

The Capital Crescent Trail

A NATURAL ADDITION TO THE NATION'S CAPITAL



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL HEARS STRONG SUPPORT FOR CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Two hundred Capital Crescent Trail supporters filled a Montgomery County Council hearing March 15 to promote acquisition of the 11-mile Georgetown Spur railroad for recreational use.

Sporting balloons, placards, and an eight-foot-long inflated 'crescent', the enthusiastic crowd made it clear that the county should acquire the land now and defer planning for the transitway.

The question of which agency should lead in acquisition and planning was raised.

"We have the fox designing the chicken coop," testified coalition director Chris Brown, describing the Montgomery County Department of Transportation's planning role for the soon-to-be-abandoned railroad. "Where are the Parks Department and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission in the effort to acquire and design a new Capital Crescent Trail?"

The Council was considering whether it should appropriate an additional \$375,000 for a second phase of studies of transit and park alternatives for the Bethesda to Silver Spring portion of the 11 mile Georgetown Spur of the Chessie System.

In his testimony, Brown raised several questions for the council to consider: Will the entire corridor be acquired upon abandonment or just the proposed transit section? Will the corridor be purchased if there is no transitway? Will the corridor be purchased strictly with funds for

(continued on page 2)

CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL NEWS TO YOU?

If you are not familiar with the Capital Crescent Trail project, the map and text on page three of this newsletter will tell you much of what you need to know. The project is an ambitious plan to turn 11 miles of unused railroad into a magnificent park and trail. The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT) includes 26 local conservation, recreation, and neighborhood groups working to make the trail a reality. Similar local groups around the country have succeeded in converting 150 abandoned railroads to usable trails. All of them had to work hard to do it - and the CCCT is no exception. We need your help. See page four for ways you can help.

LATE-BREAKING NEWS
The Interstate Commerce Commission on March 28 finally approved abandonment of the Georgetown Spur.
See ABANDONMENT GRANTED, page 4

ACQUISITION UPDATE

The National Park Service has expressed support for the trail (see page two) but has not been able to agree with the railroad on a land swap or even on a fair price. The Montgomery County Council and Department of Transportation are interested in acquiring the Maryland portion of the track. They are consid-

(continued on page 2)

NO LITTLE PLAN

"Make no little plans, they have no magic to stir men's blood." So said the architect Daniel Burnham in commenting on the McMillan Plan, which, early in this century, transformed Washington from a cow town into an imperial city.

The Capital Crescent Trail is no little plan. It is 11 wooded miles of greenway through a densely-populated metropolis. It ties together two national parks, the city's five major bikepaths, half a dozen local parks, and several score of libraries, shopping areas, schools, and other community facilities.

The Capital Crescent Trail is a grand scheme, today's equivalent of creating a new Rock Creek Park or C&O Canal. It is made urgent by the 180-day period before it can be sold off to developers.

We must:

- . Get the land into public ownership - all of it, not just the prime segments the National Park Service and Montgomery County most want.
- . Secure an agreement for trail passage over lands controlled by the Army Corps of Engineers at Dalecarlia and Eisenger-Kilbane and Associates in Bethesda.
- . Get the entire corridor studied for park and trail use.
- . Get the corridor dedicated for park and trail use

No little plan, with the land valued by CSX Corporation at \$83 million! But with your time and ideas and financial support, we will "stir men's blood" and make the Capital Crescent Trail our contribution to the nation's capital.

Chris Brown
Coalition Director

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL *(continued from page 1)*

transportation use? Is there a contingency plan for park acquisition if the transitway is not pursued? Hearing no immediate answers, Brown recommended delaying Phase II of the transit study until ridership, safety, and other preliminary surveys are complete and substituting for it a full-scale trail study.

About two-thirds of the 36 scheduled witnesses testified in favor of the trail. Despite the strong showing, a council subcommittee on March 22 recommended that funding for both the transitway and trail studies be approved. A favorable vote by the full council was expected to be pro forma.

ACQUISITION UPDATE *(continued from page 1)*

ering a light rail transit system on the railroad bed between Bethesda and Silver Spring. But an independent study by the consulting firm Booz, Allen, and Hamilton raised serious issues of ridership, construction and operating costs, and safety, throwing the advisability of the whole project into question, even for those who support mass transit.

Once the right to abandon the railroad is granted by the ICC, a 180 day period starts during which CSX Corporation can only sell the land to a public or non-profit group. Those 180 days will tick by very quickly. We must get firm commitments from both the NPS and the county council to buy the land as soon as possible.

A Seattle study shows that proximity to that city's Burke-Gilman rail-trail raised property values six percent.

THANKS

Thanks to the more than 200 individuals and groups who have supported the Capital Crescent Trail. Special thanks to those listed below, who have contributed \$100 or more.

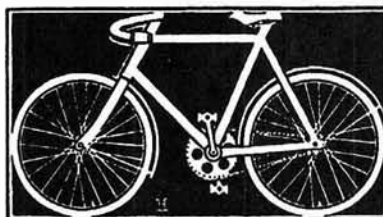
Seymour Adler
Anonymous donation of a slide projector
Capital Hiking Club
Milton M. Gottesman
Christopher C. Herman
Ralph W. Lugbill
Montgomery County Road Runners
Abigail C. Nichols
Walter B. Slocombe
Dr. Lucy R. Waletzky
Charles B. Wayne

NPS DIRECTOR HIKES TRAIL

With an emphatic "We've got to get this trail," National Park Service Director William Penn Mott led a 4-mile hike sponsored by our coalition along the Capital Crescent trail on December 12. Some 60 people joined the nation's foremost steward of parks and natural areas in walking the rail-trail.

"I think this is a golden opportunity to get 11 miles of hiking trail," Mott remarked. "When you consider what this is going to mean to future generations, it's worth every bit of effort."

Mott is particularly enthusiastic about the potential for linking existing parks—the C&O Canal and Rock Creek Park—with the Capital Crescent Trail.



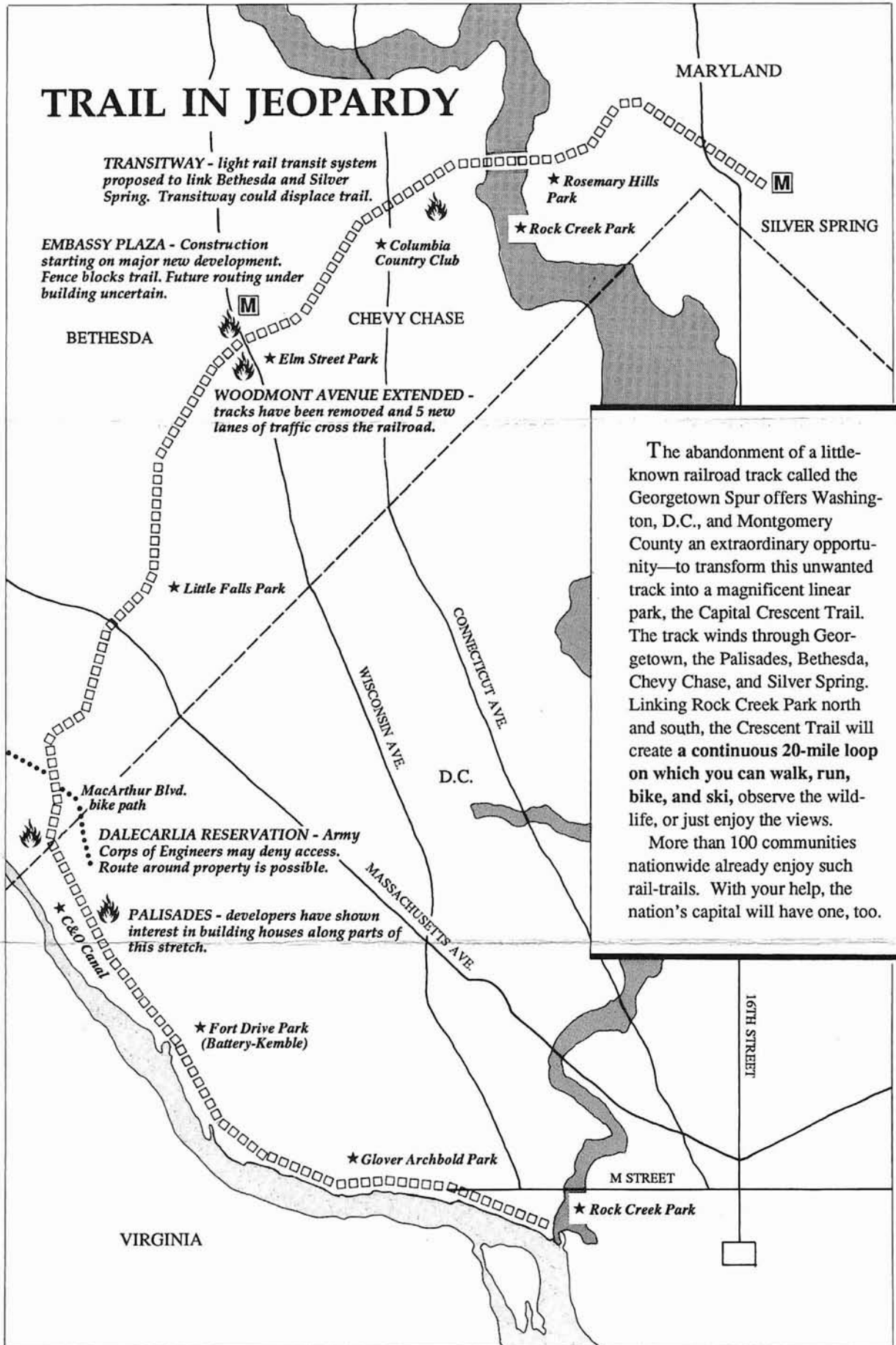
COALITION MEMBERS

American Forestry Association
American Hiking Society
Appalachian Mountain Club
(Washington, D.C. Chapter)
Audubon Naturalist Society
Capital Hiking Club
C&O Canal Association
Conservation Federation of Maryland
Greater Bethesda Chevy Chase
Coalition
Maryland Association of Bicycling
Associations
Montgomery County Road Runners
Montgomery County Citizens Bicycle
Committee
Montgomery County Outdoor
Education Association
National Handicapped Sports and
Recreation Association
National Parks and Conservation
Association
National Recreation and Park
Association
N.I.H. Bicycle Commuting Club
Pentagon Pacesetters
Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
Potomac Boat Club
Potomac Pedalers Touring Club
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Sierra Club (Rock Creek Group)
Virginia Volkssport Association
Walkways Center
Wanderbirds Hiking Club
Washington Area Bicyclist
Association

CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Peter Harnik, Chairman
Henri Bartholomot
Betsy Blizard
Susan Kaiser
Valerie Kirkpatrick
Charles Montagne
Pat Munoz
Reeve Vanneman
Chris Brown, Director

TRAIL IN JEOPARDY



The abandonment of a little-known railroad track called the Georgetown Spur offers Washington, D.C., and Montgomery County an extraordinary opportunity—to transform this unwanted track into a magnificent linear park, the Capital Crescent Trail. The track winds through Georgetown, the Palisades, Bethesda, Chevy Chase, and Silver Spring. Linking Rock Creek Park north and south, the Crescent Trail will create a continuous 20-mile loop on which you can walk, run, bike, and ski, observe the wildlife, or just enjoy the views.

More than 100 communities nationwide already enjoy such rail-trails. With your help, the nation's capital will have one, too.

COALITION FOR
The Capital Crescent Trail

A RAILS-TO-TRAILS PROJECT

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Join the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail.
- If you belong to a community organization, arrange for the group to join the Coalition or to express support for its goals.
- Write to the Montgomery County Council letting them know of your support for the trail and asking for their help. Council members are:

Michael Subin, Chair
Rose Crenca

Isiah Leggett
Bruce Adams
Michael Gudis
Neal Potter
William Hanna

All can be reached at:
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850
tel: 217-7900

- Spread the word. Tell neighbors, colleagues, and friends about the trail and encourage them to become involved.
- Contribute time or money to the Coalition. Call Betsy Blizard at 229-4188 to volunteer.

ABANDONMENT GRANTED

(continued from page 1)

Almost two years after CSX Corporation filed to abandon the spur, the ICC approved the request. Attached to that approval is a public-use condition barring CSX from disposing of the land for 180 days, effective 30 days from March 28. Abandonment puts renewed pressure on the NPS and on Montgomery County to acquire the land. It also increases the risk that the land could be sold and developed.

The W&OD Regional Railroad Park, a 44 mile rail-trail running from Arlington to Leesburg, is the most popular park in Virginia, drawing more than a million users a year.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

April 9 - Clean-up and hike, 8:30 a.m. Meets at Bethesda Ave. crossing of trail. Call Jim Douglas, 270-2148
April 27 - CCCT Steering Committee meeting at Bethesda Library, 7 p.m.
April 30 - C&O Canal Assoc. 34th Justice Douglas Reunion Hike. Call Donna Boies, 966-0358
May 7 - Hike, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Meet at Fletcher's. Call Kevin Hein, 535-6475
May 25 - CCCT Steering Committee meeting at Bethesda Library, 7 p.m.
June 4 - Hike. Call Betsy Blizard at 229-4188

YES! I WANT TO HELP CREATE THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL.

Add me to your membership list. Enclosed is a donation for \$_____ to help make the Capital Crescent Trail a reality. (Make check payable to Sierra Club Foundation/CCCT.)

I know of a group that might join the coalition. The group is:

I want to help with:

research writing
 telephoning artwork
 leafletting event organizing

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE (DAY) (EVE)

Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail
P.O. Box 30703, Bethesda, MD. 20814

EDITORS
Susan McGrath
Karen-Lee Ryan
PRODUCTION
Don Carrick



Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail
c/o Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
1325 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

Non-Profit org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #2023