trade offs to trail users. It would remove the park character of the trail between Bethesda and the eastern edge of Rock Creek Park, but also would complete the trail into downtown Silver Spring. The CCCT will continue to work to ensure that if elected officials decide to proceed with the Purple Line, CCCT will work to ensure the best possible trail design given all of the limitations and challenges inherent in a first class trail sharing a narrow space with a double tracked train.

Stairs To Trail For Sumner Village

Sumner Village is a community of 400 condominiums, located in the woods north of mile 5.8 on the Capital Crescent Trail. A narrow dirt trail winds down from Sumner Village to the steep berm on which the CCT rests.

Climbing this steep hillside to the Trail is a feat only for the fit; hauling a bicycle up it requires extra strength and agility. There are no steps; only wooden footholds stuck into the hillside. The climb is particularly treacherous in wet or icy weather. Sumner Village has a high proportion of elderly people, many with physical limitations, many of whom would walk on the CCT if they could get there. The CCT is greatly appreciated by those Sumner Village bicyclists who can make it up the hill.

The Department of Parks plans to meet this problem by constructing stairs, expected to be built in the spring. The design is for concrete steps similar to those at Bradley Boulevard, with a bicycle ramp and with steel railings; the steps will be straight with three landings, at the middle, top, and bottom.

New Trail Route Signs at Bethesda

New signs have been erected to help trail users follow the route of the Capital Crescent Trail where it transitions to the Georgetown Branch Trail in downtown Bethesda. The new trail direction signs show which crosswalks to use at the Bethesda Avenue/Woodmont Avenue intersection and show the trail turns between the Woodmont Avenue sidewalk and the Bethesda Tunnel.

The CCCT had requested that Mont. Co. DOT install better trail direction signs here, and DOT Bicycling Program Coordinator Gail Tait-Nouri met with CCCT Chair Peter Gray to inspect the site and develop the new trail sign plan. CCCT appreciates that DOT has installed better signs. The new signs are more helpful than the incomplete route signing that was there before.

The new trail route signs may still leave some trail users confused at this complex crossing, however. There are five turns from the CCT across the two crosswalks and to the tunnel entrance. Visual clutter in this area makes it easy to miss a sign. More than directional signs are needed to reliably guide trail users through this confusing area. CCCT will continue to advocate for a trail crossing route that is much closer to a straight line, and for surface markings or texture in the sidewalks and the crosswalk pavement that clearly define the trail.

Safety is NO Accident *Courtesy is Contagious*

A "Letter" to Capital Crescent Trail Members

As a result of your hard work and generous contributions our trail is a beautiful and heavily used success. Bikers, bladers, joggers, runners and walkers, commuters and recreational users of ALL SPEEDS and AGES enjoy its 'car-free' park like setting. Unfortunately 'car-free' does not mean 'danger-free' and success has brought congestion and increased danger to the trail. Serious accidents involving hospital convalescence and police investigation have occurred.

Our trail has over 1 million users per year, is quite congested at times, and has users moving as slowly as 1-2 miles an hour up to 20 – 25 miles an hour. We are experiencing an increasing number of serious accidents on the Trail and we urge ALL users to exercise greater caution, courtesy and alertness.

Please follow the safety tips below:

ALL USERS:

- STAY ALERT, TURN OFF YOUR IPOD
- Stay to the right
- Do NOT block the trail when stopping
- Do NOT block the trail by going 3 or 4 abreast
- Look behind you from time to time
- Pass ONLY after looking behind you
- Pass ONLY after a loud warning
- Pass ONLY on the left
- Pass ONLY if you have a 2 foot clearance
- When dark, wear reflective clothes
- When dark, carry a light
- Yield to others when entering the trail
- Yield to others at crosswalks
- STOP at stop signs, they indicate dangerous cross car traffic

PARENTS:

- PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN, keep them to the right!
- Do not let your children ramble freely across the trail
- Stay immediately behind or to the left of your children

BIKERS AND BLADERS:

In addition to the above:

- Keep safe, reasonable speed
- Adjust speed to trail congestion and surface conditions
- Be predictable
- Wear a Helmet
- Warn with a loud bell, whistle or voice at least 2 seconds BEFORE overtaking someone

HIKERS AND WALKERS:

- TURN OFF YOUR IPOD
- Do NOT READ while on the trail
- If warned before being passed, call out, "Thanks for the warning"
- If NOT warned before being passed, politely call out, "Please warn before passing"

PET OWNERS:

- Keep your pet on a very short leash (required by law!)
- Treat your pet as you would a child

Be safe after dark and use a strong light -

Cyclists: Please, do not use a flashing strobe light as a headlight.

All trail users need a light for safety when using the trail after dark.

Trail users are reporting that the flashing white strobe lights some cyclists are using as headlights can be disorienting and are very irritating. Cyclists, please use a headlight with a steady beam aimed low. We are all safer if no one is confused or blinded by your light.

River Road Plaza

It looks as if the long (10 years plus) wait for the building of a Plaza/rest area on the north (Whole Foods) side of the intersection of the Trail and River Road is almost over!! After months of consultations with landscape architects (most notably Professor Iris Miller of Catholic University of America), the Coalition will soon submit an application for a Public-Private Partnership to the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

The application details the plans for a Plaza that include two curved concrete seating walls, one on each side of the asphalt Trail at the base of the ramp over River Road. A steel Pergola, composed of five vertical posts and a horizontal beam, secured behind the western seating wall, will symbolize a Gateway to River Road. This Gateway feature will also help demarcate the Plaza area. Also on the western (Georgetown) side packed earth with sand and gravel and a curved pathway marked with stone pavers will be bordered by ground plain grass. The pathway will include LED lighting built-into the path itself. This pathway will be built over the area formerly used for parking and that space will require remediation prior to building the pathway. The eastern (Bethesda) side of the Trail will feature ground plain grass and a stone paver

walkway. Along the pathways on both sides, will be an array of trees, including existing trees plus Crepe Myrtles to match the myrtles at the north end of the paved Trail in Bethesda. Boulder bollards and other seating, bike racks, two Turtle sculptures, up to four Cherry Trees, a Kiosk/Mapcase, and a water fountain are also part of the overall plan for this Plaza. Overall, the cost of the Plaza will be around \$150,000. The Coalition will contribute up to \$75,000 from its treasury.

Once the application is submitted (and posted on our web site) the Commission staff will review it for 30-60 days and then hopefully enter into a contractual arrangement with the Coalition. The Coalition will then solicit contributions from businesses in the neighboring Westbard corridor, from the Citizens Coordinating Committee for Friendship Heights, and from Coalition members. Montgomery County Parks Department will also be asked to contribute plantings and other efforts towards completion of the Plaza. Once the Planning Commission approves the application, it is possible that the construction of the Plaza could be completed in a matter of months.

A Letter from a Trail User "Safe passing on the Trail"

As an enthusiastic user of the Capital Crescent Trail, I am hoping that the Coalition could address an issue which I feel affects safety. No driver of a vehicle would pass another car unless the lane of oncoming traffic is free. But bikers constantly pass into the lane in which pedestrians are walking, forcing them to move over, or at worse, off the trail itself. Commuting bikers seem to assume that they have the right of way over pedestrians, and that they should neither have to slow their speed down or have any impediments, such as other bodies/bikes in their way. This isn't a rule of the road, nor should it be the accepted pattern for the path, but very few bikers will wait until the opposite lane is free.

Many more bikers now will alert pedestrians when passing because of informational signs and increased attention focused on safety; is it possible to bring this problem up in a forum or newsletter in a way that bikers can become aware of this right of way issue as well?

I would be glad to walk with members of the coalition to record the number of times this happens, and if it seems to present as much of a problem to others as it does to my friends and me.

Thank you,
Ann Cornell

SEEKING member ideas and concerns

Dear CCCT Member or Trail User

The CCCT Board would like your input about your issues concerning the Trail. For several years the Board's focus and energies as well as most Newsletter articles have been dedicated to a group of issues that are slow to resolve. Issues include the Purple Line, River Road Plaza, Georgetown Boathouse, Invasives, Safety and Grafitti. While the Board continues to believe these matters are critical to the Trail we wonder if there are other matters of concern to Trail Users we have overlooked.

We invite you to write Letters to the Editor. With the writer's consent we may publish them. Letters may be sent electronically to contact@cctrail.org or by US Post to CCCT, PO Box 30703, Bethesda, MD 20824.

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:
Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail
P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824**

THIS MAP IS FREE TO ALL NEW MEMBERS.

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.

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The Trail in springtime near Fletchers Boathouse.

Photo by Wayne Phyllaier