



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR

November 30, 2011

The Honorable Valerie Ervin
President, Montgomery County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

RE: Capital Crescent Trail Scope Refinement

Dear President Ervin:

At our regularly scheduled meeting on November 17th, the Planning Board reviewed several scope questions regarding the Capital Crescent Trail that have been raised by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). The following list summarizes the Planning Board's recommendations. A detailed list of recommendations is included as Attachment A.

1. Create a CIP project for the Capital Crescent Trail to evaluate MTA engineering drawings for the trail and to construct the trail in conjunction with the Purple Line.
2. More design work is needed before a recommendation can be made with confidence on whether to construct the Capital Crescent Trail in the tunnel.
 - a. Constructing the trail may be feasible if:
 - i. further engineering investigation reveals that the cost or risk differential between building the Purple Line and the Capital Crescent Trail in the tunnel and building the Purple Line only in the tunnel (with an upgraded surface trail) is significantly smaller than currently estimated; or
 - ii. a mechanism is found to reduce the public outlay and/or risk to the Apex Building associated with putting both the trail and the Purple Line in the tunnel.
 - b. We recommend that MTA brief the County Council in six months time with designs, updated cost estimates and risk comparisons for the following scenarios so that this decision can be made with greater assurance.
 - i. Purple Line only in the tunnel with an upgraded surface trail
 - ii. Trail in the tunnel with the Purple Line station under the Air Rights Building, removing the need to put the Purple Line through the tunnel.

- iii. Trail in the tunnel with the Purple Line station just east of the Air Rights Building, removing the need to put the Purple Line through the tunnel.
 - c. If the cost and risk differential between building both the Purple Line and the Capital Crescent Trail in the tunnel and building only the Purple Line in the tunnel (with an upgraded surface trail) remains as great as currently estimated, we recommend that the County Council determine the tunnel route to be financially infeasible and concentrate more effort on building the planned surface trail with an alignment and features that will accommodate the volume and variety of user groups anticipated.
3. Convene an agency working group with the mandate to develop a design and circulation concept that upgrades the planned surface alignment, especially if the tunnel route is found financially infeasible. This alignment should provide a safe, convenient, and protected crossing for pedestrians and cyclists at the intersection of Wisconsin Ave / Willow Lane / Bethesda Ave. Attachment A details the types of upgrades to be considered.
4. Provide continuous lighting on the Capital Crescent Trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring to the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) standard for vertical illuminance, and provide maximum protection for undesirable spillover onto adjacent properties.
5. Include emergency call boxes in the design of the Capital Crescent Trail.
6. Continue to include the master-planned switchback connection to the Rock Creek Trail on the east side of the creek in the design of the Capital Crescent Trail, but evaluate a new option that would route the connection through park land to the south of the Georgetown Branch right-of-way, to reduce environmental and aesthetic impacts.
7. Include additional landscaping and hardscaping in the design of the Capital Crescent Trail. Landscaping and hardscaping (including benches and trash cans) should be provided along the community side of the trail as well as the Purple Line side, with enhanced landscaping at stations.
8. The master-planned surface route should remain on the north side of Bethesda Avenue and any private development or public projects potentially affecting that route will be required or advised, respectively, that the Bethesda Avenue bike route needs to be accommodated until:¹
 - a. A better surface alignment is identified.

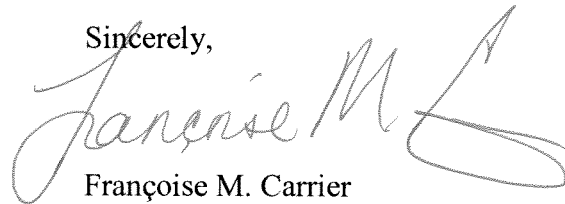
¹ The bulk of this recommendation relates to how the Planning Board would determine appropriate conditions to place on any development proposed along the north side of Bethesda Ave. Should the Council prefer options that would reroute the surface alignment, a master plan amendment likely would be needed.

- b. We have assurance from other parties involved – including the State Highway Administration and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation – that they concur with the new surface alignment and will ensure that a high-quality, safe route is feasible.
- c. The master plan is amended.

There were two corrections to the staff memo regarding cost, which are identified in an errata sheet in Attachment B. The full Planning Board packet is included as Attachment C.

If you have any additional questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me at (301) 495-4605 or David Anspacher of our staff at (301) 495-2191.

Sincerely,



Françoise M. Carrier
Chair

cc: Roger Berliner, Chairman T&E Committee
Senator Richard S. Madaleno, Jr.
Mike Madden, MTA
Edgar Gonzalez, MCDOT
Gary Erenrich, MCDOT
Glenn Orlin
Mary Bradford
Rollin Stanley
Mary Dolan
Rose Krasnow
Tom Autrey
David Anspacher

Attachment A: Detailed Planning Board Recommendations

Lighting

1. Provide continuous lighting on the Capital Crescent Trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring to the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America (IESNA) standard for vertical illuminance, and provide maximum protection for undesirable spillover.

Tunnel

2. It appears that more design work is needed before a recommendation can be made with confidence on whether to construct the Capital Crescent Trail in the tunnel.
 - a. Constructing the trail may be feasible if:
 - i. further engineering investigation reveals that the cost or risk differential between building the Purple Line and the Capital Crescent Trail in the tunnel and building the Purple Line only in the tunnel (with an upgraded surface trail) is significantly smaller than currently estimated; or
 - i. a mechanism is found to reduce the public outlay and/or risk to the Apex Building associated with putting both the trail and the Purple Line in the tunnel.
 - b. We recommend that the Maryland Transit Administration brief the County Council in six months time with designs, updated cost estimates and risk comparisons for the following scenarios so that this decision can be made with greater assurance.
 - i. Purple Line only in the tunnel with an upgraded surface trail
 - ii. Trail in the tunnel with the Purple Line station under the Air Rights Building, removing the need to put the Purple Line through the tunnel.
 - iii. Trail in the tunnel with the Purple Line station just east of the Air Rights Building, removing the need to put the Purple Line through the tunnel.
 - c. If the cost and risk differential between building both the Purple Line and Capital Crescent Trail in the tunnel and building only the Purple Line in the tunnel (with an upgraded surface trail) remains as great as currently estimated, we recommend that the County Council determine the tunnel route to be financially infeasible and concentrate more effort on building the planned surface trail with an alignment and features that will accommodate the volume and variety of user groups anticipated.
3. Create a CIP project for the Capital Crescent Trail. The CIP project should provide funds to:
 - a. Evaluate MTA engineering drawings for the trail.
 - b. Construct the trail in conjunction with the Purple Line.

Emergency Call Boxes

4. Emergency call boxes should be included in the design of the Capital Crescent Trail. Emergency call boxes should be located as follows:
 - a. Where there is no access to other assistance, such as long stretches between access points.
 - b. Where cell phone coverage is spotty, such as in tunnels.
 - c. For other reasons as deemed necessary.
5. Emergency call box locations should be selected in consultation with the Montgomery County Police Department and the Maryland-National Capital Park Police, Montgomery County Division.

Rock Creek Trail

6. Continue to include the master-planned switchback connection to the Rock Creek Trail on the east side of the creek in the design of the Capital Crescent Trail, but evaluate a new option that would route the connection through park land to the south of the Georgetown Branch right-of-way, to reduce environmental and aesthetic impacts.
7. Include additional landscaping and hardscaping in the design of the Capital Crescent Trail. Landscaping and hardscaping (including benches and trash cans) should be provided along the community side of the trail as well as the Purple Line side, with enhanced landscaping at stations.

Landscaping / Hardscaping

8. Include additional landscaping and hardscaping in the design of the Capital Crescent Trail. Landscaping and hardscaping (including benches and trash cans) should be provided along the community side of the trail as well as the Purple Line side, with enhanced landscaping at stations.
 - a. The plant materials that are selected should establish an acceptable aesthetic character for trail users when the trail is constructed and should replace the existing tree canopy over time.
 - b. The landscaping plan should be consistent with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles so that appropriate materials are used, for instance so they do not block trail lighting or grow to interfere with trail lighting.
 - c. Provide hardscaping that is consistent with a park-like experience.
 - d. Provide benches with uneven, non-level seating.

A Better Surface Alignment for the Capital Crescent Trail between Elm Street Park and Woodmont Ave

If the tunnel route is not financially feasible, the surface route becomes much more important. The following steps should be taken to provide a premier surface route through Bethesda. Even if a way is found to retain the trail in the tunnel, a similar approach should be used to assure that local access to the trail is provided in the best possible way.

9. Implement a bold redesign of the area surrounding the Capital Crescent Trail surface alignment.
10. Convene an agency working group with the mandate to develop a design and circulation concept that prioritizes the trail along the surface alignment.
11. The working group will be composed of representatives from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), the State Highway Administration (SHA), the Department of Parks, the Town of Chevy Chase and the Planning Department.
12. The priorities of the working group will include:
 - a. Providing an off-road path that is wide enough to accommodate anticipated demand (12 ft is recommended).
 - b. Creating a continuous trail experience from Silver Spring to downtown Bethesda that extends the lighting, landscaping, benches, and other amenities to the surface alignment.
 - c. Providing a safe, convenient, and protected crossing for pedestrians and cyclists at the intersection of Wisconsin Ave / Willow Lane / Bethesda Ave.
 - d. Separating trail users from non-trail users in areas where a large number of non-trail users are likely to be present.

Attachment A: Detailed Planning Board Recommendations

- e. Minimizing the number of driveways that cross the trail.
 - f. Completing the surface alignment prior to completion of the Purple Line as part of the Bethesda Bikeway and Pedestrian Facilities CIP project.
13. The following treatments are the level of investment that we recommend as the starting point for the working group:
- a. Evaluate the design of the surface alignment through Elm Street Park to ensure that it will safely accommodate the anticipated heavy use, and to minimize negative impacts to park users and facilities.
 - b. The working group should identify a preferred location for the path on 47th Street.
 - c. At the intersection of 47th Street and Willow Lane create a four-way stop with a raised crosswalk due to the expected volumes of trail users.
 - d. The working group will determine on which side of the road to locate the trail on Willow Lane.
 - e. Eliminate conflicts for pedestrians crossing Wisconsin Ave. This could be accomplished by:
 - o Prohibiting left turns from Bethesda Ave to northbound Wisconsin Ave and prohibiting right turns on red in the southbound direction, to eliminate all conflicts between trail users and motor vehicles.
 - o Providing a pedestrian only phase across Wisconsin Ave.
 - f. Realign the crosswalk on the north leg of the Wisconsin Ave / Willow Lane intersection so that it connects directly to Willow Lane.
 - g. On Bethesda Avenue:
 - o Locate the trail on the north side of Bethesda Ave
 - o Remove a row of parking between Wisconsin Ave and Woodmont Ave as recommended in the sector plan.
 - o Implement the following typical section on Bethesda Ave between the existing curbs: from north to south include a 12 ft trail, 2 ft buffer, two 11 ft traffic lanes, and an 8 ft row of parking.
 - o Consolidate driveways to the extent possible.
14. The master-planned surface route should remain on the north side of Bethesda Avenue and any private development or public projects potentially affecting that route will be required or advised, respectively, that the Bethesda Avenue bike route needs to be accommodated until:²
- d. A better surface alignment is identified.
 - e. We have assurance from other parties involved – including SHA and MCDOT – that they concur with the new surface alignment and will ensure that a high-quality, safe route is feasible.
 - f. The master plan is amended.

² The bulk of this recommendation relates to how the Planning Board would determine appropriate conditions to place on any development proposed along the north side of Bethesda Ave. Should the Council prefer options that would reroute the surface alignment, a master plan amendment likely would be needed.

Attachment B: Planning Board Memo Errata Sheet

Two costs items were incorrectly reported in the November 17, 2011 memo to the Planning Board for the Capital Crescent Trail (item #3).

The cost of lighting to the Illuminating Engineering Society of North American (IESNA) standard for vertical illuminance should be changed from “\$7.3 million” to “\$4.2 million” in the following locations:

- Page 4, second bullet
- Page 7, fourth paragraph

The cost of the master-planned Rock Creek Trail connection should be changed from “\$1.4 million” to “\$1.9 million” on:

- Page 4, fifth paragraph
- Page 16, sixth paragraph