



# the Crescent

October/November 1987

## The Capital Crescent Trail — A Recreational Mecca

The proposed Capital Crescent Trail, once connected with the existing Rock Creek Trail at both its north and south ends, would create a 20 mile long circuit ideal for hikers, bikers, strollers, skiers, runners, and other recreational users and commuters.

The trail would follow the old B&O railroad right-of-way and offers Washington a unique opportunity (and probably its last chance) to create a major new park and recreational area within this rapidly developing and growing metropolis.

Starting under Key Bridge in Georgetown, just two blocks from Rock Creek Park, you could walk or ride westward along the beautiful Potomac River paralleling the C&O Canal. You'd cross the canal and Canal Road on a bridge at Arizona Ave., begin an easy climb along the impressive Palisades, go through a beautiful stone masonry tunnel under MacArthur Blvd., pass the Dalecarlia Reservoir, and enter Little Falls Park.

The right-of-way then passes through woods and back yards, crosses Massachusetts Avenue and River Road, goes under Wisconsin Avenue at the Air Rights Building in Bethesda, traverses the Columbia Country Club (watch out for golf balls), and crosses Rock Creek Park on a spectacular high trestle, then continues to Silver Spring. A descent from the trestle into the Rock Creek valley puts you on the trails of Rock Creek Park which leads back to Key Bridge.

### BACKGROUND:

Once CSX Transportation, the railroad, abandons the right-of-way, it may sell the land with some major restrictions. The governments through which the land runs have first option to purchase, either under the Federal Rails-To-Trails Act, or within 180 days from the date the property is legally abandoned (the public use condition).

To understand the politics and problems our Coalition faces, let's look at the right-of-way a section at a time.

### SECTION I - KEY BRIDGE TO ARIZONA AVENUE BRIDGE TO DALECARLIA RESERVOIR:

National Park Service (NPS) is interested since the land

is between the C&O Canal and Potomac River, or is in the District of Columbia. NPS and CSX are attempting to negotiate a land swap. Unfortunately, the NPS has made little progress to date and CSX appears to be seeking an excessive amount of compensation.

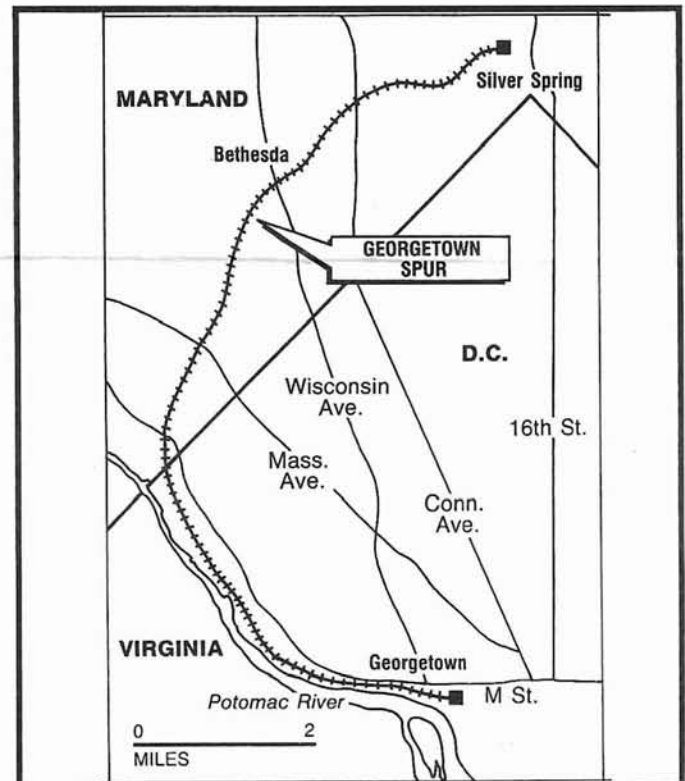
### SECTION II - DALECARLIA RESERVOIR:

The Corps of Engineers is responsible for this section. Since safety of the reservoir water supply is their responsibility, they are hesitant to allow a trail to pass through the property. We are exploring routing the trail on Federal land around their facility. Compromise appears possible.

### SECTION III - DALECARLIA TO ROCK CREEK:

Montgomery County has expressed a desire to purchase the entire 6.7 mile section. All but the 4 mile portion between Bethesda and Silver Spring appears to be

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designated for park land, but no commitment to trail development has been made. The Coalition's members are most concerned about the Bethesda to Silver Spring section.

The County's Department of Transportation appears wedded to installing a rail system, or electric trolley bus between these areas of rapid urban development. Only after severe criticism from CCCT and its members has the Department begun to seriously consider recreational uses.

Proponents of mass transit and development are presenting their case as "do you like mass transit?" They are not mentioning other issues or alternatives, and they do not address the feasibility of the transit way. The transit system might cost \$100 million for construction plus annual operating subsidies.

In June, consultants hired by the County to assess how to accommodate pedestrian and hiker-biker travel on the rail right-of-way presented a wholly inadequate document. CCCT President Val Kirkpatrick and Peter Harnik of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association vigorously criticized the report and CCCT member Reeve Vanneman prepared a detailed 13 page response to the consultant's memorandum.

Reeve told the County Council that the consultant's memo "is totally inadequate as a planning document for recreational use of the Georgetown Branch. It ignores much of the right-of-way's potential value. What usage and routing it does consider is poorly conceived."

Reeve concludes from his analysis of this memorandum and previous work the consultant has done that "the consultants may be either inadequately skilled to prepare recreational plans or are already so committed to a transit use of the right-of-way that an impartial study is no longer possible for them."

Among his criticisms are that it:

- explicitly declares its pro-transitway bias;
- ignores most users of a trail other than bikers;
- underestimates the number of bikers who would use the trail;
- ignores nearby heavily used parks;
- appears to propose moving much of the trail onto county streets;
- fails to make use of Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission data and expertise;
- omits the entire trail west of Bethesda;
- does not consider compatibility problems between transit, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic on the same pathway.

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail considers this portion of the right-of-way critical to securing a

vehicle free recreational corridor between Bethesda and Silver Spring. It is worth an aggressive effort.

## What is the CCCT?

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT) is the umbrella group leading the effort to create a park and trail out of the right-of-way of the soon to be abandoned "Georgetown Branch" railroad track from Silver Spring to Georgetown. It would connect with the Rock Creek Parkway trail at both ends to create a circuit trail and park over 20 miles long.

In just over a year, CCCT members have:

- Produced a report describing the benefits of the trail.
- Put on a slide show about a successful local rails-to-trails conversion, the W&OD Trail in Virginia.
- Distributed over 15,000 copies of a promotional brochure that has alerted the metropolitan area to the wonderful potential of the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Organized a hike along the tracks that resulted in a full-page article in the Washington Post.
- Testified on several occasions before the Montgomery County Council.
- Sent representatives to appear on local television and radio programs.
- Organized a litter clean-up that was blocked by the railroad because of liability fears. Because of the incident, Montgomery County has leased the track so that anybody may now walk on it.
- Obtained seats for two of its members on official Montgomery County Advisory Boards which are making recommendations on the rail corridor.
- Spearheaded the effort to require an environmental impact statement on the rail abandonment, and then provided detailed comments on the statement.
- Organized a major hike and rally in favor of the trail which received TV and newspaper coverage.
- Established contacts with a number of Federal and local government agencies and officers to smooth potential problems in establishing the trail along parts of the right-of-way.

### Your help is needed!

CCCT accomplished all of this on a minimal budget thanks to donations of time and energy by a dedicated core of volunteers from our member organizations. But the time is rapidly approaching when our efforts will expand to a grass roots campaign of political pressure through letter writing and personal contacts.

If you are not a member of CCCT or its member organizations, join up and send a donation for the Capital Crescent Trail project. We need your help in any way you can offer it. See the CCCT meeting schedule and sign-up form elsewhere in this newsletter.

## Grassroots efforts the key

# CCCT Plans Outreach Program for 1988

All our advisors agree - 1988 will be the year when our efforts and activities must strive for maximum effect. Here are some of the projects in the works. If you would like to become more involved in the work of establishing the Capital Crescent Trail, we urge you to attend our meetings or at least let us know you can help. Use the coupon on the last page.

**Letter Writing Campaign** - We are compiling a mailing list of "power people" who should be contacted regularly by letter or telephone. If you can suggest people valuable to our cause, or are willing to contact friends

## Meet Our Leaders

Valerie Honsinder Kirkpatrick was elected by CCCT to become Chairwoman replacing Joe Keyser, a founding member.

Val, a swimmer and hiker who grew up in Bethesda, remembers when the Bank of Bethesda was the big building marking the center of town. And that was before the brownstone bank had additions.



She raised two children in other D.C. suburbs, other states, and other countries before returning to Bethesda to become a secondary school teacher professionally involved in career education for special needs students.

For fun, she says, she is

involved in alumnae activities for her alma mater, Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. "I see volunteering to work for the Capital Crescent Trail as another way to benefit my community and leave something of lasting value for the generations that follow," she said.

Joe Keyser, writer, editor, biker, hiker, and conservationist, worked tirelessly to help found CCCT. While coordinating the birth of CCCT by organizing meetings and contacting clubs and organizations to establish a base of support, he still found time to do significant volunteer work for other groups.

With his job at the American Land Resource Association demanding more of his energy, Joe resigned as chairman, but fortunately he is continuing to work for the establishment of the Capital Crescent Trail and is a board member of CCCT.

who can help, please mail us names, addresses, and phone numbers (if possible). We'll be happy to make the initial contact to ask for their aid.

**Media Relations** - We are establishing an ongoing relationship with print and electronic media writers and personalities to interest them in our cause. When the issues heat up, we hope that our views will be presented strongly and accurately, and that we will have respected spokespersons informed of the issues and on our side.

**Mailing Lists** - We are organizing our lists of people willing to help when the issues warrant. Please volunteer if you can help! Also we are interested in mailing lists from small neighborhood organizations - such as garden clubs - who might support the trail. We will not use these lists for any purpose other than the trail and will not loan or sell the lists to anyone.

**Statistics** - We are compiling recreation statistics for use in our arguments and presentations. Not much data appears to be available. If you have ideas for sources, let us know.

**Trail Study** - CCCT is considering hiring a consultant to perform a study of the potential for the trail, its characteristics, its costs, etc. We would have to increase our fund raising efforts to pay the tab. The study will cost between \$3,000 and \$15,000 depending on who does it and how its scope is described. Peter Harnik, the CCCT board member who suggested the study, says that it would give CCCT's presentations considerably more clout with the public and politicians. A feasibility study is underway.

## Join Us!

Anyone interested in the Capital Crescent Trail is invited to attend Coalition meetings. They are scheduled 7-9 p.m. in the meeting rooms of the Bethesda Library, 7400 Arlington Rd., on:

October 19	November 16
December 16	January 27
February 24	March 28

Special events such as orientation hikes along the right-of-way are being scheduled. Watch this newsletter, other hiking and biking organizations' newsletters, or the Washington Post Weekend Section for details. Or you can come to our meetings and help plan them.

# CCCT Offers Trail Design Suggestions

Montgomery County's Department of Transportation invited us to make suggestions for the design of a trail along the right-of-way. Val Kirkpatrick responded with ideas brought forth by Coalition members at a recent meeting.

The path should:

- be at least 12 feet wide;
- have parallel paths for bikers and hikers;
- have the bike path striped;
- offer a third unpaved trail for equestrian use;
- provide night lighting;
- use the best paving materials and techniques;
- have mile markers;
- provide drinking water periodically;
- offer nearby parking lots;
- make use of landscaping techniques and materials to enhance entrances and wider park areas;
- offer benches, picnic tables, and exercise equipment where possible.

If you have any additional suggestions, please let the Coalition know. Also you should send your ideas to Glenn Orlin, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD 20850.

## New GBCCC Brochure Available

The Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Coalition is distributing 20,000 copies of its new brochure on the right-of-way to residents in their area. Congratulations! Things are beginning roll.

GBCCC also has a great monthly newsletter to keep the issues before the community. Now to get all these people to write their Council representatives. Often.

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

## Country Club Supports Trail

Good News. Columbia Country Club, which owns the largest chunk of land in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase area along the railroad, will support our work against the County's mass transit proposal. Thanks to the Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Coalition for their efforts.

**Yes!** I want to help create the Capital Crescent Trail

- Add me to your membership list.
- I want to spread the word. Send me \_\_\_ flyers.
- I know a group that might join the coalition. The group is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I want to help with:
  - \_\_\_ research                      \_\_\_ writing
  - \_\_\_ phoning                      \_\_\_ artwork
  - \_\_\_ leafletting                      \_\_\_ event organizing
- Accept my tax-deductible contribution of \$\_\_\_ to help make the Capital Crescent Trail a reality. (Make check payable to Sierra Club Foundation/CCCT.)

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

TELEPHONE (DAY)

(EVENING)

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

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