

THE CRESCENT

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Spring 2003

Vol. XII No.

CCCT Kicks In \$75,000 for Rock Creek Trestle Reconstruction at February 1 "Kick Off" Ceremony



Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail Chair Ernie Brooks, at mike, speaks during the February 1st "Rock Creek Trestle Kick Off" ceremony after presenting Montgomery County Executive Doug Duncan, also pictured, with a check totaling \$132,319. The CCCT contributed \$75,000 of that total, which will go to the construction of scenic overlooks on the reconstructed trestle. When construction is completed (estimates are this May), the overlooks will provide trail users with outstanding views of Rock Creek Park --- Photo by Jennifer Longworth



Some 300 friends of the trail attended the ceremony that was held at the east end (Silver Spring side) of the trestle.

MORE PHOTOS OF THE "KICK-OFF" CEREMONY, AND THE ONGOING ROCK CREEK TRESTLE PROJECT, pages 4 and 5.

On Saturday, April 26 help us prepare for the trestle opening! See page 3.

Help us get the trail ready for the trestle!

Please join us on Saturday, April 26th on the Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail to help remove litter from the eastern end of the trail. The little used section of the trail between Grubb Road and Stewart Avenue has been neglected, and is badly in need of a spring cleanup before the opening of the trestle brings many trail users to the area. We will spend a couple of hours picking up litter and trash along the trail, then will walk to the nearby trestle to see the nearly completed construction (as safety and access at the construction site permits). This will be a good chance to preview the new trestle, before its expected opening around mid-May.

We will meet at 10 a.m. at the Georgetown Branch Trail at Terrace Drive and Grubb Road. If coming on the trail, follow the signed Georgetown Branch Trail to where the on-road trail detour of the trestle meets the off-road trail on the east side of the Rock Creek stream valley. This is at Terrace and Grubb. If driving, take East-West Highway to Grubb Road. Go north on Grubb Road (toward Rosemary Hills and the Recreation Center) and keep straight on Grubb Road two blocks above East-West Highway where the main roadway curves right to become Lyttonsville Road. Terrace Drive is at the top of the next hill, where Grubb Road makes a left turn. Street parking is available.



Check the CCCT website, www.cctrail.org, or call our hotline at 202-234-4874 in case ongoing trail construction requires a last minute change in the start to another nearby location.

The following is a letter the CCCT sent to Governor Ehrlich requesting an expansion of the current Environmental Impact Study (EIS) of the Inner Purple Line (IPL) to include the study of some undergrounding. This request does not represent a change in our neutral position on the IPL - it is simply an indication of our concern for the impact a surface rail line will have on some sections of the CCT. We believe that the CCT can co-exist with a surface IPL between Silver Spring and Bethesda (in the last mile into Silver Spring it will only exist as an off road trail if the IPL is built), but the section between Rock Creek and Bethesda will lose its park like character, and its usage will likely be reduced, primarily, to purposeful trips. We feel that the possibility of losing this setting justifies the expanded study, and we will be closely monitoring this issue as it develops.

January 15, 2003

Governor Robert Ehrlich
State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Expanding the scope of the Inner Purple Line Environmental Impact Study

Dear Governor Ehrlich:

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT) is writing to ask that the scope of the Inner Purple Line (IPL) Environmental Impact Study (EIS) be expanded to include the option of some undergrounding. We feel that the constraint the Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) is following to only evaluate a transit alignment that is entirely on the surface is too limiting. The feasibility and cost of undergrounding the IPL in especially sensitive areas must be evaluated so that decision makers will have design options available that can preserve the character of the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT).

CCCT is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization with over 1600 members. We are an advocacy group formed in 1986 when the CSX Corporation decided to abandon the Georgetown Branch right of way (ROW), with the purpose of seeing a continuous trail being established within that ROW, between Silver Spring and Georgetown. We were instrumental in getting Montgomery County to acquire the section lying in their jurisdiction under the Federal Rails to Trails Act in the late-1980's. Our mission is to support a high quality trail, suitable for a variety of users, which links Georgetown and the C&O Canal towpath trail to the CCT along the Georgetown Branch, through Bethesda and on to Silver Spring where it joins the main CSX tracks. It is our goal to continue the CCT into Silver Spring to join with the Metropolitan Branch Trail and the Silver Spring Green Trail. Additionally we support having the CCT provide easy access to a park environment for as many neighborhoods as possible. The CCT has become the most heavily used trail in Montgomery County. It enjoys tremendous support both in the adjacent neighborhoods, and among the over one million users per year. It is an important recreational and commuter resource for the entire region.

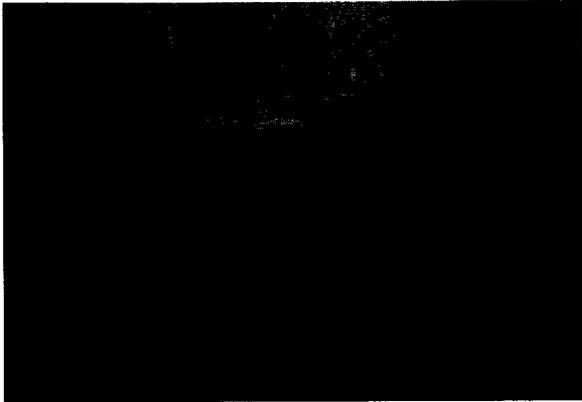
The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission took a trail user survey in August and September of 2000. That survey gives insight into the characteristics that have made the CCT so successful. The trail users are a very large group, counting over 500 users/hour during peak periods and 240 users/hour average. The survey found that trail users are very representative of both sexes and of all age groups. Trail uses are diverse, with 41% cyclists, 37% walkers, 15% joggers, and 7% inline skaters. People with disabilities and infants in strollers were among the users (approx. 3%). Peak use periods were during weekday evenings and weekend afternoons, especially among walkers and joggers. Other peak use periods were during weekday commuting hours, especially for adult cyclists. The high traffic counts during commuting periods shows that the CCT has a significant transportation use for purposeful trips. But the even heavier traffic counts in weekend and evening periods demonstrates the very important recreational use the trail has providing access to a park environment.

The CCT is such a successful multi-use trail because it has design characteristics that satisfy the diverse needs of two large user groups - those making purposeful trips and those seeking a recreational experience in a park. The completed portion of the trail has been built to high design standard throughout, with good continuity and with bridges or tunnels eliminating conflicts with motor vehicle traffic at major roadway crossings. These characteristics permit cyclists to commute safely from Bethesda to Georgetown faster than is often possible by automobile. The trail also is built in a wooded corridor, under a tree canopy and in a quiet, park-like setting. People of all ages, including families with young children, can walk, jog, or cycle along the trail and enjoy an escape into a serene,

continued on page 4

“Kick-Off” Ceremony for the Rock Creek Trestle

After postponement of the October groundbreaking ceremony due to sniper attacks, County Executive's Doug Duncan office held a “kick-&” ceremony to celebrate the trestle project and recognize those groups that made it possible, including the CCCT. Many prominent leaders attended and accepted a ceremonial presentation of a \$132,319 check from the CCCT, the Washington Area Bicyclist Assoc., and the Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Coalition to demonstrate strong support for this vital link in the trail. The ceremony was held on the east end of the trestle under cloudy skies and muddy conditions. This view of the ongoing reconstruction of the trestle's deck looks west, towards Chevy Chase.



Presentation of the check for the scenic overlooks - Along with CCCT Chair Ernie Brooks, second from right, are (left to right) Mont. County Councilmember Nancy Floreen, Wash. Area Bicyclist Assoc. representative and former CCCT Chair Chris Brown, Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Coalition president Ira Shesser, County Executive Doug Duncan (behind Ernie), and Mont. County Council member Howard “Howie” Denis. GBCCC contributed \$55,000, and WABA kicked in with \$2500 towards the \$132,000+ total.

continued from page 3

park-like setting. This is an especially scarce and prized retreat in the heart of a dense urban area. It is this combination of a good functional trail design and a quiet park setting that sets the CCT apart from other bike paths or park trails, and accounts for why the number of users on the CCT is twice as great as on any other trail in Montgomery County. If either the high functional design standards or the park setting is lost, the CCT will be greatly diminished.

The MTA is performing an EIS to develop concepts and to evaluate impacts of a doubletrack IPL that would share the Georgetown Branch Corridor east of downtown Bethesda and part of the CSX/WMATA corridor in Silver Spring with the CCT. Light rail trains, each car a length of 96 feet, would run 19 hours a day, as often as every three minutes at speeds of up to 50 mph. MTA representatives presented early design concepts to the public in workshops in November 2002 and have also walked parts of the corridor with representatives from the neighboring communities and from the CCCT. It is evident from these meetings that MTA is trying to develop designs that retain a trail, but it faces severe design constraints because of the narrowness of the right of way and the need to accommodate a number of safety requirements such as providing better physical separation between transit and trail where possible, better protecting trail users from transit vehicle noise, providing better and more frequent neighborhood cross-rail connections to the trail from adjacent neighborhoods and protecting the crucial trail alignment through the Bethesda tunnel.

The difficulty of completing the final CCT in downtown Silver Spring continues to be of great concern to the CCCT, and we are pleased that MTA has made an especially strong effort to develop a transit/trail design that would provide a trail with good continuity through the very difficult and constrained CSX/WMATA corridor. MTA's design concept would create a safe and functional trail in the “final mile” that is crucial to complete the trail connection between Montgomery County's two largest urban centers, Bethesda and Silver Spring. The trail MTA proposes alongside transit in this eastern most section of the corridor would likely be better than any shared use trail we can build in Silver Spring without the assistance of the Purple Line.

But the trail character that is so important to the trail users and to nearby neighborhoods will be lost elsewhere along the corridor for a CCT rebuilt alongside the IPL. The corridor is too narrow in some places for the trail and transit to coexist on the surface without sacrificing virtually all of the park setting and quiet experience trail users now enjoy. This is especially true at the west end of the corridor, where the right-of-way is only 66' wide. Even if the trail is placed within 10' of the passing transit vehicles, the entire width of the corridor will be within the limits of construction and no mature trees will remain in the corridor. MTA can design a bike path alongside transit that has a good functional design for purposeful trips in these constrained areas, but MTA has an impossible task in attempting to preserve a pleasant trail environment so important to a majority of trail users, including the elderly, children, families and recreational users, if it is constrained to following a transit alignment that is entirely on the surface.

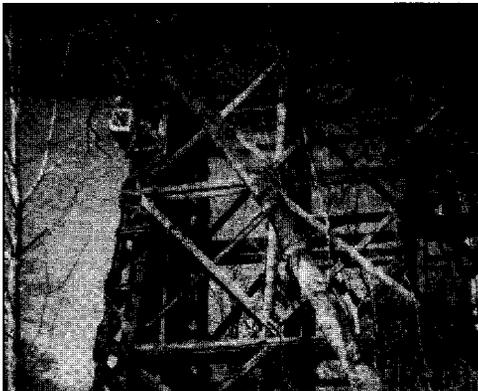
CCCT is asking that you direct MTA to determine the feasibility, cost and impacts of undergrounding the Purple Line in those areas where the available right-of-way is too constrained to save the park character of the trail. CCCT recognizes that MTA has developed very approximate cost estimates for undergrounding transit over the entire length of the corridor between Bethesda and Silver Spring. We are not asking that underground options be studied for the section of the corridor east of Rock Creek, because trail users seeking a direct connection into, and through, Silver Spring are best served by having the CCT completed alongside transit in the very difficult CSX corridor. But an underground transit system between Rock Creek and Bethesda would provide the trail experience currently enjoyed by the public on the completed section of the CCT west of Bethesda to those who would use the trail to the east.

In sum, the quiet park setting under a tree canopy is an essential part of the trail experience for many of our trail users. An at grade Purple Line will result in the destruction of many hundreds of mature trees, not to mention thousands of smaller trees, and the beautiful park character that gives the CCT much of its value. The easy access the CCT gives to a serene park environment is essential for maintaining a good quality of life for many close in urban neighborhoods. The CCT will play a decisive role in shaping public opinion, determining whether the Purple Line project succeeds or fails to gain acceptance. Please direct MTA planners to develop information on all reasonable options to protect the park character of the Trail. If options such as partial undergrounding are not given serious examination by decision makers then many trail supporters and much of the public will likely resist conclusions drawn from any IPL EIS as being based on **incomplete information.**

Sincerely
Ernie Brooks
CCCT Chair

Trestle Reconstruction

From the Rock Creek Hiker-Biker Trail looking up, the incomplete (left part of photo) and partially completed deck of the trestle (right) can be seen.



A Brief History of the Rock Creek Trestle

As originally built in 1892, this wooden structure that spans high above Rock Creek Park was 1400 feet long and 67 feet high, advertised as the longest trestle on the B&O Railroad in its day. One of the most interesting and historic features of the Capital Crescent Trail, this formerly single-track bridge is located east of Jones Mill Road, just off East-West Highway.

In 1967, the bridge was vandalized and went up in flames. But it remained structurally sound since the fire fed chiefly on the surface creosote, a wood preservative. Hurricane Georges dealt the bridge its second major blow in June 1972 when the rain-swollen Rock Creek raced through the narrow opening with fallen trees and debris in its wake, knocking out the support structure on the west side and leaving the central horizontal stringer dangling and the track sagging. But eventually, the bridge was fixed (shored up with steel beams, which remain today with the restored trestle) and trains service resumed as it had after the '67 fire.

Today, with fill added the steel trestle is 281 feet long and 69 feet high. For the past few years as the Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail opened, signs have detoured Trail users around the deteriorated, blackened structure to nearby Susanna Lane and the Rock Creek hiker/biker path. Beginning next month - May 2003 - trail users will be able to take a more direct route across Rock Creek - over it!

Along The Trail...

5 YEARS AGO

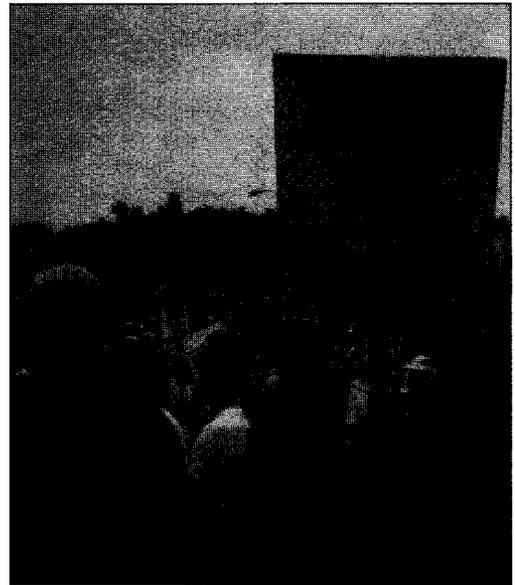
During its February 10 meeting the Montgomery County Council voted with a 5-4 majority to fund renovations totaling \$410,000 to open the trails tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue. Coalition efforts were strongly supported by a citizens' group that collected nearly 9,000 petition signatures for opening the tunnel. Two council members who voted against funding stated that they did so in fairness to Silver Spring, believing that opening the tunnel and restoring the Rock Creek Trestle should be considered together.

10 YEARS AGO

Construction of Capital Crescent Trail begins with a \$100,000 in-kind donation from the Potomac Electric Power Company on a 0.6-mile section between Bethesda Avenue (across from Barnes & Noble) and Little Falls Parkway (adjacent to the Bethesda Pool).

100 YEARS AGO

Construction of a different nature begins on the Rock Creek Trestle as it is shortened to 281 feet in length (from the original 1400-foot length) after fill is added to form a large berm. In 1928, the trestle is strengthened with steel girders supporting the central span.



September 1997 CCCT "Open the Tunnel" rally.

DIAL UP TRAIL CONDITIONS AND EVENTS

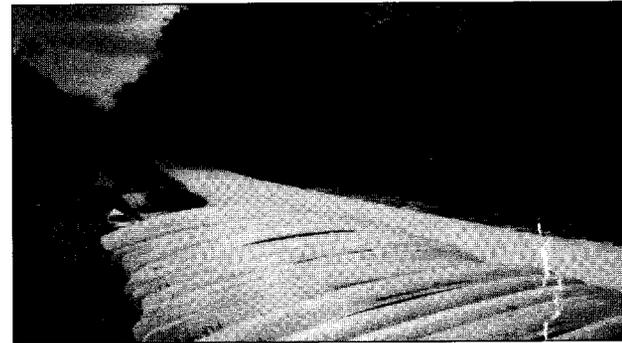
We can't be everywhere! Be the Coalition's eyes and ears the next time you're out on the Trail - Call the CCCT Information Line at 202-234-4874 and press box "8." Leave a message on trail conditions you've encountered, or on any issue which might impact the Trail. The hotline message provides trail users with weekly 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 | 5: Volunteer actiiv |
| 2: Coalition meeting dates | 6: Other messages |
| 3: Membership information | 7: [Inactiiv] |
| 4: Obtain a CCT map | 8: Trail hotline & events |



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

All events are rain or shine, unless noted. To confirm, call the Events Hotline, 202.234.4874, box 8, or on the web: www.cctrail.org.

CCCT MONTHLY BOARD MEETING, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, 2nd floor, Bethesda; location is one block west of Bethesda Metro, at the corner of Old Georgetown Rd. and Edgemoor. Meeting begins at 7 p.m.

Second Mondays, April 14 and May 12 (Call 202-234-4874 mailbox 8, to confirm dates)

CCCT Annual Meeting to be held in June. Watch for mailing!



ROCK CREEK TRESTLE CLEAN UP, SATURDAY, APRIL 26. Help us get *ready for the trestle!* Meet at 1 Oam at Terrace Drive & Grubb Rd. along the Georgetown Branch Trail. Details on p. 3.

BIKE TO WORK DAY, MAY 2, 2003- Volunteers Needed

All types and all stripes of volunteers needed to help with the festivities at Freedom Plaza, Friday, May 2. Commuter Convoy Leader to Freedom Plaza from Crystal City needed, as well as other commuter convoy helpers for the 15 routes planned for the morning ride in, including a ride along the Capital Crescent Trail from Bethesda to Freedom Plaza.

We need on-site assistance at the Plaza starting at 6AM-10AM. Contact the WABA office if you can assist 202-628-2500 or waba@waba.org

Yes! I want to help complete the Capital Crescent Trail and make it safer and more pleasant to use!

Name(s) _____ (W)
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____ E - m a i l _____

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
P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824

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Help us prepare for May's **opening of the Rock Creek trestle - Plan on attending the CCCT's** April 26 clean up.
Details inside!