



P.O. Box 30703  
Bethesda, MD 20824

November 18, 2008

Diane Ratclif  
MTA Director of Planning  
6 St. Paul Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Ms. Ratclif:

Below is written testimony, on behalf of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, given today at an MTA public hearing at the 4-H Conference Center on the Purple Line DEIS/AA.

My name is Peter Gray and I am the chair of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail Board. The Coalition spearheaded the effort to have Montgomery County and the National Park Service obtain the Georgetown Branch railroad right-of-way abandoned by the B&O railroad in the 1980's and to then build the current Capital Crescent Trail, including the portion between Wisconsin Avenue and Stewart Avenue over which the Purple Line may one day run. In our 22 years as an organization we have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and contributed to many projects along the Trail including the bump outs on the Rock Creek bridge, the anti-graffiti fence and additional lighting inside the Wisconsin Avenue tunnel and the ongoing effort to build a rest area by River Road. We have also engaged in continuous advocacy efforts to ensure that the Trail is usable and safe for all users.

We, along with the Montgomery Parks and Transportation Departments have been so successful that today the Trail is used by hundreds of thousands of walkers, bicyclists, and runners, making it one of the most used trails in the area, and maybe the nation.

It is my purpose in giving this testimony today to outline some important principles that we hope will guide MTA and Montgomery County in shaping the Purple Line plans and the impact of those plans on the Capital Crescent Trail.

1. We want to strongly emphasize the principle of **Continuity** - the end result of the Purple Line project must be a continuous, off-road trail without interruption between downtown Bethesda and the Transit Center in downtown Silver Spring. This means keeping the Trail in the tunnel under Wisconsin, and avoiding at-grade crossings at

Connecticut, Jones Mill Road, 16<sup>th</sup> street and Colesville Road. This includes having portions of the Trail placed in the CSX right-of-way where necessary.

2. **Funding for the completed trail must be identified** as part of the overall Purple Line project. Responsibility for the design, construction and maintenance of the Trail must be clearly stated, including all costs for grading, fencing, retaining walls, landscaping, and necessary public amenities. No part of the Purple Line transit way should begin construction until funding for the Capital Crescent Trail is assured.

The DEIS/AA unfortunately has language that appears to place total responsibility for funding of a completed Capital Crescent Trail from Bethesda to the Silver Spring Transit Center completely in the hands of Montgomery County. This raises fears that the Trail will be sacrificed from the project when costs rise. At the same time, the DEIS does not have a separate section detailing plans for the Trail. There are significant omissions and inconsistencies regarding the Trail in the DEIS which the Coalition will address in written form to the MTA and others at a latter date this year. These omissions and inconsistencies involve factual issues that should be sorted out before finishing the final version of the EIS

3. **Minimum width of the Trail should be 12 feet paved** with two feet of gravel on either side, except west of Pearl Street and approaching the Silver Spring Transit Center where the right-of-way may only accommodate a narrower 10 foot wide paved Trail. At these two points special measures will be necessary to insure the safety of trail users. Perhaps as a result of the numerous accidents on the CCT where there is severe congestion, County planning staff has acknowledged that a 12 foot paved width would be safer than a narrower trail width.

4. **Maintain a 10 foot planted buffer** between the edges of the gravel buffer and the fence or retaining wall adjacent to the LRT/BRT. Maintain a planted buffer on the opposite side of the trail as well consistent with the illustrations being circulated by the MTA

5. **Maintain local neighborhood access to the Trail** at least equivalent to current access so that persons living close to the Trail can still access the Trail.

6. Ensure that **the Trail and the transit line are integrated** to the maximum extent possible. This means that Trail users can cross over to the transit stations as easily as possible so the Trail users can most easily use mass transit.

7. **Silver Spring Transit Center connections** - once the Trail and transit cross Colesville Road both should be at the same level and the Trail users should also easily connect to the Red Line, to buses, to MARC, and seamlessly go on to the Metropolitan Branch Trail, with Met Branch users able to connect as easily as possible to all forms of Transit and the Capital Crescent Trail also.

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8. Of the six build alternatives, **one would avoid impacts to the Trail from Bethesda to Jones Mill Road**. A variation of that alternative shown in the DEIS on figure 2-5 "Medium Investment BRT on Jones Bridge Road" would still have the added benefit to Trail users of providing a direct, off road access into the Silver Spring Transit Station. While we recognize that there are many considerations that will influence the ultimate decision on the locally preferred alternative, as advocates for the Capital Crescent Trail we note that this alternative has the least adverse impact to the Trail and it provides direct Trail access into Bethesda through the Wisconsin Ave Tunnel on the west, and a direct Trail access through the CSX tracks into Silver Spring on the east. However, due to lack of specifics for this and other options, the CCCT is not prepared to endorse any option at this point.

cc: Montgomery County Planning Board  
Montgomery County Council  
Montgomery County Executive, Isiah Leggett  
Maryland Purple Line Advisory Group