# GRESCENT

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Spring 2004

Vol. XII No. 4

#### **CCCT and DPWT take on Interim Trail Issue**

**On** March 9, 2004 CCCT Chair Ernie Brooks and Board Members Andy O'Hare and Wayne Phyillaier had a meeting with Montgomery County DPWT Director AI Genetti and his satff at CCCT's request. Also attending was Ms. Merle Steiner, Legislative Analyst for Councilmember Nancy Floreen. CCCT reiterated its strong interest in:

- Improving the condition of the Georgetown Branch (Interim) Trail, including providing better access to Silver Spring communities,
- · Improving the trail surface east of Jones Mill Road, and
- · Providing improved trail access at Pearl Street in Bethesda.

Gail Tait-Nouri, DPWT Bikeways

Coordinator, outlined efforts to provide public access from the end of the off-road trail at Stewart Avenue to the communities of Lyttonsville and Rosemary Hills. DPWT has learned the County owns the right-of-way needed for a public pathway from the end of Stewart Avenue to Kansas Avenue, and is planning to build a pathway there. They are contacting nearby residents to get public input. Funds are available for this small project, and work could be done this season. Opening this public access would allow the Georgetown Branch Trail to be redirected off dangerous Brookville Road onto quiet neighborhood streets.



The resurfaced trail, east of the Rock Creek Trestle.

Photo by Wayne Phyillaier

Gail also indicated DPWT will perform repairs of the badly eroded stone-dust trail

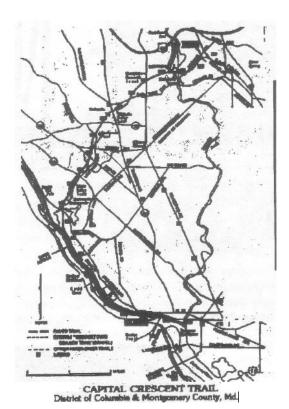
surface east of the trestle. This would be an inexpensive temporary repair, since the storm-water drain system in the area is inadequate and future erosion may occur until the system capacity is expanded. CCCT asked DPWT to develop cost estimates for a range of options for a more permanent fix in this area, and DPWT agreed. (Editor's note – about 10 days after the meeting with CCCT board members DPWT did resurface the Interim Trail east of the trestle.)

A range of other concerns was shared, including the coarse gravel surface on the approaches to the trestle, erosion near mile 3.0, the hazards of the informal path to Pearl Street, and planning for extending the trail east into other Silver Spring neighborhoods. One persistent problem for DPWT has been the absence of funds for trail maintenance. In recent years there has been no money allocated in the Operating Budget for DPWT to maintain any of its trails. Most work to maintain or improve the Interim Trail must come from the Operating Budget. The Trail competes directly with roads for scarce maintenance funds, and the Trail frequently loses. Ms. Steiner indicated Councilmember Floreen is very interested in addressing this issue, and suggested the Council would be interested in hearing from the CCCT on this at the upcoming public hearings.

CCCT will continue working these issues with DPWT, and is preparing to give testimony to the County Council for Operating Budget funding to better support the CCT and the Georgetown Branch (Interim) Trail.

Action Alert! Your Comments are needed.
See page 3, GU Boathouse Update





#### zz The Coalition For The Capital Crescent Trail **Board Members 2002-03**

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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: or by mail to CCCT.

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### **Proposed Operating Budget falls short**

The Montgomery County Executive has submitted his Operating Budget request to the County Council. The proposed Operating Budget falls short of what is needed to keep our CCT and Georgetown Branch (Interim) Trail in good shape.

The Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) would have \$0 allocated for trail maintenance next year. DPWT must maintain 100+ miles of trails and side paths countywide, including the Georgetown Branch (Interim) Trail. CCCT has requested DPWT to perform repairs to correct the severe erosion damage along the Georgetown Branch Trail. Brush and grass must be cut several times each season to keep the trail reasonably attractive. The proposed budget has nothing to support this.

The Montgomery County Parks Department would have a modest increase in its Parks Fund. This fund supports maintenance of the CCT from Bethesda to D.C. ones. But the increase hardly covers inflation. The CCT is starting to show some age, and needs maintenance to keep it at the good standard we enjoy. We have already lost trash pickup service on the Trail and at all of our parks. This spring we will lose the flowers alongside the Bethesda Trailhead and at the Map kiosk, to be replaced with grass or mulch. Has Montgomery County become so poor that we can only afford grass at the Trailhead to the region's signature trail, where as many as 500 persons use the trail hourly and more drive or walk by along Bethesda's most pedestrian active street?

There is time for the Council to fix this budget, and CCCT will be testifying to the Council in support of bettering funding. But it will be a hard fight to secure adequate funding in this tight budget year. You can help by letting the Council know how important it is to you that our Trail be kept safe and attractive. Letters are most effective, but telephone calls and emails also help. Contact information follows, but please act soon while the budget is still be decided.

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# Action Alert; GU Boathouse Update By Ernie Brooks

On December 11 the DC Zoning Commission approved the Waterfront Zoning for the parcel of land near the southern terminus of the CCT on which Georgetown University (CU) plans to build their super-sized Boathouse. In order to accommodate the enormous size, the ZC also approved two special exceptions, and a Zoning Variance. This approval would allow GU to build a boathouse some 40% bigger, and 35% taller than had been approved by a 1998 Memorandum of Agreement between the involved parties, which was a requirement of the Historical Review process. In order to tie up this loose end, the National Park Service (NPS) is revising the MOA to fit the larger boathouse design.

As readers of the Fall 2003 Newsletter (now available online, www.cctrail.org) will recall, the Coalition opposed the Boathouse approval due to its negative impacts on the both CCT, and the C&O Canal National Historic Park. In particular, the size of the structure. and its 12' wide access road through the CCT Right-of-way, will push the edge of the trail's pavement up against the canal embankment. In addition, the 54' tall and 300' long structure will crowd the trail along one of its busiest stretches.

One reason the NPS gives for allowing GU to build at this location is the fact that GU owns a parcel some 3/4 of a mile further up the CCT, with access rights through the CCT ROW from the end of Water Street to that parcel. NPS will be getting that parcel and removing the long access easement, in exchange for the proposed site and its shorter access easement. Ignoring the suspicious nature of GU'S acquisition of the upstream parcel to begin with, this exchange might seem to be a good deal for the Trail. The problem with that reasoning is that the upstream site is essentially unbuildable for anything (it was described that way by an appraisal for the Environmental Assessment required for the land swap), and laughable as a site for a boathouse.

#### What Can Be Done

The NPS dropped the ball back in 1989 when they allowed GU to get the upstream site and its easement, and we'd really like to see them do a better job of protecting the CCT & the C&O Canal at this point in time. What they seem to fail to realize, or choose to ignore, is that they are in an incredibly strong bargaining position regarding the land swap. If GU wants a bigger boathouse than what is appropriate for the proposed site, NPS could consider swapping a piece of the riverfront property they own between 34th Street and Key Bridge. The land along that stretch suffers none of the negatives associated with the currently proposed site.

To help protect the CCT in this area, trail users should send an email to Terry Carlstrom, the NPS Regional Director, at <a href="terry\_carlstrom@nps.gov">terry\_carlstrom@nps.gov</a>, as well as your Congressional representatives. Remind them that GU will be happy to swap its upstream parcel for the proposed site, even if they don't get everything they want in their boathouse. You should also let them know that much more suitable sites exist along the noted section of Water Street.

#### Off the Beaten Trail

The C&O Canal Association is planning a through-hike of the entire 184.5 miles of the C&O Canal National Historical Park this spring. "The Hike that Created a Park" will commemorate the 50th anniversary of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas's 1954 trek to save the canal with its scenic vistas and natural resourcesfrom being paved over to become a road.

This two-week hike will begin in Cumberland, Maryland on April 18 and finish in Georgetown, Washington, DC on May 1. Each day, a different structure, historic event or special attraction will be the featured. The number of people participating in the entire through-hike is limited due to the size of available camping areas but we welcome any and all that wish to join us in hiking on a daily basis. Our schedule for the entire hike is here for anyone interested in bringing some water, lunch, good hiking boots, a camera and hiking along with us.

Day hikers are responsible for their own transportation. Access to the areas listed above is explained in several publications about the C&O Canal towpath and the official Park Service brochure about the park includes a map. The Capital Crescent Trail runs parallel to the Georgetown portion of the towpath, from the Arizona Ave. trestle to Georgetown, mile 7.5 to mile 10.5.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please call the C&O Canal NHP at 301-739-4200.



Improved access at Mass. Ave.

The Montgomery County Park Department has constructed a paved access ramp from the Trail, near milepost 5.0 to the sidewalk on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue. The Park Dept. has plans to construct another paved access ramp from the Trail, near milepost 3.5, to the sidewalk on the north side of Bradley Blvd. Photo at right shows this access as it exists now.



# Prescription: CCT, taken regularly.

Officials at the Center For Disease Control, citing a recent Journal of the American Medical Association study, have announced that "the widespread pattern of physical inactivity combined with unhealthful diets is poised to become No. 1" to overtake smoking as the most avoidable cause of death in the U.S. [The Washington Post, front page, March 10, 2004] The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's largest foundation dedicated to improving the health and health care of Americans, thinks that it has found a health remedy in our Capital Crescent Trail. Their own study affirmed the importance of regular physical activity for maintaining health, and they have cited the CCT as an outstanding example of how to design activity into our daily lives. You can see their interesting website feature on the CCT by going to our www.cctrail.org website "News and Events" page and following the link in the announcements section.

# Along the Trail...

#### 5 Years Ago:

The Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission begins a trail alignment study for the CCT and the Metropolitan Branch Trail through Silver Spring.

On another front, a drinking fountain with water supplied by the Washington Aqueduct is completed near the Dalecarlia Bridge. The purchase of the fountain was funded by a friend of the Trail and installation funded by the CCCT.

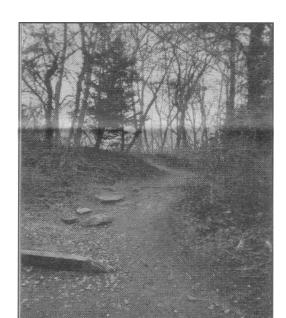
#### 10 Years Ago:

Montgomery County Councilmember Isaiah Leggett proposes the creation of a County task force to study the feasibility of establishing an interim trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring (the portion of the Capital Crescent Trail now known as the Georgetown Branch Trail).

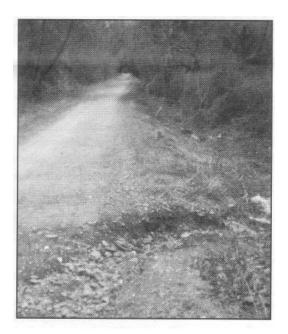
#### 18 Years Ago:

CSX Railroad files notice of abandonment of Silver Spring to Georgetown spur with the Interstate Commerce Commission.

The recently formed Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail prints its first brochure.



Erosion remains a problem on the trail just east of the Wisconsin Ave. tunnel.



The Sumner Citizens Association would like to see Montgomery County Parks provide residents with an improved access path to the CCT at Brookeway Ave., near mile 5.5 on the trail. Current conditions, as can be seen in the left photo, are very rugged especially for those with children in strollers.

#### Calendar of Events

CCCT Monthly Board Meetings, second Mondays of each month (April 12 and May 10), starting at 7pm.

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.

May 7th - BIKE TO WORK DAY: The Washington Bicyclist Association (WABA) annual Bike to Work Day will feature several routes along the Capital Crescent Trail. There will be "pit stops' with entertainment and refreshments for riders to gather in North Bethesda, Bethesda and Silver Spring, and several bike convoys will start from these locations and ride along the CCT or the Georgetown Branch (Interim) Trail. If you have ever considered riding to work on the CCT, this is an excellent opportunity to join a group-supported ride for your first commute. See the WABA website at www.waba.org for the ride schedules and registration.

**Monday, June** 14. CCCT Annual Membership Meeting. Our annual awards presentation. Food and drink provided. Details to follow in a special mailing.

## Safety on the Trail

Parents with small children, walkers and joggers, elderly people, some of whom are hearing-impaired – These are among the trail users we hear from that tell us stories of bicyclists and rollerbladers who pass without giving any audible warning. Besides being required by law in Montgomery County and D.C., warnings are important for safety and are the courteous thing to do, appreciated by those being overtaken.

The Capital Crescent Trail has been an enormous success and with the advance of warmer weather and longer days can be very crowded with users of all sorts. Toddlers and children present a whole new set of concerns, as their actions can be unpredictable.

For the past fourteen years, the Coalition has led efforts to create this wonderful greenway and to achieve the best possible amenities to make the Trail safe and attractive. As part of our commitment, we regularly sponsor "Bells & Whistles" events throughout the year. One will be held on April 24 - Look for us at the Bethesda trailhead.



#### 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.



The largest project along the trail this spring may be at River Road. Construction is poised to begin for a trail rest stop and plaza on the north side of River Road, at milepost 4.5. Minkoff Company, Inc. is building this rest stop under the guidance of the Park Dept., in exchange for a lease to use a part of the trail easement to park its vehicles. The rest stop will include a map kiosk and bulletin board (donated by the CCCT), a waterfountain, benches, bike racks, a pathway to the River Road sidewalk and plantings to screen the Trail from the commercial storage building on the west side. A few parking spaces will be dedicated exclusively for trail users on all days, and more will be available to trail users on weekends. County and State permits are pending, and construction could begin in April.

Name(s)	(H)	(W)
Address		A p t
	State	
	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 C HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES IS FREE TO DONORS OF \$60 OR MORE WILL RECEIVE (IF DESIRED, PLEASE CIRCLE SIZE:	ALL NEW MEMBERS.  E A CCCT T-SHIRT UPON REQUEST
Make your tax-deduc	tible contribution checks payable to: The Coalition Mail to CCCT, PO. Box 30703, Bethesda, MD.	·
Thanks for your efforts of	on behalf of the Trail! Here's an addition	nal contribution of \$
Membership	is good for one <b>year</b> from the 15th day of the mon	th that you join.
We are an all	-volunteer organization I am interested in v	

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

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.



Why are these people smiling?

They attended last year's CCCT Annual Membership Meeting! Plan on attending this year's food and fun-fest on Monday, June 14. Look for a special mailing as the date approaches.

CCCT P.O. Box 30703 Bethesda, MD 20824

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