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Testimony to the Montgomery County Council
In support of funding for better trails.

April 6, 2006

My name is Peter Gray and I am speaking on behalf of the Board of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail and our 2000 plus members. We request that the Council support funding for the Capital Crescent Trail and for other trails in the area. In particular, today we are asking for funding for a resurfacing of a half-mile segment of the Interim Capital Crescent Trail (a.k.a. Georgetown Branch Trail) east of the Rock Creek Trestle, and for increased funding for trail related activities generally.

The Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) is perhaps the most used facility of any kind within the Montgomery County park system. It is used every day by hundreds of cyclists for commuting and other purposeful trips, and on weekends and evenings it is crowded with recreational cyclists, walkers, joggers, rollerbladers, and other trail users of all ages and descriptions.

In May 2003, the repairs on the trestle over Rock Creek were completed, thanks to funding by the Council, and it became possible, for the first time, for trail users to travel completely off road from Bethesda to just outside downtown Silver Spring! Unfortunately, access between the trestle and Silver Spring is again impaired due to the horrible condition of the trail east of the trestle. The county did initially lay down a limestone surface which was usable for all trail users, including bicyclists of all types. However, once the first serious rainstorms passed the condition of that portion of the trail quickly deteriorated has become impassable for all but the hardest cyclists and pedestrians and is inaccessible to all mobility impaired users.

Since 2003, the county has attempted to resurface this portion of the trail east of the trestle at a cost of approximately \$30-40,000 per resurfacing effort. However, these efforts have been literally washed away by storm water runoff in that area. A letter our Board sent to County Executive Doug Duncan on February 14, 2006 more completely describes the problem and is attached to this testimony.

The CCCT Board proposes resurfacing the portion at issue with a 2" temporary asphalt surface that we estimate would cost about \$160,000. This asphalt resurfacing has been endorsed as the most cost effective solution by a DPWT engineer who examined the trail east of the trestle in January 2006.

The CCCT Board wants to thank Council member Floreen for her memo last month calling for funding of resurfacing the half-mile portion of the trail. We note though that the County Executive's proposed budget does not include any funds for this purpose and defers funding for other trail related programs. (The Council can also refer to the following url, www.cctrail.org/erosioncontrol.pdf, for pictures of the trail and more information on the costs to resurface the trail).

Some public transit advocates worry that placing a hard surface of any type would be a move towards making the Interim part of the trail permanent and make it harder to place a light rail or other mass transit solution along the Georgetown Branch corridor into downtown Silver Spring. The Coalition contains both supporters and opponents of the Bi-County Transitway and as such the Board for the CCCT is neutral in its stance regarding the use of mass transit along this corridor. However, the Board strongly feels that placing of a 2" hard surface on this small section of the 4.5 mile length of the Interim CCT will not prejudice future use of mass transit along the whole of the Interim trail corridor.

Nevertheless, the Coalition is meeting with WABA, the Committee to Build the Inner Purple Line ("CBIPL") and trail planners at the Park Department and DPWT to explore alternative approaches that do not use asphalt, that are more acceptable to these advocates of mass transit. CCCT will seriously consider approaches that others may suggest so long as they provide a practical solution to the erosion problem. Given the cost of limestone resurfacing, placing a hard surface as proposed is a far more cost effective solution which will maintain the accessibility of the trail for all from Silver Spring to Bethesda. As such, we implore the Council to insert funding for such resurfacing into the FY '07 operating budget.

The CCCT Board also requests that funding for trail and bicycle related programs in the operating budget be increased, including adding \$200,000 to the \$50,000 already proposed for maintenance of all trails in the county. DPWT must maintain over 100 miles of trails in the county overall, and \$50,000 is quite inadequate for that task. The CCCT also hopes that increased funding for maintenance will mean that the County is able to plow snow off the trail as the NPS does on the DC portion of the trail. The CCCT also advocates adding a full-time employee equivalent working on bike related issues at DPWT and at least a half-time equivalent at M-NCPPC as well, funded within either the Capital or Operating Budget as appropriate. CCCT has great admiration for the persons currently working on these issues at DPWT and M-NCPPC but feels that adding personnel to work on these issues will make the county effort to enhance the use of trails and bikes in the county far more effective. Good trails are crucial to the mental and physical health of our residents, and to the livability of our neighborhoods. Please give them your strong support.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Gray, Vice Chairman, CCCT