

THE CRESCENT

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Fall 2003

Vol. XII No. 3

CCCT Opposes Georgetown University Boathouse

By Ernie Brooks, CCCT Chair

On June 19th the CCCT appeared before the DC Zoning Commission in opposition to a proposal for a Georgetown University boathouse near the southern terminus of the Trail. Our opposition to the boathouse project is based on several considerations, chief among them being the narrowing of the effective width of the trail by 30-40%



Trail's end at Georgetown with the Washington Canoe Club at left

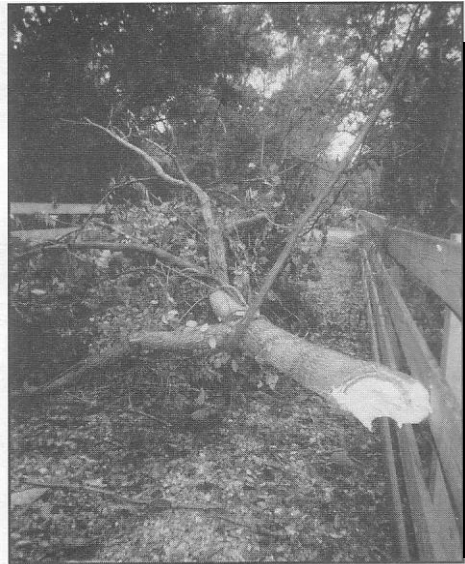
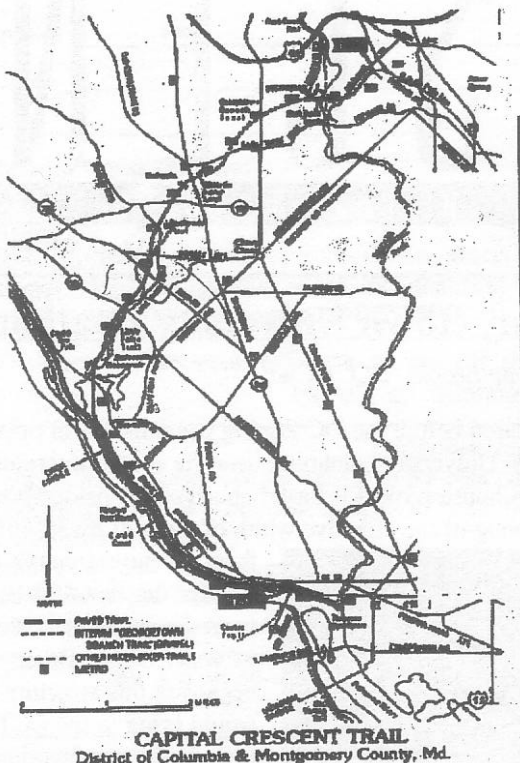
from its current configuration for the first 800-1000' from the entrance at the end of Water Street. Other negatives this structure would bring to the CCT include the combination of its enormous size (nearly 300' in length, with rooflines varying from 34' to 54' along that length) and proximity to the trail (approximately 15' along the 300' length), vehicular traffic along its access road located within the CCT right-of-way, and its blocking of river views from both the CCT and the C&O Canal Towpath. The CCT is not

opposed to the idea of GU having a boathouse for their crew teams, but we feel a much better site is available approximately 1/4 mile to the east, at the intersection of 34th and Water Streets. If GU insists on the proposed site, we believe they should be willing to construct a building which meets its programmatic needs on the Waterfront and move all non-water based uses onto their main campus.

Some Ancient History

In the mid-1990s the CCCT began to attend meetings of the Georgetown Waterfront Commission in order to evaluate how the CCT would be extended to meet the Rock Creek Trail through the proposed Georgetown Waterfront Park. In the course of those meetings we discovered that GU had plans to build on the site immediately upstream from the Washington Canoe Club, including using the CCT for vehicular access from Water Street to the boathouse site. Our initial reaction was to adamantly oppose such usage along that portion of the CCT, and that was with no idea what kind of structure was being proposed. At the time we were informed by officials with the National Park Service, which owns and manages the DC section of the CCT, that GU already owned a parcel of land about a mile further upstream, and their ownership

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September 19, 2003, post-Isabel

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Editor:
John Campanile

Contributing Editors:
Ernie Brooks
Andy O'Hare
Wayne Phyllaier

Design:
Jane Garrett

Distribution:
Ellen Jones
Washington Area Bicyclist Assn.

CONTACT THE CCCT:
contact@cctrail.org
OR
202-234-4874

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We request that all entries should be sent to the post office box listed above. Submissions should be sent via e-mail to: jcamp213@fox.com, by mail to CCCT.

MTA Holds "Scoping Meetings" for the Bi-County Transitway

By John Campanile and Wayne Phyllaier/CCCT Board

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) held a series of public "scoping" meetings in September as part of its planning efforts for the Bi-County Transitway, formerly known as the "Purple Line," a 14-mile transitway that would run from New Carrollton to Bethesda. The Silver Spring to Bethesda portion of this line would run alongside part or all of the Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail. CCCT board members have attended many of these meetings in order to monitor the project's process, and will evaluate and comment on the project's impact on the Trail as the evaluation process continues.

MTA plans to combine two previous studies into one comprehensive study - the Georgetown Branch Purple Line Western segment (Bethesda to Silver Spring) and the Purple Line Eastern segment (Silver Spring to New Carrollton) - to meet "consistent project goals and ensure all built alternatives [light rail and bus] are assessed from the perspective of the entire corridor." MTA has made clear that, in regards to the Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail, part of the project's objective is to maintain a "high quality hiker/biker trail" as an essential element of the project.

The Transitway is planned to provide high-capacity transit along the 14-mile corridor that extends from the western limits of Metrorail's Red Line in Bethesda to the New Carrollton Metrorail Station. The overall goals of the completed transitway, as outlined by MTA, are to address the needs to improve access to existing transit services, enhance connectivity, relieve traffic congestion and support land use goals and plans within both counties. The project is also planned to provide needed economic revitalization to the communities affected.

As mapped out by the MTA on its Bi-County Transitway web site

(www.bi-countytransitway.com) the study is expected to take approximately three and a half years with the current Public Scoping process to take about a year. Another 18 months will be used to fully analyze the alternatives, produce the "Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement" (AA/DEIS) and select a "Preferred Alternative." A preliminary engineering report and the development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement on the Preferred Alternative will take an additional year to complete.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

Larger Study Area: Combining the two Purple Line studies into a single project means that the study area is expanded, encompassing two counties and a number of culturally diverse communities such as Bethesda, Silver Spring and Takoma Park in Montgomery County, and Langley Park, College Park, Riverdale and New Carrollton in Prince George's county.

Alternative alignments will be considered by MTA as a way for the agency to **minimize costs**.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), considered as part of the Purple Line East study, will now be considered for the entire Bi-County Transitway corridor. As outlined by MTA, BRT is a "Rubber-tired" rapid transit mode that combines stations, vehicles, services, and guideways into an integrated system that ideally would improve the travel time and reliability of traditional bus transit.

These public meetings are considered an important part of the environmental review process implemented by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The MTA will use public input from these meetings in the development of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the 14-mile project. The meetings also initiate the public involvement and consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail recognizes that there are issues for the Trail whether transit is built or not. If the transitway is built, it will be difficult to preserve a good trail experience while sharing the corridor with transit. If it is not built, our ability to complete the Trail into Silver Spring on the preferred alignment is very uncertain. Our role in this process is to ensure that trail users will have a first-class trail whether or not transit is built.

For more information or to keep up with MTA's progress on this planning phase, visit www.bi-countytransitway.com, or contact the MTA, 6 St. Paul St., Baltimore, Md., 21202, 410-767-3694 (*En Espanol: 8720 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, Md., 20910, 301-565-9665*).

Continued from page 1

included full ingress/egress rights along the CCT to that parcel. The NPS officials further informed us that GU intended to build a boathouse on that upstream parcel, and use the CCT to access it. The NPS decided to swap a parcel next to WCC for the upstream GU parcel, which we were advised was a better deal for the Trail, since GU would only be impacting about 800' of the Trail rather than the final mile into Georgetown. Since the NPS had been our ally in acquiring and developing the DC section of the CCT, we took them at their word, figuring they had gotten the best deal possible for the Trail. NPS also implied they would make sure that GU's boathouse design would have minimal impacts on the CCT and the Towpath.

2003

During this past winter the Board finally saw an accurate rendering of the boathouse design. When we saw how much larger and intrusive it was than we had been led to believe by both GU and the NPS, we began to wonder about the accuracy of the information we had been given in the past regarding the upstream property. Upon obtaining the description of the upstream parcel, and information on its acquisition by GU, it was clear that, at best, we were somewhat misled. At this point the CCCT joined the Defenders of Potomac River Parkland, a group dedicated to preserving and protecting the parkland along the Potomac River. The main effort of the Defenders at this point in time is to stop this boathouse from being built in the C&O Canal National Historic Park, or barring that, scaling down the size to minimize its impact on the CCT, the Towpath, and the historic Washington Canoe Club.

GU's Upstream Property and the Land Exchange

In 1986 NPS identified a site just upstream from the Washington Canoe Club, and extending about 1/5 of a mile upstream from the Key Bridge, as a future boathouse site. This site was totally within the C&O Canal National Historic Park, and it's worth noting that this site is directly south of GU's campus. Unfortunately for GU, the NPS can't just give or sell them a piece of land that lies within a National Park.

In November of 1989, Kingdon Gould, acting largely as a placeholder for the NPS, paid the CSX corporation \$10 million for the 3.7 mile long section of the Georgetown Branch located in Washington, DC. This purchase specifically excluded a 1.1-acre site located about a mile upstream from the Key Bridge, and fronting on the right-of-way being sold to Mr. Gould. It also excluded from that sale access rights through the ROW from Water Street to the excluded property. The very next day, CSX gave that 1.1-acre parcel, and the access rights, to Georgetown University. Exactly one year later, Mr. Gould sold the ROW he had purchased from CSX to the NPS for \$9.5 million. Curiously, GU had obtained complete access rights for free along 1/4 of what the NPS paid millions for, not to mention they now had a perfect piece of land to swap for the boathouse site next to the WCC, which had been identified 3 years earlier..

In the early and mid 1990s, GU and the NPS worked on an exchange agreement for swapping the upstream parcel GU had been given in 1989 for the boathouse site identified by NPS in 1986. In August of 1997, as part of their responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, officials of the NPS signed a Memorandum of Agreement for the land exchange. This MOA contained a number of stipulations, including "that the facility's footprint or aggregate footprints are not more than 15,000 square feet for a building rising no more than 40 feet above grade."

While the upstream parcel is the same area as the parcel NPS proposes swapping for it, it is far from being useable for a rowing boathouse. The parcel itself is only 45' wide, and it fronts on the CCT for 1067' (it is located about a mile up river from Key Bridge). GU does have included in its deed a right of access along the CCT ROW from the end of Water Street to the eastern end of the property, but not along the 1067' of CCT frontage. To get from one end of their property to the other, GU would have to have some sort of a driveway within their property, which would reduce the buildable width to 30-35'. There is absolutely no way that any halfway reasonable boathouse for rowing shells could be built on a site that is so narrow. In addition, the site is some 15' below the level of the CCT, and would be prone to flooding a half dozen or more times each year. Finally, while using that parcel for whatever GU could put there would disrupt the CCT for nearly a mile of its length, it would also prove impractical for GU students to use since getting to it would not be very convenient for them.

The point of all these negatives is not that the NPS shouldn't be swapping land for the property GU owns, but rather that the NPS is in an incredibly strong bargaining position regarding such an exchange, given how undesirable that upstream parcel is for any sort of developed use. NPS says that they couldn't exchange land along the already commercially developed waterfront at 34th Street because Georgetown residents would have strongly opposed locating a boathouse in that area. I can only report that in our attending the Waterfront Commission meetings nearly a decade ago, we never heard any debate on that possibility. Actually the proposed building is too large even for this site, which is some 2-1/2 times wider than the upstream parcel, so GU is asking for several special exceptions to the Zoning that is being granted, and a Zoning Variance so that they can build their monster boathouse. Up to now, NPS has gone along with every request.

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CCCT TO WORK WITH COUNTY TO ADDRESS TRAIL CONDITION EAST OF TRESTLE

By Andy O'Hare/ CCCT Board



At its September meeting, the Board of the Coalition discussed the state of the trail east of the trestle over Rock Creek. Regular users of this section of trail are keenly (perhaps painfully) aware of the fact that the very wet spring, summer and now fall have not been kind. Large sections of the trail have deep trenches caused by erosion (photo), and the gravel is thick in one place and non-existent in others. The Board has discussed these concerns with officials from the Montgomery County Department of Public Work and Transportation (DPWT) — the branch of county government that oversees this section of the trail. DPWT has informed the Board the funds for trail maintenance are very limited, but has expressed an interest in working with the Coalition to determine whether there are a few key problem areas that may be addressed in the coming months. To this end, the Board plans to walk this section of trail with DPWT staff in coming month or so. Stay tuned for further developments!

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GU has stated that they absolutely have to have everything they have included in the building's design for their rowing program to be effective, including an 80' wide structure (in the main section), plus a 24 person enclosed rowing tank, and an 80'X40' 2nd floor "exercise" room. The "exercise" room has 24' high ceilings, a massive fireplace at one end and a large veranda at the other, with spectacular views of the Potomac. Until opposition arose to the proposed building, GU was touting the "exercise" room as a great "party" room, and it was clear that one of its intended uses (and perhaps its main usage) was for fundraising gatherings. Interestingly, none of those components could be fit into a building placed on their upstream site, yet they continue to maintain that they would build there if they weren't allowed to build on the NPS site. The proposed structure has a footprint in excess of 19,000 square feet, and a maximum height rising 54' above grade — far exceeding the limits of 15,000 square feet and a maximum height of 40' stipulated in the MOA signed by the NPS in 1997. There is no question that a boathouse which would be more than adequate for GU's rowing program could be built in such a way as to protect views from the Towpath and greatly minimize impacts on the CCT, and we feel it is unconscionable that officials of NPS are not requiring such a structure in the final land swap agreement.

Letters to the Editor

As an early supporter of the Crescent Trail I surprised and disappointed that the summer 2003 issue of The Crescent contains no mention of the threat facing the start of the Trail in Georgetown at the end of Water ("K") Street.

Georgetown University (GU) has proposed to construct an enormous boathouse, just upstream from the existing 99-year old Washington Canoe Club (WCC), between the C&O Canal and the Potomac River. It would involve a land swap with the National Park Service (NPS) for land further upstream within the park owned by GU.

The canal bank at that spot is steep, unlined and fragile. It continually leaks water under and into the WCC, enroute to the Potomac. If the bank were further weakened by cutting an access right-of-way into the bank parallel to the Trail, the bank could collapse, washing out the Trail and even the WCC.

Several hearings have been held by the D.C. Zoning Commission, but no decision has been announced.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Westlake

Washington, D. C.

See page 1 article. - Editor

DIAL UP TRAIL CONDITIONS AND EVENTS

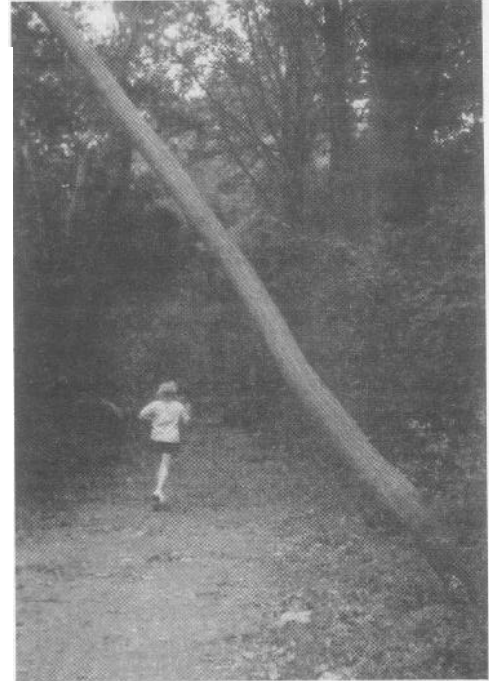
We can't do it without you! After tropical storm Isabel paid us a visit last month, we relied on trail users to inform us of downed trees and other potential hazards. So be the Coalition's eyes and ears the next time you're out on the Trail - Call the CCCT Information Line at 202-234-4874 and press box "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, 202-2344874

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

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1: Background of the CCT | 5: Volunteer activities |
| 2: Coalition meeting dates | 6: Other messages |
| 3: Membership information | 7: [Inactive] |
| 4: Obtain a CCT map | 8: Trail hotline & events |



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All events are rain or shine, unless noted. To confirm, call the Events Hotline, 202-234-4874, box 8, or visit our web: www.cctrail.org.

CCCT MONTHLY BOARD MEETING, Second Mondays, October 13, November 10 and December 8 (Call 202-234-4874, mailbox 8, to confirm dates). LOCATION: Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, 2nd floor, Bethesda; one block west of Bethesda Metro, at the corner of Old Georgetown Rd. and Edgemoor. Meeting begins at 7 p.m.

Superintendent Doug Faris to Retire

Doug Faris, Superintendent of the C&O Canal National Historic Park, has announced that he will retire at the end of the year after 30 years of service to the National Park Service. Doug has served in his current position, which includes overseeing the 3.7 miles of the Capital Crescent Trail in DC, since 1994, the year in which paving began on that section.

Even though the CCT was acquired by the NPS in 1990, from an “in place” point of view, you could say that Doug has been the only Superintendent the CCT has ever known! His efforts in resolving CCT problems, his vision in helping to develop the joint (with Montgomery County) Trail Management Plan, and his generous nature have been greatly appreciated, and will be missed.



Retiring Superintendent Doug Faris, third from left, is flanked by current CCCT Chair Ernie Brooks, and former chairs Scott Hall and Chris Brown.

On September 10th a Retirement Celebration was held for Superintendent Faris. Among the 200+ in attendance were three CCCT Chairmen - Chris Brown, who was Chair when Doug arrived in '94; Scott Hall, who worked with Doug on the Trail Management Plan; and current Chair, Ernie Brooks. The evening was filled with testimonials lauding Doug's many achievements during his 30-year career. The CCCT Board adds their thanks and good wishes for a well-deserved retirement to Superintendent Faris!



Not an endorsement, just...interesting...

From the Washington Post, September 21:

Conversion on the Bike Path

In India, many people consider cows to be sacred. In Vermont, they worship bicycles.

How else to explain this exchange between [Howard] Dean and ABC News's George Stephanopoulos last Sunday, after Dean was asked if he was raised Roman Catholic.

“No, raised Episcopalian, and I ended up as a Congregationalist,” Dean said.

Why did he become a Congregationalist?

“Because I had a big fight with a local Episcopal church about 25 years ago over the bike path. ... We were trying to get the bike path built. They had control of a mile and a half of railroad bed, and they decided they would pursue a property right suit to refuse to allow the bike path to be developed.”

5 YEARS AGO...

The Montgomery County Department of Public Works & Transportation removes 200-300 feet of railroad tracks immediately east of Stewart Avenue in Silver Spring, at the trailhead of the Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail. Crews also plant some evergreens opposite the trailhead.

10 YEARS AGO...

The Maryland-National Capital Park Planning Commission holds a public hearing to debate development of a bridge on the right-of-way to cross the Army Corps of Engineers' access road at the Dalecarlia Reservoir (mile 6.5). The CCCT opposes. The Commission votes in favor of the bridge, but at the Corps' expense.

15 YEARS AGO...

The Montgomery County Council votes to acquire Georgetown Branch right-of-way for \$10.5 million. Some argue that the expensive purchase price can only be justified if the right-of-way is used for proposed transitway (December 8).

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 _____

Individual Contributions:

Basic Individual \$10, includes newsletter subscription, action alerts. **New member** **Renewing member**

Sustaining \$30

Sponsoring \$60, newsletter subscription, action alerts, and T-shirt (IF DESIRED, PLEASE CIRCLE SIZE: M L XL)

Special Honor Membership \$200, recognition in our annual report, newsletter subscription, action alerts, and commemorative rail spike (IF DESIRED YES) OR T-shirt (IF DESIRED, PLEASE CIRCLE SIZE: M L XL)

Thanks for your efforts on behalf of the Trail, and in funding the trestle overlooks
Here's an additional contribution of \$_____.

Organizational / Business Contributions:

Basic \$200 (Crescent sent to up to 3 individuals; recognition in Crescent)

Sustaining \$500+ (Crescent sent to up to 15 individuals; recognition in Crescent, constant recognition on CCCT website with link.

Membership is good for one year from the 15th day of the month that you join. Make checks payable to: The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, P.O. Box 30703, Bethesda, MD. 20824. Detailed four-color map of the Capital Crescent Trail with historical perspectives is free to new members.

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.

CCCT
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