



The Crescent

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Fall 2005
Vol. XII No. 9

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 3 Metropolitan Branch Trail design takes a bad turn at DPWT
- 4 The Interim CCT should not be only for mountain bikes
- 5 Park vs Parking at River Rd.
- 6 Safety on the Trail
- 7 How do I find the CCT from Virginia?

Task Force takes on safety issues at Little Falls Parkway

The dangerous conflicts that occur regularly between trail users and motorists at the crossings of Little Falls Parkway and of Dorset Avenue are drawing increased attention. Montgomery County Park Police have stepped up enforcement in the area, and Park and Planning has initiated a task force study to consider what should be done to make these crossings safer.

The CCT has only two at-grade roadway crossings between Bethesda and Georgetown. This almost total freedom from concern about motor vehicle conflicts has been one of the major factors that has made the CCT one of the most heavily used trails in the nation. But this may also have given trail users a false sense of security at the two at-grade roadway crossings that do exist – at Little Falls Parkway and at Dorset Avenue. Trail users frequently ignore the stop signs and cross without looking for oncoming motor vehicles. While many motorists do stop, trail users cannot count on all motorists doing this. Two cyclists have been killed this year on the Washington and Old Dominion Trail this summer when they failed to stop at roadway crossings under similar conditions.



Park Police billboard advisory, set up just north of the intersection of the trail with Little Falls Parkway.

The Montgomery County Park Police have increased their safety and enforcement efforts. A flashing warning sign was stationed just north of Little Falls Parkway to give trail safety rules. Park Police have also been out to enforce the stop signs on the trail at Little Falls Parkway. We welcome the increased Park Police effort to enforce trail rules. CCCT has held several "Bells and Whistles" safety events this year to promote courteous and safe trail behavior. CCCT volunteers give free bells and whistles to trail users and distribute trail safety rules during these events. But some trail users continue to show illegal behavior and put themselves at risk at the Little Falls Parkway and Dorset Avenue crossings by entering the crosswalk without first stopping and looking for oncoming traffic.

continued on page 6

EDITOR:
John Campanile

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:
Pat Baptiste
Wayne Phyllaier

DESIGN:
Linda Rapp

PRINTING:
Ecoprint
printed using 100% wind power
on 100% postconsumer recycled
paper, process chlorine free





The trail's approach to the Rock Creek Trestle, after a summer's storm.

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Board Members 2004-2005

Officers At-Large

- Ernie Brooks, Chair
- Peter Gray, Vice-Chair
- Wayne Phyllaier, Treasurer
- Jennifer Longworth, Secretary
- Charlie Wellander, Asst. to the Treasurer
- Pat Baptiste
- John Campanile
- John Dugger
- Jennie Sue Dunner
- Issac Hantman
- Andy O'Hare

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 citizen's group promoting development of the 11.2 mile rail-to-rail conversion from Georgetown, D.C. to Silver Spring, MD for multi-purpose, recreational use.

@copyright 2005 Coalition for The Capital Crescent Trail

Reproduction of information in *The Crescent* for non-profit use encouraged. Please use with attribution.

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

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!

TRESTLE OVER ROCK CREEK PARK
 Opened in May 2003, making the connection into Silver Spring possible without dipping down to Creek level. Following an intensive campaign by the Coalition, the Montgomery County Council voted \$1.3 million to rebuild the trestle. The Coalition paid \$75,000 of the additional funds needed to help build observation decks.

TUNNEL UNDER WISCONSIN AVENUE
 Opened in 1998 following a campaign by the Coalition for the County Council to fund the \$900,000 needed for a trail in the tunnel. The Coalition spent \$45,000 for better trail lighting and routing.

HISTORY SURROUNDS THE TRAIL
 A guide to points of interest along the Trail can be found on the Coalition website, www.cctrail.org.

THE "GEORGETOWN BRANCH TRAIL"
 IS THE TEMPORARY NAME FOR THE FUTURE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL, AND HAS THIS NAME ONLY UNTIL A DECISION IS MADE AS TO WHETHER OR NOT A TRANSITWAY WILL BE BUILT ON THAT SEGMENT.

For a detailed four-color map of the Capital Crescent Trail with the historical perspectives, send a self addressed stamped envelope to
 CCCT, Box 30703
 Bethesda, MD 20824

For a more detailed map see the website: www.cctrail.org

CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL
 District of Columbia & Montgomery County, Md.

Metropolitan Branch Trail design takes a bad turn at DPWT

The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) is expanding its long overdue Metropolitan Branch Trail design project to study new trail alignment options. The new options would not have a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue, seriously degrading the trail. This comes as deadlines for the next Capital Budget approach, and may cause construction of the Trail to be delayed.

The Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) is needed to connect the CCT to many destinations and neighborhoods in eastern Montgomery County and in D.C. The MBT is also the missing link for the 22 mile "bicycle beltway" trail loop that includes the CCT and the National Mall. Completing this trail is a priority project for the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA). The CCCT strongly supports this project because of its importance to the CCT and to the regional trail network.

The recent decision by DPWT to inject new alignment options into the study is most unwelcome. In 2000 the Montgomery County Council approved the Silver Spring Master Plan calling for the MBT to have grade separated crossings of at Georgia Avenue and at Burlington Avenue (a.k.a. East-West Highway). The following year the Montgomery County Park and Planning completed a CCT/MBT Facility Plan that recommended a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue and a trail tunnel under Burlington Avenue. The Master Plan and the Facility Plan were developed with much public input from workshops and hearings.

The Planning Board sent the CCT/MBT Facility Plan to DPWT for implementation in 2001. After three years of inaction, DPWT issued a contract to design the Silver Spring section of the MBT. Over the next year the contractor developed three alternate design options for consideration, and DPWT hosted a public workshop to gather public input on these options in March, 2005. One option (Option 1) followed the Master Plan alignment and goals closely, with a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue and a tunnel under East-West Highway. The two other options deleted the tunnel and followed along local streets to cross East-West Highway at a light. The workshop information handout is available at our website, at www.cctrail.org/MBTworkshop.pdf Public response at this MBT Workshop was strongly in support of Option 1 as best meeting the goals of the Master Plan and as providing a quality trail.

But DPWT management has decided the proposed bridge over Georgia Avenue is too costly and is rejecting all three of the options it had brought to the public at the March workshop. DPWT is now considering using the existing CSX railroad bridge to carry the trail over Georgia Avenue. But the CSX bridge sidewalk is only 6' wide, and the bridge structure will not allow the sidewalk to be widened for the trail. The CSX bridge was studied in the 2001 CCT/MBT Trail Facility Plan and rejected because the sidewalk was too narrow and the trail would be too close to the active CSX tracks.

Capital Crescent Trail users understand how important it is to have bridges and tunnels to cross busy roadways. Imagine how much the CCT would be degraded if the bridge over River Road was only 6' wide and there was no tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue!

DPWT has assured County Council staff that studying new alignment options will not significantly delay completion of the design study, so that the MBT can still be considered in the upcoming Capital Budget deliberations this Spring. CCCT has little confidence in this assurance, given the very slow progress of the DPWT design study to date. The County Executive and the County Council have expressed strong support for completing the MBT as a good quality trail. CCCT will be working with WABA to advocate that DPWT bring the MBT design project forward for Council budget deliberations soon, and to insist that DPWT follow the Master Plan guidance for bridges and tunnels across the busy roadways. Follow our CCCT www.cctrails.org website, and WABA's www.waba.org website, to keep abreast of developments.



Looking west across Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring, from the north side of the CSX railroad tracks where the Metropolitan Branch Trail is proposed.

“Let no one say,
and say 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, and there are no trash receptacles along the CCT.

Therefore, it bears repeating: **Litter begets litter.**

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.

The Interim CCT should not be only for mountain bikes

Erosion damage has been a persistent problem for the Interim CCT between Bethesda and Silver Spring since its dedication in 1996. Conditions are especially poor east of the Rock Creek trestle, where storm water runoff from the DPWT maintenance facility at Brookville Road and the industrial area near Stewart Avenue regularly runs down the trail to cut deep ruts in the stone dust trail surface.

CCCT has been pressing this issue with the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) with only limited success. CCCT is advocating to improve the storm water system and/or to pave the trail with asphalt in the problem areas. Only approx. 1/3 of the Interim CCT length needs this special attention. DPWT did regrade the Interim CCT in the area of the Bethesda tunnel recently. But DPWT's limited trail maintenance budget will not support a more permanent fix where conditions are worst – at the Silver Spring end.

CCCT recognizes that the Interim CCT must remain as a temporary trail pending final decisions on the Bi-County Transitway. But it will be many years before any transitway construction can begin. It is unacceptable for the trail between Rock Creek and Silver Spring to remain almost unusable for this period for failure to address the storm water problem. The CCCT will be bringing this issue to the County Council in the upcoming budget deliberations.



The Interim CCT near mile marker 0.5. Much of the Interim CCT east of Rock Creek is so heavily eroded that mountain bikes are needed.

Along the Trail....

This article originally appeared in the summer 1997 issue of The Crescent. In the more than eight intervening years since, the Minkoff Company has yet to make any of the promised improvements, although it has taken advantage of the free parking spaces this area has for its fleet of trucks and dumpsters.

Park vs Parking at River Road

By John Dugger

Whether Montgomery County should continue to lease to private parties a portion of the Capital Crescent trail right-of-way on the Kenwood side of the River Road bridge was an issue considered by the Montgomery County Parks and Planning Commission at an evening meeting on April 28. The Minkoff Company, contractors



The Minkoff building, and the parking lot (which sits in the trail's right-of-way) are located at the River Road bridge.

for repair of fire and flooding damage, with office and equipment buildings behind the Mobil station [has] been using a strip of right-of-way along the access road and adjacent to a parking lot for parking vehicles, particularly large trucks

and dumpsters; the rent established by the County for this use is \$5000 per year. The Parks Department has prepared plans for extensive landscaping of the entire right-of-way between the access road and the bridge foundation and adjacent to the Trail; these plans would preclude parking on the right-of-way. The Minkoff Company declared that it would have to move its business elsewhere, perhaps out of the County, if the leased parking is terminated[.]

The [company] proposed that if the lease for parking were continued, they would pay for an elaborate scheme of landscaping in the area adjacent to River Road between their property and the Trail. Under the joint proposal, the appearance of the access to the Trail at River Road would be greatly improved, but less so than under the Parks Department proposal, which provides a much larger park area.

Skating the Issue

During our September "Bells & Whistles" safety event, we fielded an inquiry from a trail user regarding the status of roller bladers on the trail. The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission website on Parks has a link to park rules.

The section on rules for park activities is at:

http://www.mc-mncppc.org/parks/division/rules/regs/rules_regs_ch6.shtm

The section on Roller Blading reads:

Section 12. Roller Skating/Roller Blading/In-line Skating and Skateboards

Roller skating, roller blading, in-line skating, and skateboarding are permitted only in areas designated for such use. **Skateboarding is prohibited on hiker/biker trails (emphasis added).**

Note that skateboarding, but NOT rollerblading, is listed as prohibited on hiker/biker trails.

Elsewhere on the Parks webpage there is a link to trail maps and trail descriptions. Following the link to the Capital Crescent Trail, one finds Hiking, Biking AND ROLLERBLADING as permitted activities. So the CCT is among those areas "designated for such use."

Safety on the Trail

For bicycle commuters who use the CCT:

The days are getting "shorter" – fewer hours of daylight. It is important that all bicyclists carry a good lighting system and wear reflective clothing if you commute before dawn or after dusk. Generally, there are a fair number of bicycle commuters who use the trail after dusk, but with lights and reasonable caution, commuters should not have any problems.

Trail safety and courtesy means:

- **ALL USERS should stay to the right side of the trail except when passing.**
- **Passing other trail users to their left, allowing at least two feet clearance.**
- **Always look ahead and behind before passing.**
- **Give an audible voice or bell warning at least two seconds before passing.**
- **Travel at reasonable speed in a consistent and predictable manner.**
- **Keep all pets on a short leash (required by law).**
- **Move off the trail when stopped to allow others to pass.**
- **Yield to others when entering or crossing the trail.**
- **Use lights and reflectors after dusk or before dawn.**

Task Force takes on Safety

from page 1

Montgomery County Park and Planning has set up a task force to examine what can be done to improve safety at these crossings. Some suggestions that citizens have made to Park and Planning include traffic lights, four-way stop signs, and speed bumps or barriers on the trail that would physically force trail users to come to a near stop. Another suggestion is to give motorists the stop signs, so that they must always stop. The challenge is to find a practical approach that improves safety at these crossings while fairly balancing the convenience of motorists and trail users. The CCCT will work to protect the interests of trail users in any changes that result from the task force study, consistent with the overriding need to improve safety.



Please designate

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL
In the United Way/Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)
of the National Capital Area.
CCCT's CFC NUMBER IS 7221.

***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.***

How do I find the CCT from Virginia?

FROM ROSSLYN, cross the Potomac on Key Bridge. At M Street, turn right (east), right again on Wisconsin Ave. (south), and right one more time (west) on K Street (under the Whitehurst Freeway). K St. ends as you approach the Washington Canoe Club. You'll see the CCT trailhead straight ahead.

FROM NORTH ARLINGTON, go north on either Glebe Road or Military Road to cross the Potomac on Chain Bridge. Take the ramp down off the bridge before Canal Road. This ramp puts you on the C&O Towpath. Take the Towpath south (towards Georgetown) about one mile to Fletcher's Boat House. The CCT is the paved path, 2 miles north of K St./Georgetown trailhead. Backtrack north if you want to head towards Bethesda/Silver Spring; continue south if Georgetown is your destination.

**To receive a CCT map, send \$1.00 and a SASE to CCCT,
Box 30703, Bethesda, MD., 20824
(Map is free with membership).**

IS IT TIME FOR YOU TO RENEW YOUR SUPPORT FOR THE CCCT?...

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 FREE TO ALL NEW MEMBERS.

Donors of \$60 or more will receive a CCCT T-shirt upon request.

(if desired, please circle size: S M L XL).

Make your tax-deductible contribution checks payable to: The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail.

Mail to: CCCT, P.O. Box 30703, Bethesda, MD., 20824.

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.

CCCT
P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #4468
Wash., DC



Become a
volunteer for
The Capital
Crescent
Trail!