

The Crescent

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

SUMMER 2009

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CCCT ANNUAL MEETING

The Coalition's Annual Meeting was held at the usual place and time; that is at the Elm Street Park in Chevy Chase on June 8th the second Monday in June. The weather cooperated, with light clouds and occasional sunshine and none of the heavy rains that had been occurring in early June. All the CCCT Board Members and Officers were present to discuss Trail Issues with Coalition members. Notable attendees included Montgomery County Council



Members Nancy Floreen, Roger Berliner and Valerie Ervin's Special Assistant, Ben Stutz, as well as Parks Director Bradford and Park Police Chief Manley.

The highlight of the brief business part of the meeting was the announcement by Coalition Chair Peter Gray that the CCCT Application for the Trail Plaza at River Road has received preliminary acceptance. See the accompanying Trail Plaza article. As of this writing the Coalition's Proposal continues to progress through the various administrative requirements. Board Chair Peter Gray summarized the other accomplishments during the last year and outlined CCCT goals for the coming year. He also announced that the current board will be returning for next year, with one notable exception. Ernie Brooks will be leaving the board after 16 years of service.

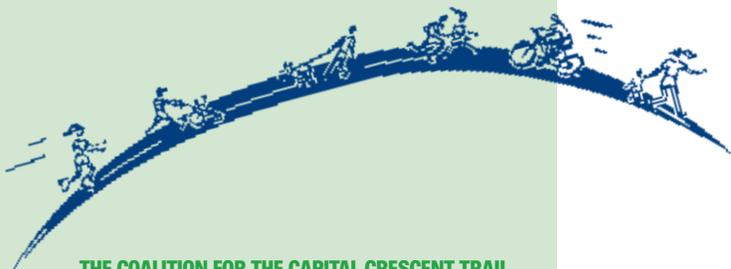


Ernie Brooks joined the CCCT only a few years after it was founded, and has been a part of many of the advances on the trail. Before the tracks were pulled up, Ernie could often be found on the future trail using his chainsaw to keep the alignment cleared for politicians and neighborhood groups to see what was possible. He also served as treasurer for the 7 years prior to becoming Chair, during which time the CCCT funded approximately \$125,000 in trail improvements. He also served as our representative on the County's Interim Trail Task Force (chaired by the CCCT's own Henri Bartholomot), whose report led to the construction of the interim Georgetown Branch extension of the CCT from Bethesda to the eastern end of the former railroad line. Ernie was there to help erect the mile markers when the first section of the CCT opened. He served as CCCT Chair for four years, and was the Chair when the



All images courtesy of Charlie Wellander.

CCCT helped dedicate the Rock Creek Trestle. More recently he has been our lead in addressing the Georgetown Boathouse issues. He will be missed from the Board, but he has promised to continue to help us with the boathouse issue as a regular CCCT member. *Happy Trails Ernie, we will all miss you.*



THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Board Members 2008-09

- Peter Gray, Chair
- Ron Tripp, Vice-Chair
- Wayne Phyllaier, Treasurer
- Jennifer Longsworth, Secretary
- Pat Baptiste
- Ernie Brooks
- John Dugger
- Jenny Sue Dunner
- Isaac Hantman
- Charlie Wellander



*Let no one say, and say to your shame —
All was beauty here, until you came.”*

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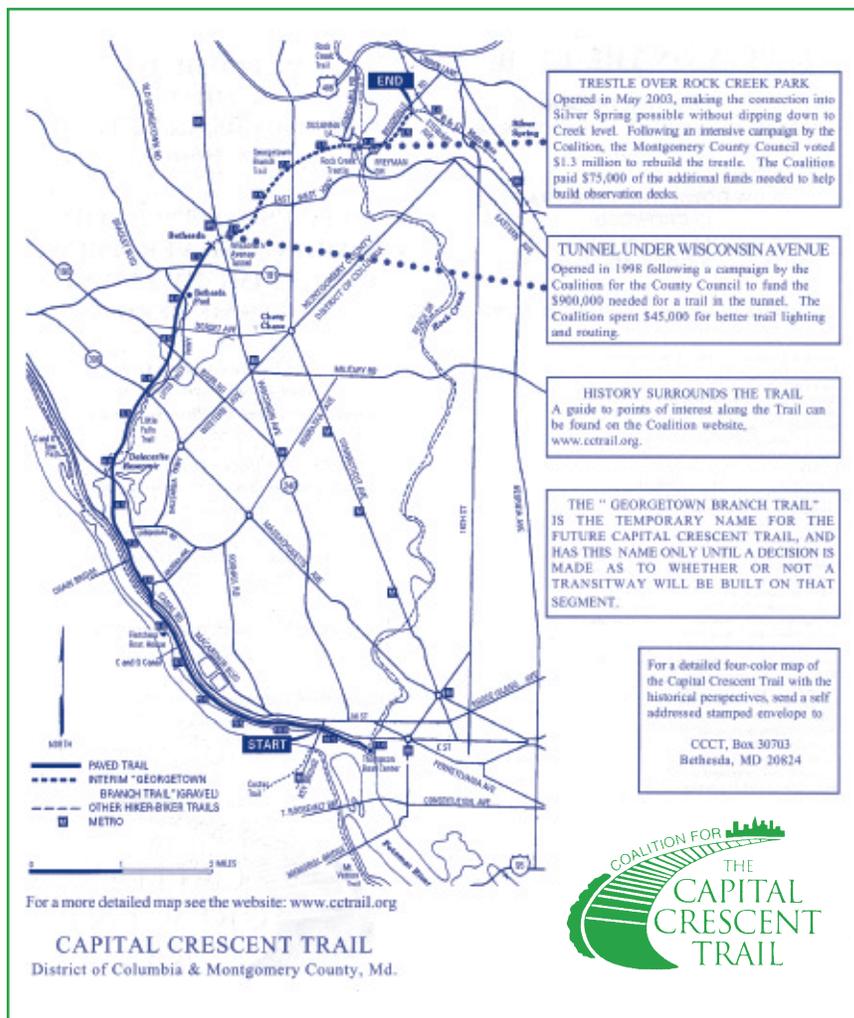
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We request that all submissions for *The Crescent* be sent to the post office box or e-mail noted below.

CONTACT THE CCCT:
contact@cctrail.org

P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824
202-234-4874

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.cctrail.org
for trail updates and events!



Serious Accident on the Trail

How to Report Them

A very serious accident occurred in early July during the 'morning commute' on the gravel part of the trail at about 'milepost' 2.3 between Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues. Congestion and overcrowding were not causative factors. The accident resulted in an ambulance call, ER Treatment, a six day Hospital Admission including a stay in the Intensive Care Unit for multiple serious head and chest injuries. The accident did involve an unplanned interaction between a cyclist, a leashed dog and its walker - owner.

We ask all trail users to avail themselves of the safety tips in this issue of the Newsletter and that they pass this information on to friends and family. Just because there are no cars on the Trail does not mean trail users should not maintain situational awareness. We also ask that any and all accidents be reported to the appropriate part of the Government. It is important that accidents be reported as it helps make the case that the government take practical and effective measures to reduce the accident rate. Thanks.

Accidents on Trail's DC section: bradley_hofe@nps.gov or call **866-714-2250**.

Accidents on the Montgomery County asphalt section (DC Line to Bethesda Ave): William.Gillette@mncppc-mc.org or call **301-765-8702**.

Accidents on the Montgomery County gravel section: gail.nouri@montgomerycountymd.gov or call **240-777-7243**.

River Road Plaza UPDATE

CCCT Chair Peter Gray used the June 8, 2009 Annual Meeting to announce that the Montgomery County Department of Parks and Planning has reviewed the CCCT application to build a trail rest area and plaza at River Road under the Public / Private Partnership program and has determined that the proposal has merit and appears to be acceptable in scope and scale. The plan will undergo further review including meetings between Planning staff and the Coalition. The plan calls for building on County land and has the support of 3 County Councilmembers.

Under the plan, the CCCT would take the lead in managing construction, and would contribute up to \$75,000. The Parks Department will contribute plantings and construction services. The Citizens Coordinating Committee of Friendship Heights (CCCFH), the Washington Episcopal School, and individuals will also be contributing to this community effort.

The plan for the plaza, developed by the CCCT, includes seating walls, a pergola, pathways, bike racks, sculptures, a mapcase, and a water fountain on the north side of the River Road trail bridge. Since the June meeting the plan continues to make progress through the County's administrative process.

The proposed plaza is described in the CCCT application follows. The CCCT proposes a Public Private Partnership with the M-NCCPC

for the purpose of construction of a Plaza area at the intersection of the Trail and River Road on the northwest and northeast sides of the intersection where there currently exists a bench and a parking area adjacent to the trail at the beginning of the bridge over River Road. The Coalition proposes a PPP along the lines described in paragraph 1.3.3 of the Policy for Public Private Partnerships. The "North Plaza" will include two curved concrete seating walls covered with stone veneer, one on each side of the asphalt Trail at the base of the bridge ramp over River Road. A steel Pergola, composed of five vertical posts and attached 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 side packed earth with sand and gravel and a curved pathway marked with stone pavers will be bordered by 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 side of the Trail will feature grass and a stone paver walkway. Along the pathways on both sides, will be an allee of trees, including existing trees plus Crepe Myrtles to match the ones at the north end of the paved Trail in Bethesda. Boulder bollards and other seating, bike racks, two earth-mound Turtle sculptures, up to four Cherry Trees, a Kiosk/Mapcase, and a water fountain are also part of the overall plan for this Plaza.

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.

The CCCT received this letter about Trail Congestion and publishes it unedited, as well as the general nature of our response for your consideration and comment.

Trail User Paul Severance writes:

I run, bike or walk the Capital Crescent Trail several times each week and have done so since I moved to Washington DC in 2000. I love the trail. But the trail has become increasingly crowded, to the point that, on many days, it is more an obstacle course than a relaxing experience. Groups such as *Team in Training* have mass runs on the trail pretty much every weekend, drawing literally hundreds of people to the trail at once, monopolizing it and detracting from the experience of everyone else. Some people appear to use the trail as their back yard - holding conversations while standing in the middle of the trail or letting dogs run on extended leashes or even without them. Some bikers and rollerbladers go too fast, some runners and walkers keep their MP3 players cranked to the point that they can't hear the audible warning that bikers and others are supposed to give before passing. Trail users will always have conflicts, but with the increasing number of users, it is no surprise that those conflicts have become more more frequent and that, for many, use of the trail has become less enjoyable. *How can we address this overcrowding?*

One alternative is to paint more lane markings, create new rules and install signs communicating them, implement speed limits; generally make the trail more like a street. I suspect that, no matter what else we do, we'll have to do more of these things.

But part of the solution has to be to change the orientation of trail planning. From what I've been able to gather, the overarching goal in trail planning has been to increase easy access to the trail through projects such as the one described in the CCCT Spring 2009 newsletter that will install stairs to a 400 unit condominium. Constructing more access points will undoubtedly encourage more people to use the trail. But is it wise to draw yet more people to a trail where overcrowding is already approaching a crisis level? A secondary goal seems to be to provide more amenities such as benches, plazas, fountains, etc..., such as the proposed plaza at River Road. But cute little Disney-esque plazas such as the proposed River Road plaza also exacerbate overcrowding and contribute to a distancing from the natural environment that is the trail's prime attraction. And, really, the proposed River Road plaza is only about a half mile from the existing plaza in Bethesda - do we really need it?

The trail has reached saturation. What the trail needs today is preservation, not growth. Those who want to use it can walk a couple of blocks to the nearest existing trail head rather than expect a direct connection to the trail be built for their use. Mass groups such as *Team In Training*, no matter how worthy their cause, should be prohibited from monopolizing the trail week after week. And if you want cute little Disney-esque plazas, no need to ruin the trail: there are dozens of such plazas all over the place - in Bethesda, Chevy Chase, Silver Spring, Downtown DC - the list is endless. You may publish this e-mail if you choose.

Regards,

Paul Severance

The Board's Response

CCCT Officers had several conversations with Paul. We thanked him for writing and agreed about the congestion, that the Trail has become a victim of its own success. We explained the value of the forthcoming River Road Plaza, our efforts to increase courtesy and safety awareness, as well as our initiating the now implemented 15 mph speed limit on the asphalted section from Bethesda Ave. to the DC line. (The DC section has the same speed limit though signage is not good. We explained we asked MoCo Parks for a stripe line dividing the Trail to cover at least 2/3 the length; we got something less. Lastly, we informed Paul of our request to MoCo parks in the Summer of '07 for widening the Trail from Bethesda Ave. to River Road. This request was not accepted, perhaps due to resource limitations or concern by some that it might worsen trail safety. We recognize the wonderful park-like atmosphere of the Trail coupled with all the attractions at the Bethesda and Georgetown terminals are such that other trails, not so blessed, are not as heavily used. These trails such as the Maryland section of the Rock Creek Trail, the new Matthew Henson Trail and the somewhat well separated trail on MacArthur Blvd. and of course the C & O Towpath may warrant exploratory visits by Crescent Trail users.

Governor O'Malley chooses Purple Line light rail on the Georgetown Branch (Future Capital Crescent) Trail.

On August 4, 2009 Maryland Governor O'Malley announced that the state was selecting light rail to be the Purple Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) that would move forward for design and construction. If built, this Purple Line alternative will use the Georgetown Branch Corridor between Bethesda and Silver Spring. Under this alternative the trail would be rebuilt alongside the double track transitway.

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has a map and its description of this alternative on its website, www.purplelinemd.com. Governor O'Malley pledged to preserve the Capital Crescent Trail at the announcement. County Executive Ike Leggett was on hand to speak in support the governor's decision, and his comments were especially strong that he would protect and preserve the Trail alongside the light rail.

The governor will now submit the Purple Line to the Federal Transportation Administration for consideration for partial funding.

The earliest that construction can begin is 2013, provided funding is available and necessary approvals are obtained.

Trail supporters continue to have very strong and diverse views about the compatibility of the Purple Line with the Trail. Purple Line opponents continue to be primarily concerned with the loss of the park-like character of that section of the trail, including the loss of much of the existing tree canopy, and proponents are primarily concerned that the trail be extended to downtown Silver Spring.

The Coalition's Board anticipates that many, and very significant, issues affecting the Trail will arise as the State drafts more explicit engineering plans and designs. Some issues are currently known, no doubt others not yet identified will also arise. The CCCT is pledged to advocate for a first class trail for all concerned regardless of what does or does not happen regarding the transit. We will continue to follow this issue to make sure this happens.

New Opening on CCCT Board

he CCCT is looking for energetic and active Trail advocates to join the Coalition Board of Directors.

The Board, which meets 10 times a year, is the primary advocacy group for the Trail. We are active in promoting enhancements and safety on the Trail, and a variety of other advocacy efforts. In addition to maintaining the Trail website, publishing a newsletter, and raising funds for Trail improvements, we engage with elected and other officials to promote Trail issues.

Currently the Board has nine members including walkers, joggers and bikers; mainly residents of Silver Spring, Bethesda, Chevy Chase and Washington. We meet the second Monday of each month either in Bethesda or Silver Spring usually from 7 to 9 p.m. The Board also is active between meetings.

We know there are tens of thousands of people who use the Trail regularly and support the Coalition financially. This is an opportunity to kick it up a notch and do some heavy lifting to support the future of the Trail. The only requirement is a commitment to the Trail. If you are interested please send an email to contact@cctrail.org.

Sumner Village Access Stairway

Construction has been completed this July for the access steps which connect the Sumner Village community with the Trail. Sumner Village comprises 400 condominium apartments just north of the Trail between Brookway Drive and the Dalecarlia Tunnel. The Trail has been inaccessible for many residents, despite a winding path down to the Trail, because of the very steep berm, a tough climb for the fit, even without dragging up a bicycle, and almost impossible for many older people. The steps are similar to those at Bradley Boulevard and Arlington Road, but without any intermediate landing. A channel has been provided in the staircase to roll up or down bicycles. The Coalition has strongly supported development of this access.



SEEKING member ideas & concerns

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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Trail, Towpath and Canal in the C&O National Park

Courtesy of Wayne Phyllaier