

The Crescent

THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Spring 2008
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 3 Weed Warrior Program Donation
- 4 Safety Is No Accident
- 5 Woodmont East, Phase II
- 5 Earth Day on the Trail
- 5 ISO More Trail Good Samaritans
- 6 GU Boathouse Updates

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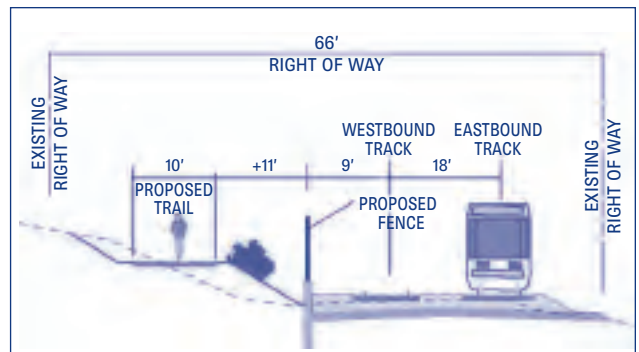
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MTA Presents Their Purple Line/CCT Plans

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) presented their latest concept plans for the Purple Line transit and trail at the March 10, 2008 CCCT Board Meeting at the Bethesda Library. Over 30 trail supporters attended.

Project Engineer Deirdre Smith presented a PowerPoint slide presentation showing typical Purple Line/CCT profiles for key locations between Bethesda and Silver Spring. Project Manager Mike Madden summarized the project schedule. There was far too much project information presented at the meeting to be repeated here, but much of the information is at MTA's www.purplelinemd.com website.



There were many questions and spirited comments from those attending. One of the many issues discussed was the MTA proposal to not include the CCT in the Bethesda Tunnel with either the Light Rail low cost or medium cost options. It is CCCT's strong position that the CCT must remain in the tunnel with all transit options. Another major issue raised was the probable multi-year closure of the Interim CCT during the several year construction period. The MTA asserts it will be the responsibility of Montgomery County to provide construction detours. CCCT insists that the County and MTA must work together to phase construction and to develop workarounds to keep the trail open during construction.

MTA described plans for the Purple Line transit/trail crossing of Rock Creek Park. MTA indicated the trestle would be removed. The berm that now carries the Interim CCT on its top would be lowered by having about 15' removed from the top, so the modified berm would be wide enough to carry the Purple Line on the top. The CCT would be rebuilt on the south side of the berm, lower than the Purple Line. The Purple Line and the CCT would each have a new bridge over Rock Creek.



Like the project as a whole, the proposed crossing of Rock Creek Park has strong positives and negatives for trail users. We would lose the trestle and the views from high above the valley, but we would get a much better trail connection to the Rock Creek Trail and the Park. MTA's concept sketch is not to scale, and does not accurately represent the elevation of the rebuilt trail. The trail elevation will not be fixed before the preliminary design if the project moves forward. But nonetheless

continued on page 3



THE COALITION FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

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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 citizens' group promoting a first class development of the 11.2 mile rail-to-trail conversion from Georgetown, D.C. to Silver Spring, MD for multi-purpose, recreational use.

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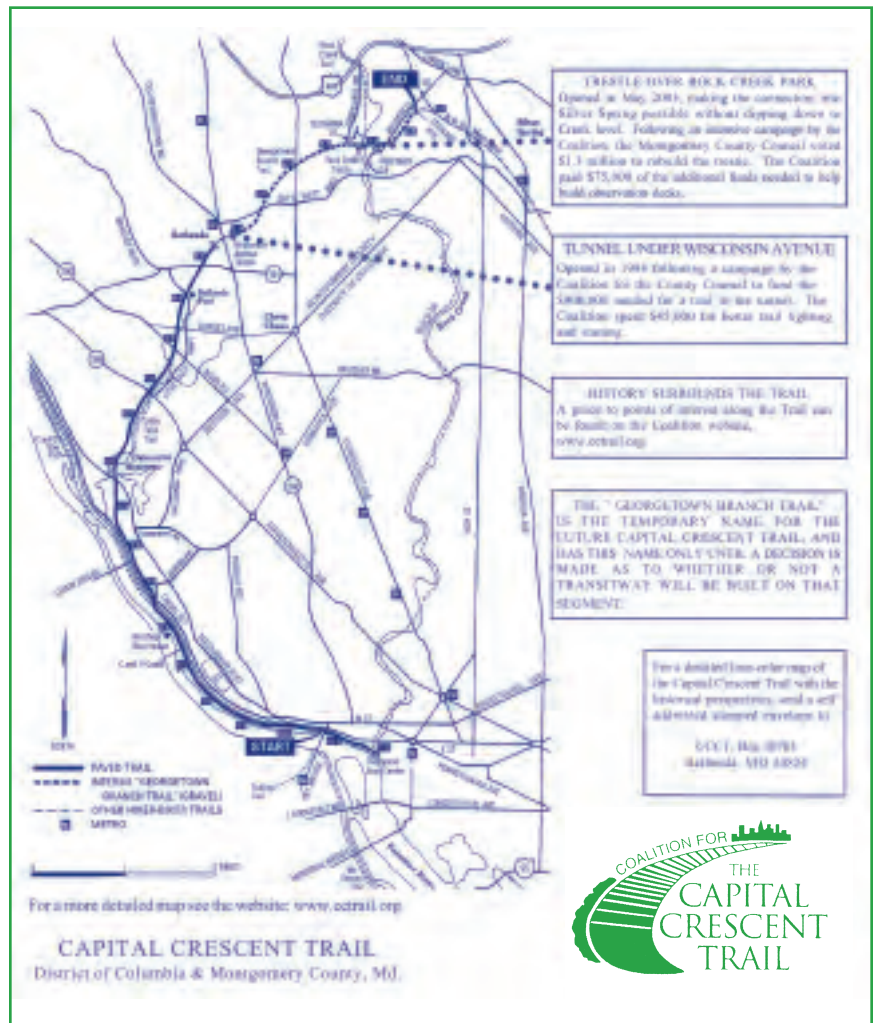
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VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.cctrail.org
 for trail updates and events!



The Dalecarlia Tunnel carries the Trail under MacArthur Blvd. One of the many historical special features of the Trail.



Weed Warrior Program Donation

One of the things that all CCT users treasure most about using the Trail are the trees that line the Trail for all of its length. In response to member complaints that those trees were being slowly strangled by vines and other plants that are not native to the region, a board member went through training to learn more about non native invasives and how to combat them. This training, provided by the Weed Warrior Program, part of Montgomery County Parks is a two hour introduction to the identification and uprooting of these invasive plants. The training is given every fourth Wednesday from 4-6pm at Wheaton Regional Park. (See http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/parks /PPSD/Natural_Resources_Stewardship/Veg_Management/Weed_Warriors.shtm). The CCCT Board further decided to organize a Weed Warrior event on the trail last fall which attracted 35 volunteers to begin an effort to save the trees along the Trail. After consulting with Weed Warrior staff, the Board then decided that in order to mount a truly effective effort to combat invasives along the Trail, CCCT would donate \$20,000 to have Parks hire and supervise dozens of laborers to uproot vines along the Trail in certain spots. This effort was very successful and on April 10th, the Montgomery Planning Board publicly thanked the Coalition for the donation, taking photos of the CCCT Board Chair and Planning Board Members and posting an item on the Planning Board web site. The CCCT board and Weed Warrior staff are making plans to reforest the area of the Trail that directly abuts Arlington Road and other parts of the Trail that need additional buffering from noise and pollution from outside the Trail. CCCT members should support the Weed Warrior Program, especially by calling on the County Council to avoid any budget cuts on this already under funded program.

Purple Line/CCT Plans from page 1

CCCT is pressing upon MTA and M-NCPPC planners the importance of keeping the CCT as high as possible while maintaining good separation from transit.

At the end of the briefing CCCT Chair Peter Gray asked if MTA could evaluate a trail width greater than the 10' width in the MTA concept plans. Peter spoke of the overcrowding and the dangers from collisions between trail users on the CCT in Bethesda. Mike Madden replied that it is the responsibility of Montgomery County to set the CCT design goals, and MTA would evaluate a wider trail if asked to do so by Montgomery County. M-NCPPC bikeways coordinator Chuck Kines commented that there are negative impacts associated with a wider trail, including higher construction impacts and possibly a reduction in the width of the buffer between the trail and transit. CCCT considers this to be an important issue, and will continue to pursue it.

MTA plans to hold another series of open houses in late spring. They will release the Purple Line Alternatives Analysis/Preliminary Environmental Impact Statement/Alternatives Analysis (AA/PEIS)

Bike to Work Day **FRIDAY, MAY 16th**

Bike-to-Work Day is May 16th this year. Join Board Member Jennifer Longworth at 7:00 am at the Bethesda Trailhead (across from Barnes & Noble) for a ride down the Capital Crescent Trail to Freedom Plaza for a rally, entertainment, food and prizes. If you need some coffee or food before the ride (and prizes!), come early to the Bethesda Pit Stop conveniently located across from the trailhead.

If you already commute along the trail, join us to show your support at Bike to Work Day.



Helmets required.

and hold formal public hearings on the AA/PEIS in September, 2008. The Governor is expected to select the preferred alternative by December, 2008. Construction would not begin until 2012 at the earliest.

The Purple Line would greatly change the character of the CCT between Bethesda and Silver Spring. If the Purple Line is built, the park character of the trail between Bethesda and Rock Creek will be greatly reduced, but the trail will be completed through Silver Spring neighborhoods into downtown Silver Spring. The CCCT Board will continue to follow this project very closely and to participate in the numerous focus group meetings, MTA open houses, and Master Plan Advisory Group meetings. The CCCT continues to take no formal position to either support or oppose the Purple Line project, but will advocate at every opportunity that if this project does go forward, then the CCT must remain in the Georgetown Branch Corridor and must be completed into downtown Silver Spring as a high quality trail. The CCCT formal statement on its Purple Line position is at our www.cctrail.org website, on the Action Page.

Safety is NO Accident *Courtesy is Contagious*

A "Letter" to Capital Crescent Trail Members

As a result of your hard work and generous contributions our trail is a beautiful and heavily used success. Bikers, bladers, joggers, runners and walkers, commuters and recreational users of ALL SPEEDS and AGES enjoy its 'car-free' park like setting. Unfortunately 'car-free' does not mean 'danger-free' and success has brought congestion and increased danger to the trail. Serious accidents involving hospital convalescence and police investigation have occurred.

Our trail has over 1 million users per year, is quite congested at times, and has users moving as slowly as 1-2 miles an hour up to 20 – 25 miles an hour. We are experiencing an increasing number of serious accidents on the Trail and we urge ALL users to exercise greater caution, courtesy and alertness.

Please follow the safety tips below:

ALL USERS:

- STAY ALERT, TURN OFF YOUR IPOD
- Stay to the right
- Do NOT block the trail when stopping
- Do NOT block the trail by going 3 or 4 abreast
- Look behind you from time to time
- Pass ONLY after looking behind you
- Pass ONLY after a loud warning
- Pass ONLY on the left
- Pass ONLY if you have a 2 foot clearance
- When dark, wear reflective clothes
- When dark, carry a light
- Yield to others when entering the trail
- Yield to others at crosswalks
- STOP at stop signs, they indicate dangerous cross car traffic

PARENTS:

- PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN, keep them to the right!
- Do not let your children ramble freely across the trail
- Stay immediately behind or to the left of your children

BIKERS AND BLADERS:

In addition to the above:

- Keep safe, reasonable speed
- Adjust speed to trail congestion and surface conditions
- Be predictable
- Wear a Helmet
- Warn with a loud bell, whistle or voice at least 2 seconds BEFORE overtaking someone

HIKERS AND WALKERS:

- TURN OFF YOUR IPOD
- Do NOT READ while on the trail
- If warned before being passed, call out, "Thanks for the warning"
- If NOT warned before being passed, politely call out, "Please warn before passing"

PET OWNERS:

- Keep your pet on a very short leash (required by law!)
- Treat your pet as you would a child

Be safe after dark and use a strong light -

Cyclists: Please, do not use a flashing strobe light as a headlight.

All trail users need a light for safety when using the trail after dark.

Trail users are reporting that the flashing white strobe lights some cyclists are using as headlights can be disorienting and are very irritating. Cyclists, please use a headlight with a steady beam aimed low. We are all safer if no one is confused or blinded by your light.

Woodmont East, Phase II

Our Fall Newsletter reported that the Montgomery County Planning Board heard testimony from CCCT representatives and the greater community opposing the development by Federal Realty and JBG at the west entrance to the Bethesda Tunnel. At that time the Board directed the developers to revise their plan to allow for a better Trail corridor and for more open, public, green space.

This winter the Planning Board reviewed a revised development plan. CCCT representatives supported the improvements in the design and called for additional protection for trail users as the final details of the plan are worked out. The new plan greatly enlarges the green space for public use and places it along Woodmont Avenue south of the trail right of way. While the space provided for the trail as it exits the tunnel is narrower than the earlier plan, there are to be no retail or restaurant uses placed in this space. To the west, the area greatly enlarges and crosses the pedestrian cross walk.

The plan also provides for space for the Purple Line and will require a future relocation of the trail in an arcade under the proposed hotel building.

The developers and CCCT desire a direct crossing of Woodmont Avenue to the Barnes and Nobel plaza and another direct crossing to meet the paved trail south of Bethesda Avenue. The County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) prefers that all trail traffic stay east of Woodmont, traversing the newly proposed green space to make the crossing at the Bethesda

Avenue-Woodmont Avenue intersection. The CCCT website http://www.cctrail.org/CCT_News_and_Events.htm offers a diagram of these opposing routes. The Planning Board agreed with trail representatives that the more direct crossing is essential and to that end will press DPWT to revise its proposal. CCCT will continue to follow this issue.

The Planning Board also considered the request of the developers to abandon Reed Street, which today serves as the main trail access across this property. While agreeing to support the abandonment, the Board made clear that the abandonment be contingent on the developers recording an easement in the land records providing for trail access directly through the site along the old RR route.

The CCCT testimony also addressed the proposed detour for the trail during construction. The current proposal continues the trail through the tunnel and provides for a detour either north to Elm Street or South to Bethesda Avenue. If the detour is onto Elm Street, it would require trail traffic to be diverted onto Woodmont Ave for the block between Elm St. and Bethesda Ave. CCCT testified that, if that route is chosen, parking on the west side of Woodmont should be temporarily removed and the parking lane be reserved for trail use. Physical barriers to protect trail users from thru traffic were also requested.

CCCT continues to follow developments at this critical juncture of the trail. We anticipate further developments later in the year. Check our website, address above often for updated information.

Earth Day on the Trail



In response to an invitation by Bruce Adams Director, Office of Community Partnerships in the County Executive's office, CCT along with the Parks Department, the BCC Chamber of Commerce and others met in March to discuss an Earth Day beautification effort along the CCT, particularly from Bethesda Avenue toward MA Avenue. The effort included volunteers

gathering up garbage along the Trail plus planting perennial plantings at the intersections of the Trail and Bethesda Avenue, Little Falls Road, Dorset Avenue, and possibly Connecticut Avenue. On this same Saturday, volunteers collected Garlic Mustard, as part of a county-wide effort to eradicate this non native invasive plant.

ISO More Trail Good Samaritans

I learned recently how many kind souls are out on the Capital Crescent Trail. I was biking home on Wednesday, April 2, approaching milepost 7. Suddenly, a one inch nail flattened my front tire. Unfortunately, I am a bit short on mechanical know-how. As I pulled out my phone to call my daughter for a ride, a biker pulled over & offered help. This proved to be a relatively difficult patch job, but this Good Samaritan (a Silver Spring architect) stuck with it, inserted his own tube, never complained, refused my offer of money, etc. His only request, as he headed off, was that I call his wife & say he was running late. She told me she was about to eat dinner solo, having given up on him. Several others asked if we needed help, & one woman offered us a new tube.

Ben Beach
Bethesda

Environmental Impact Statement for GU Boathouse Underway

In June 2006 the National Park Service (NPS) released its Environmental Assessment (EA) of the proposed Georgetown University Boathouse. Soon thereafter the CCCT identified major deficiencies in the EA, and called for a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the boathouse proposal. In December 2007, after 18 months of further review, NPS agreed to perform a full EIS. They are currently determining what should be included in the study, based in part on comments they received during the public scoping period, which closed on January 18. NPS expects the draft EIS to be completed by this summer. A decision on the boathouse project will be made after the public comment period that will follow the release of the draft EIS. It appears that this EIS has been fast-tracked, and while we're in favor of a timely study, we hope that the NPS doesn't get in so much of a rush that they repeat the errors and omissions of the EA.

The CCCT has submitted comments to the NPS on the scope of the EIS, which included:

- 1) The EIS should give serious consideration to locating the Georgetown University boathouse at 34th Street, adjacent to the proposed GW boathouse.

- 2) The boathouse proposed for the site on the CCT, just upstream of the Washington Canoe Club, has significant impacts on the environment in that area, and more size and design options need to be considered if that location is used.
- 3) The EIS should document and analyze the amount of vehicular traffic that will be accessing the boathouse.
- 4) The EA revealed a doubling of water velocity during river flooding if the proposed boathouse structure is built, and the EIS needs to address that.
- 5) The EA included the possibility of GU building a boathouse on property it already owns on the CCT, about a mile up the trail from the proposed location, without any evaluation of the site's limitations due to its topography, geometrical shape, and lack of public utilities. We have requested that these limitations be evaluated in the EIS before any claims are made regarding possible uses for that site.

Updates on progress with the EIS can be found at the News & Events section on our website -

www.cctrail.org/CCT_News_and_Events.htm.



What's that strange machinery doing along the DC end of the CCT?

Several trail users have asked us what's the story with the heavy equipment recently seen operating about a mile from the Georgetown end of the CCT. We have asked the National Park Service about this, and we have received this explanation from their representative:

'Kevin Brandt (Superintendent of the C&O Canal National Historical Park) asked me to respond to your concern regarding the 'robot drilling' on the Capital Crescent Trail. Thanks for bringing this to our attention. The park is in the process of conducting a constructability study for the Georgetown University owned parcel of land adjacent to the CCT as part of the Georgetown University Boathouse Environmental Impact Statement. The drilling is taking place as a component of that study. The contractor is working directly for the NPS and their contract with the NPS serves as their permit. The fact that there was no work area protection is a concern and has been brought to the contractor's attention. Let me know if you need any further information.'

New Details Emerge On Boathouse Land Deals

As those who have been following the issue of Georgetown University (GU) building a boathouse facility along the DC end of the CCT already know, an exchange of property inside the C&O Canal National Historical Park ('the Park') between GU and the National Park Service (NPS) will be required for the boathouse to be built on the proposed site, which is adjacent to the upriver side of the historic Washington Canoe Club, and inside the Park. In the midst of the process that resulted in NPS acquiring the old railroad Right-of-Way (ROW), CSX (the railroad owners) gave GU a parcel of land inside the Park, together with a mile long access easement along what was to become the CCT, to get to the property. This property and easement then became GU's bargaining chip to exchange for the much preferable site next to the Canoe Club. The CCCT has long questioned how NPS could not have been aware of the gift to GU, and further, why they made no effort to stop it since it would clearly encumber the future trail. In response, NPS assured us that they had no awareness of GU's property & access easement until well after GU obtained them. A recent investigation by the CCCT has uncovered documentation that shows NPS formally entered the negotiations for the railroad property much earlier than they had indicated, and were in fact a part of those negotiations contemporaneously with GU's acquisition of their upstream site. At this point we are uncertain about what impact this information may have on the boathouse project, but at least we're clearer on the origins of this problem for the Trail.

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.



Now you may donate/renew with your credit card via the CCCT web site!
Visit www.cctrail.org to use our secured method.

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 AVAILABLE AS A FOLDING POCKET MAP.

**Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:
Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail
P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824**

THIS MAP IS FREE TO ALL NEW MEMBERS.

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

Mail to the address above. Or, visit our web site to donate/renew with a credit card.

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.

Safety is NO Accident *Courtesy is Contagious*



CCCT
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2008
Annual CCCT Meeting
June 9th • 6pm
Elm Street Park
Bethesda

Meet and greet other members
Eat, drink and be merry
Short business session

CCCT Chair updates members at the June 2007 annual meeting in Elm Street Park.