

THE CRESCENT

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Spring 2005

Vol. XII No.

7



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Park Service starts Environmental Assessment for Boathouse; CCCT Chair leads "Tour" of proposed boathouse zone

Georgetown University proposes to build an enormous private boathouse on National Park property alongside the CCT trailhead at Georgetown (For background, please refer to our web site [[Action Page](#)] or the [Summer 2004 Crescent](#)). Recently, the National Park Service (NPS) announced that it would study the potential impacts of the Georgetown boathouse proposal in an Environmental Assessment.

On January 11, 2005 NPS held a public meeting to take input on issues and alternatives that

should be considered within the scope of this study. After the “scoping” process, NPS will prepare the Environmental Assessment, make it available for public review, and invite additional comments. If NPS determines the impacts of the proposals are “significant,” NPS is required by law to prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement - a more rigorous study - and to consider alternative proposals.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS?

There are several potential impacts upon the Trail that need to be addressed. The start of the Capital Crescent Trail, at K St., would be moved and narrowed to make room for an access road to the boathouse. Bikers, hikers, and baby strollers would tangle with heavy equipment, including construction vehicles and large boat trailers. In addition, the boathouse would be massive in comparison with the adjacent historic structures. The building would be 50 feet tall, towering above the river, the Capital Crescent Trail, and the C&O Canal and towpath, and blocking views of the river. Finally, the proposed boathouse is much larger than needed to meet the needs of Georgetown University’s rowing program.

On January 12, CCCT Chair Ernie Brooks led the public on a site visit of the Georgetown Waterfront Non-Motorized Boathouse Zone to see the potential impacts on the trail. The visit was organized by Defenders of Potomac River Parkland (www.savethecanal.org). The site visit began at 34th St. and Water St./K St. and included stops at the various locations proposed as future boathouse location. It also included a visit upstream to the Georgetown University-owned section of bottomland, inside the C&O Canal NHP, proposed for a land exchange with the Park gateway site.



January 12, 2005

The group tours the proposed boathouse zone. As proposed, the new boathouse would badly crowd the CCT at the trailhead.

It is not the position of CCCT to oppose the boathouse entirely. We agree that the general idea of creating more boathouse space along the Georgetown Waterfront is a good one. But we question whether the public at large is best served by the proposed location for the GU boathouse - along the CCT, just upstream from the Washington Canoe Club. We are adamantly opposed to the enormous size of the proposed boathouse.

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Letter to the Planning Board on linking the CCT and the MetBranch Trails at the Silver Spring Transit Center

During the ongoing planning phase of the Silver Spring Transit Center, the CCCT and other trail groups advocated that plans include linking the CCT and the Metropolitan Branch trails within the transit center. Recently there seems to be an increased chance that the CCT would be omitted from the final concept plan. In response, the CCCT sent the following letter to the Montgomery County Planning Board.

March 2, 2005

Chairman Derick Berlage
Montgomery County Planning Board
M-NCPPC
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Subject: Capital Crescent Trail alignment at the Silver Spring Transit Center

Dear Chairman Berlage:

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail is writing on behalf of our 2400 members and countless trail users to ask that planners for the Silver Spring Transit Center and the Bi-County Transitway take all possible measures to provide a direct and grade-separated trail alignment into the transit center. The alignment along the CSX/WMATA corridor has the best potential to do this. A trail alignment at-grade along Second Avenue is very undesirable. We also request that planners support the bike station and bike parking as needed for the transit center goal of supporting bike/transit intermodal transportation.

This letter only addresses Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) issues in the immediate vicinity of the transit center. We have great interest and concern with the potential CCT interactions with transit along the entire Silver Spring/Bethesda corridor. We continue to take no position to either support or oppose transit in the Georgetown Branch Corridor, but if a decision is made to build transit in the corridor, then we offer these observations regarding the future CCT at the Silver Spring Transit Center.

Any successful trail design must preserve the qualities that make the CCT so successful elsewhere. The CCT is the most heavily used trail in the region, with traffic counts greater than 500 users per hour in Bethesda in peak periods. This very high trail activity brings tremendous benefits to the Bethesda business community and to residents of that area of the county. The CCT can bring similar benefits to the Silver Spring Transit Center area. The CCT can help fulfill transit center goals of providing an improved pedestrian environment, increasing transit ridership, and assisting the redevelopment of Silver Spring. The CCT can also bring very significant recreational benefits to an area that has a high minority and low-income population, and that is underserved for public recreational facilities. The CCT is so successful in Bethesda in large measure because trail users feel sheltered from motor vehicle traffic. The CCT does not follow alongside busy roads and has only two roadway crossings over its seven mile length between Bethesda and Georgetown. If these characteristics are lost in Silver Spring, then the CCT will not be as heavily used and many of its potential benefits will be lost. "If you build it, they will come" will not hold if you do not build a quality trail.

It is of greatest importance that the CCT come into the Silver Spring Transit Center on a direct alignment that is well protected from motor vehicle conflicts, and that connects seamlessly to the Metropolitan Branch Trail. The CSX/WMATA alignment holds the best promise of achieving this. The December 2004 Draft Transit Center Environment Assessment and 4(f) Evaluation shows the transit center design as reserving space for the transit and trail on this alignment. But the exact alignment is yet to be determined pending Bi-County Transitway decisions. We urge Transit Center designers and Bi-County Transitway designers to do everything possible to provide the CCT and MetBranch Trail with a direct alignment and a seamless connection in the Transit Center. We appreciate the design challenge of bringing both transit and trail through the choke point at the Metro Plaza Building and also along a good alignment within the Transit Center. Unfortunately we can identify no other route into the Transit Center that can preserve the directness and separation from motor vehicles that is essential to the success of the CCT.

The CCCT regards any transit/trail alignment that would bring the CCT along Second Avenue as only a “last ditch” fallback position. A trail built at-grade along Second Avenue will be close alongside heavy traffic and will have numerous crossings of busy streets, including Colesville Road. This route will present designers with the lose-lose choice of either completing the trail connection to the Metropolitan Branch Trail by going along Dixon Avenue (thereby not bringing the CCT into the Transit Center) or by having the trail thread its way through the transit center (thereby routing the CCT through Transit Center vehicle and pedestrian congestion).

Any trail route at-grade along Second/Wayne Avenues will have multiple conflicts with motor vehicle traffic, which will lead to significantly reduced usage. Traffic is forecast to increase by 600 vehicles/hour in peak periods in this area. The new hotel, residential building, office building, and retail will generate more turning and crossing traffic. The Transit Center EA indicates the jughandle at the Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue intersection will be opened to all classes of vehicles to permit turns from eastbound Colesville Road onto Second Avenue. A new bus left turn lane is planned for westbound Colesville Road, putting yet more buses across the path of the Green Trail. In the very unfortunate event that the CCT is brought onto the Green Trail at-grade alignment, then the “nameplate” of the CCT should not be used on this portion of the trail. Trail users identify the CCT name with a high quality trail separated from motor vehicle traffic. and this trail would not be worthy of the CCT name.

Providing secure and convenient storage for bicycles at the Transit Center is essential to multi-modal bike/transit transportation. CCCT supports the bike station at the Transit Center, in a location convenient to the trails and transit. The bike station concept is proving to be very successful elsewhere, with stations first appearing at several west coast cities and recently spreading to Denver and Chicago. The County should identify an appropriate space for the bike station in or adjacent to the Transit Center. The bike station concept is still so new that it is unlikely the private sector will commit retail space to this use, absent both a strong requirement from the County that space be set aside for this purpose, and a commitment from the County to subsidize a portion of the operating expenses. Locations for open bike racks should also be identified in the Transit Center design. Cyclists not leaving their bikes for most of the day will not use bike station parking, and bike racks should be available for them.

The CCT has the potential to greatly help the new Transit Center meet its goals. But the CCT will not succeed in Silver Spring unless it maintains a direct and safe alignment into the transit center, with a grade-separated crossing of Colesville Road and good separation from motor vehicle traffic. The CSX/WMATA alignment is the best alignment to achieve that. Cyclists also need secure bike parking, best provided by a bike station, if they are to use transit. We ask all transportation planners at both the state and local level to keep these requirements up front as they make Bi-County Transitway and Transit Center decisions.

Sincerely,

Ernie Brooks
CCCT Chair

Cc: Montgomery County DPWT (Shri Gondhalekar, Transit Station Project Manager)
Cc: MTA (Mike Madden, Bi-County Transitway Project Manager)
Cc: County Council (Council President Tom Perez)
Cc: County Executive Doug Duncan

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New trail connectors planned

Montgomery County has completed two new trail access stairs in Bethesda. One is between the CCT and the sidewalk on the north side of Bradley Blvd. The other, several hundred feet north along the trail, is between the CCT and the small shopping center off Arlington Blvd. (with Big Wheel Bikes).

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is seeking ideas on where connectors are needed to link community destinations with existing paved hiker/biker trails in any of M-NCPPC's parklands. If your community is near the Montgomery

County Parks section of the CCT between Bethesda and D.C. and needs better trail access, contact Carrie Sanders, carrie.sanders@mncppc-mc.org for more information.



The new access staircase on the north side of Bradley Blvd.

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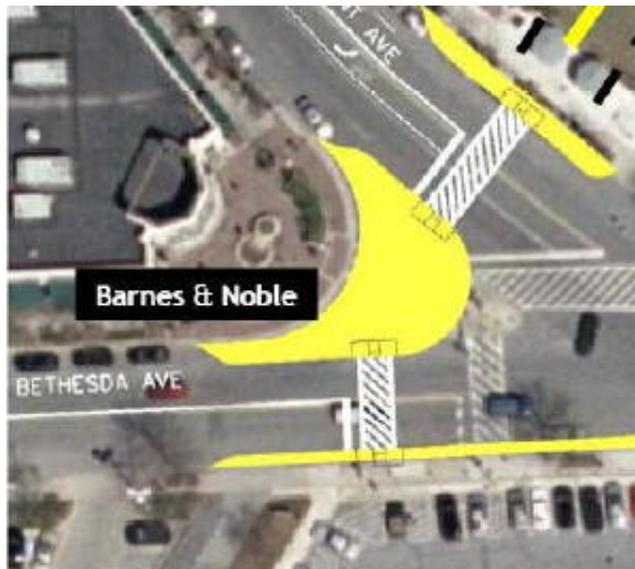
Redesign of CCT's Bethesda/Woodmont crossing is underway

Montgomery County DPWT is examining concepts to improve pedestrian safety in Bethesda, and held a public meeting to present its ideas at the Bethesda Chevy Chase Services Center on January 26. Concepts were presented for two areas:

- Norfolk Avenue from Rugby Avenue to Woodmont Avenue
- The intersection of Woodmont Avenue and Bethesda Avenue

The intersection of Woodmont and Bethesda Avenues is of particular interest to the CCCT - this is now the indirect and confusing trail crossing between Ourisman Honda and the west end of the Bethesda Tunnel. DPWT presented a concept that would reconfigure this intersection. to make this important trail crossing safer and much more direct. A partial sketch of this concept is shown on the right. More information about concepts being considered for this intersection and also for Norfolk Avenue is available as a PDF file at [DPWT December 2004 Newsletter](#).

The intersection concept calls for closing the turning lane in front of Barnes and Noble to create an expanded public space. The Georgetown Branch Trail (Interim CCT) would be realigned to follow the County owned railroad easement between Woodmont Avenue and the Bethesda Tunnel, replacing its indirect path along the front of the Thyme Square Restaurant. The trail would cross Bethesda Avenue and Woodmont Avenue on new crosswalks on a much more direct alignment. Countdown pedestrian crossing signals would be installed.



DPWT's concept for a safer crossing of Bethesda and Woodmont Avenues.

The concept may go to Mandatory Referral before the Planning Board as early as this spring, with an opportunity for public comment at that time. Construction could begin as soon as summer or fall of this year. The DPWT Project Manager, Aruna K. Miller, can be contacted at aruna.miller@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Webmaster's note: We learned after this went to the printer that DPWT construction of safety improvements on the south side of the intersection will be put on hold, pending a decision on the development of Parking Lot 31 adjacent to this intersection. See our website [News and Events](#) page for the current status of the Lot 31 decision.

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DIAL UP TRAIL CONDITIONS AND EVENTS

SPRING IS HERE!!! And you're out on the CCT more and more. So be the Coalition's eyes and ears the next time you're out on the Trail - Call the CCCT Information Line at 202-234-4874 and press box "8." Leave a message on trail conditions you've encountered, or on any issue which might impact the Trail. The hotline message also provides trail users with regular updates on trail conditions and Coalition events.

If you're new to the Capital Crescent Trail, leave your name and address to receive a membership brochure and our latest newsletter. After consideration, we hope you'll support the CCT and become a member of the Coalition.

CCCT INFORMATION LINE, 202-234-4874

Use your touch-tone phone to access one of our mailboxes:

1. Background of the CCT
2. Coalition meeting dates
3. Membership information
4. Obtain a CCT map
5. Volunteer activities
6. Other messages

- 7. [Inactive]
- 8. Trail hotline & events

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Along the Trail... Five years ago, The Crescent's front page carried the following...



Spring 2000

CCCT HOSTS RALLY TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE COMPLETION OF THE GEORGETOWN BRANCH/CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

By Wayne Phyllaier, Chair/Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail

Saturday, April 29 is an important date for all trail lovers. The big push is on to get the Montgomery County Council's 2001-02 budget to include funds to rebuild the Rock Creek trestle, a long-abandoned railroad trestle linking the eastern (Silver Spring) portion of the Georgetown Branch /Capital Crescent Trail (GB/CCT) with the western section (Chevy Chase/Bethesda). **Now more than ever, the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail needs your support and presence at this important event.** The start time is 1:30 p.m.

The CCCT has been lobbying the Montgomery County Council to provide funding that would rehabilitate and reopen the trestle to make it available to trail users. In addition, the CCCT wants to complete the GB/CCT into downtown Silver Spring thereby providing trail users with a **level, direct and safe recreational and commuting route**. In a surprise appearance last October during a CCCT trestle rally, County Executive Doug Duncan spoke in favor of completing the Trail into Silver Spring and to include funding to rebuild the trestle in the 2001-2002 budget. Executive Duncan challenged the Coalition and rally participants to get the support of five Council members needed to pass the budget. . . [But] this issue has been entangled in an ongoing debate focused on building a transitway along this 4.5-mile corridor that runs from Bethesda to Silver Spring. In the Coalition's view, this debate may not be settled for many years. Since Montgomery County purchased this right-of-way in 1985 in large part for recreational trail use, **trail users should not be denied use of the trestle and forced onto dangerous detours while the transit debate continues**. In addition, engineering studies commissioned by the Coalition have determined that **the trestle can be repaired and opened at a fraction of the cost of building a new bridge**, without damaging environmentally sensitive Rock Creek Park. In the event transit comes to this corridor in the future, the investment in opening the trestle will have already been recovered by many years of heavy trail use. . .

PLEASE COME AND JOIN US ON APRIL 29. Bike rides and hikes to the rally will leave from the Silver Spring Metro station and the Bethesda Avenue trail head. . .

The CCCT has long maintained that the GB/CCT should be completed into Silver Spring, with the Rock Creek trestle. The opportunity to complete this portion has arrived! SEE YOU AT THE RALLY!

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Workshop on the Metropolitan Branch Trail

The Montgomery County DPWT held a public workshop on 22 March at the M-NCPPC Auditorium at 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring. DPWT has a design project for the Metropolitan Branch Trail, and presented concept alternatives and took public input.

The section of the MetBranch Trail that the county will build extends from the Silver Spring transit center south to the Takoma Park Campus of Montgomery College. Several alternate trail alignments are under consideration in Silver Spring. This section of the MetBranch Trail will include a bridge over Georgia Avenue, and a crossing of Burlington Avenue either in a tunnel or at-grade. This section of the MetBranch Trail will ultimately connect directly to the eastern end of the CCT in a new Silver Spring transit center to complete the trail network in lower Montgomery County. See the [DPWT March Newsletter](#) (a pdf file) for the full scale map and a description of the options. (The letter to the Montgomery County Planning Board regarding the CCT/MBT connection at the new transit center appears elsewhere in this newsletter.)

The MetBranch has already been constructed from Montgomery College south to the D.C. Line except for a short interim gravel section in the City of Takoma Park. D.C. is well underway in building its seven-mile section from the D.C. boundary south to Union Station.

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***"Let no one say - and say it to your shame
- all was beauty here until you came."***

The Capital Crescent Trail is beautiful and has been nearly litter-free. The National Park Service and the Montgomery County Departments of Parks and of Transportation have no regularly scheduled clean-ups of the Trail, due to personnel limitations. There are a number of unsung heroes who pick up litter on a regular basis, and they do a great service to the beauty and maintenance of the Trail. Those efforts are very much appreciated.

Carrying a plastic grocery bag with you when you're out on the Trail and taking your trash with you makes their efforts easier.

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