

Informational Paper for PLIAG: Capital Crescent Trail (CCT)

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1. Assumptions and definitions
 - a. Scope of this document is to the trail specifically, homeowner issues are addressed during other discussions. With the exception of section 7.
 - b. For the purposes of this document, "the trail" is defined as the Capital Crescent Trail (including the Georgetown Branch) between Bethesda and Silver Spring.
 - i. The Green Trail is a separate physical space located in Silver Spring, but should have the same considerations/characteristics, when applicable, as the CCT.
 - ii. Anne Edwards will address specific issues of the Green Trail at another time.
 - c. Stakeholders include trail users. They are defined as, but not limited to: walkers, cyclists, runners, with special consideration for children (infants, toddlers, and school aged), as well as the elderly.
 - d. Items are listed in no particular order and should be given equal weight.
 - e. This is a summative document of the following resources:
 - i. COPLN Memo to Montgomery County Executive dated January 30, 2014
 - ii. PL Light Rail, Mandatory Referall No. MR2014033 Summary of Comments and Recommendations
 - iii. Testimony given before the Montgomery County Council by Christine Real de Azua, June 17, 2014
 - iv. Input from communities and individual members
2. General Questions
 - a. Ownership: Is it the case that the County will own the entire trail? Are there any exceptions? What county agency will own it?
 - b. Maintenance: Who is responsible for hard-scape (including the trail surface), the mechanical elements, signs, and warning gates. Who picks up the trash and maintains the trash receptacles? Finally, someone will have to maintain the landscape; mow the grass, and trim bushes and trees.
 - c. What are the responsibilities of state agencies, county agencies and the P3 partner? How can community groups and individuals efficiently communicate with these partners on trail issues?
3. Noise

- a. All efforts to minimize noise to trail users should be taken into consideration. Noise mitigation measures to minimize the noise exposure need to be factored into the trail/transit design.
 - b. Specifically, the **construction of an acoustic noise barrier, between the trail and the transit line** should be evaluated for maximization of noise dampening. This will help to mitigate noise for trail users and adjacent residents and ensure the separation of trail users from the transit line, facilitating safer trail use.
 - i. In follow-up to a request made at the last PLIAG meeting
 - 1. What would the noise levels on the trail be if
 - a. the noise was is located on the outer (residential) side of the trail or
 - b. the inner (Purple Line) side of the trail.
 - 2. Assumptions: Since MTA states that a noise wall adjacent to the trail reduces noise by 4 dB, then a wall on the outer side of the trail will reduce it by something less than 4 dB.
 - 3. What noise reduction is indistinguishable to the human ear?
 - ii. Importantly, this type of noise mitigation will significantly reduce noise exposure at the trail access points and for homes adjacent to these points.
 - iii. Noise barrier height should be raised to maximize the sound attenuation. Although MTA states that the current design will achieve a 4 dB noise reduction, FTA reports that “sound barriers for transportation systems are typically used to attenuate noise at the receiver by 5 to 15 decibels.” **MTA should raise the height of the noise barriers to achieve the full 15 dB attenuation** possible with the typical noise barrier design.
 - c. Train speed is a significant contributor for the noise level and that noise levels decrease as train speed decreases. The projected 45 mph speed of trains through East Bethesda should be reduced to 30 mph or less to mitigate the noise levels in tandem with the recommended noise barrier designs.
 - d. Noise abatement for residences that will be exposed to horn soundings.
 - e. Sound-muffling from the traction power substations and overhead wires.
 - f. Comply with the strictest noise ordinances
4. Vibration
 - a. **The community requests that the maximum vibration level be 65 VdB – the human threshold for perceiving vibration – measured 50 feet from the centerline of the tracks** once the Purple Line begins operations. This commitment has been made in areas between the Columbia Country Club and East West Highway, and the same should be made for all residents and communities.
 - b. Trail construction materials should absorb vibrations without disrupting the trail

user's experience.

5. Lighting

- a. What is the position of lighting the trail? Should the trail be lit at all? If so, to what extent?
- b. If so, some individuals/communities support it for security reasons and some concerned that it will invade their homes.
 - i. Can the design of the light fixtures direct the light on the trail and not into people's homes?
 - ii. Light fixtures be solar powered for environmental and maintenance reasons.
 - iii. Light fixtures should be aesthetically pleasing
 - iv. Install low lighting for trail access.

6. Visual appearance/Aesthetics/Maintenance

- a. Efforts to preserve tree canopy on the trail and surrounding areas where possible and replant where destruction is necessitated so as to restore the character of the area should be mandated.
- b. Plant new shrubs and trees to restore green space along the trail and train, particularly in areas previously filled with dense trees and greens.
- c. An aggressive schedule for implementing the landscape design, especially with respect to the planting of trees.
- d. Reduce the number of trees to be removed, now at 2,200 trees.
- e. Benches and water fountains should be placed at equal intervals along the trail.
- f. Regarding the interface between the trail and adjacent properties, communities believe that a privacy fence, complimented with landscaping between the fence and the trail, should be constructed.
- g. Use natural colors, textures & materials, as well as plantings, in the design of retaining/noise barrier walls.
- h. As federal funds restrict the usage of local artists in art development along the trail, the county should use local funds to incorporate art work of local artists into the trail experience. This art work should include environmental or "green" aspects into the trail.
- i. Walls higher than 6 feet should include terracing, berms, and other landscaping solutions to mitigate the negative visual effects of tall concrete walls and replicate and restore the current visual effects of green vegetation (as has been agreed to do in the areas owned by Columbia Country Club).
- j. Provide homeowners with funds for replacing lost vegetation and tree canopy or to install landscaping features to mitigate visual impact of retaining walls or other structures.
- k. Work with Montgomery County to designate Sleaford Road Trail access area as a community park to maintain green space.

- l. A commitment to using grass tracks in the segment of the project running along the Georgetown Branch right-of-way.
 - m. The trail should be as natural as possible, with urban aspects disguised using natural and design features.
 - n. A “green” median should be installed between the wall separating the trail from the transit line and the trail itself. This may include perennial shrub and flower plantings and trees, that at maturity, will be tall but not interfere with catenary wires.
 - o. Stairs leading from East-West Highway to the Trail should be fenced off, in an aesthetically pleasing way, from adjoining private property.
 - p. Lighting: see 5a
7. Visual and Audio Intrusions
- a. We request that some type of privacy barrier be erected separating the trail access points from the adjacent homes to facilitate both safety and security.
 - b. Particular consideration should be given to the Hamlet Place Community, Kentbury Drive, the Edgevale community, the community of Albert Stewart Lane to past Stewart Avenue.
 - c. Lighting: see 5a
8. Pedestrian Access
- a. All ramp connections to the CCT should be flared to the extent possible to facilitate access to the trail.
 - b. The path/sidewalks should be wide enough for two double wide strollers to pass each other safely at a run.
 - c. Lighting: see 5a
 - d. Specific Access Points
 - i. Ensure outreach to the communities surrounding specific access points.
 - ii. Lynn Drive: The community continues to work with the state on developing a mutually agreeable arrangement.
 - iii. Kentbury Way: The community requests that the access point not be lit at the intersections to the trail, so as to avoid disturbing the adjacent homeowners and to avoid bringing unnecessary attention to these points after dark. If lights are installed, they should be designed to avoid disturbing adjacent homeowners.
 - iv. Sleaford Road:
 - 1. The community is concerned about the safety issues posed by a 50-60 foot tunnel under Sleaford Road at Kentbury Drive. We request that the tunnel lighting be confined to the tunnel itself. In addition, the community requests that the tunnel be equipped with gates on both ends and that the tunnel be opened in the

morning (no earlier than 6:00 a.m.) and closed at night (no later than 10:00 p.m.) to prevent loitering. These accommodations would be the same as those employed today for the trail tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue, managed by the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP). We request the same BUP management contract for the Sleaford Road Access point.

2. Provide a bicycle channel on the stairway connection to the CCT at Sleaford Road
- v. Elm Street Park: Provide a smooth transition for the CCT into Elm Street Park, avoiding sharp turns by making structural adjustments to the Air Rights Building garage.
- vi. Connecticut Ave Trail Access :
 1. A shared use path should be provided on the south side of Newdale Road that is 10 feet wide where right-of-way is available, and 8 feet wide in constrained locations. The path should be wide enough for two double wide strollers to pass each other safely.
 2. Provide a bicycle channel on the stairway connection to the CCT on the east side of Connecticut Avenue.
- vii. Coquelin Run Shared Use Path: Design the ultimate ramp connection between the CCT and the Coquelin Run Trail during final design. And to enhance trail security, a temporary staircase should be constructed from the CCT to the Coquelin Run right-of-way.
- viii. Talbot Avenue: Issue a change order to address the substandard trail width on the CCT, between Michigan Avenue and Lanier Drive, if recommended by the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan.
 1. MTA Repsonse: The minimum trail width at this location is 10'-0" and meets County criteria. It was determined that running the trail parallel to Talbot Avenue was the best option for minimizing impacts while providing trail users the best experience possible.
 2. Response: See above 5b
- ix. East West Highway:
 1. Provide a bicycle channel on the stairway connection to the Capital CCT at East-West Highway.
 2. To create additional landing space at the western terminus of the East-West Highway ramp, investigate whether it is possible to reduce the length of the landing area at the junction with the Capital Crescent Trail.

3. Along East-West Highway, widened the sidewalk to 7 feet and build it against the retaining wall for the ramp so that a landscaped buffer between the sidewalk and the road can be provided. Add an ADA ramp that is aligned with the ramp on the other side of the driveway.
- x. Silver Spring Transit Center: Investigate ways to widen the connection between the CCT and the Metropolitan Branch Trail to be 16 feet upon completion of the Silver Spring Transit Center to achieve a 12-foot effective width.

9. Safety

- a. Purple Line tracks must have adequate pedestrian barriers and walls from both sides to ensure that no individuals can access the tracks and injure themselves, and to prevent suicide attempts.
- b. Tunnel at Sleaford Road trail access area must have adequate lighting 24/7 inside the tunnel, and tunnel must be locked between 10 PM and 6 AM to deter crime.
- c. If the noise wall was between the trail and train, it could act as a security barrier.
- d. Realign the trail access point to either Noyes Lane or Noyes Drive to avoid mid-block crossings.
- e. Provide a landing area between Jones Mill Road and Capital Crescent Trail that facilitates adequate sight distance and safe connections.
- f. The median island on the south leg of Jones Mill Road, across from the ramp, should be 8 to 10 feet wide to facilitate use by southbound bicyclists headed toward the ramp.
- g. The sidewalk in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Jones Bridge Road and Jones Mill Road should be constructed behind the proposed ramps to facilitate travel by disabled persons as well as to provide storage space for people waiting to cross either street.
 - i. MTA Response: A bypass sidewalk was not provided behind the sidewalk ramps to avoid impacting private property and a steep slope behind the sidewalk. This issue is the responsibility of MCDOT.
 - ii. Comment: While taking private property is not an acceptable solution, we must ensure access and the safety to those with disabilities and small children. This site should be evaluated by a 3rd party disabilities advocacy organization, in coordination with the impacted property owner.
- h. Develop and implement a unique signing and branding plan for the Capital Crescent Trail between the Silver Spring Metro station and the Bethesda Metro station. Signing should be provided at regular intervals on the trail, as well as at all access points. Signage should be designed and created by local artists and designers.
- i. No standing water, to prevent ice in the winter
- j. Lighting: see 5a

10. Environmental Issues

- a. Endangered species and due process of their protection.
- b. That water drainage and management be designed and handled properly such that no water damage will be incurred by residents during or after construction.
- c. Trail and track surfaces must be built with water permeable materials to prevent flooding and overflow.
- d. The water drainage system must drain such that no standing water will remain for prevention of mosquito and insect breeding. Water drainage should be at least 30-feet from trees on private property so that trees will not be drowned by excess water.
- e. Careful consideration should be given to properly engineer drainage for precipitation to avoid ponding of water on the trail and any negative impact on plantings in a “green” median, or adverse effects on adjacent homeowners.
- f. Reduce the number of trees to be removed, now at 2,200 trees; with special consideration for old growth trees.
- g. Follow-up meetings with representatives of affected communities and their elected representatives. A firm and detailed commitment to a tree-loss prevention plan and tree re-planting plan.
- h. Minimize as much as possible the entire width of the project (i.e., the trail and the tracks combined) to minimize tree loss caused by construction and to ensure that there is a remaining, unused portion Georgetown Branch right-of-way within which new trees can be planted following construction.
- i. Commit to a tree re-planting plan that calls for the maximum number of trees that can be ecologically sustained in the remaining portion of the Georgetown Branch right-of-way not used for the trail or tracks, rather than the minimum required by state or local law.
- j. Begin the tree canopy replacement program as early as possible.
- k. The FEIS contains no survey of trees on private land adjacent to the Georgetown Branch right-of-way, nor does it analyze the extent to which such trees may be damaged or killed as a result of construction activity. Therefore, the government should:
 - i. Conduct a tree survey to identify trees on private property whose critical root zones overlap the construction impact zone;
 - ii. Create tree protection measures (fencing, signage, etc.) in the plans and specifications for the construction contract; and
 - iii. Enact a monitoring system to ensure trees identified in the survey are not impacted by construction operations
 - iv. Share the results with the public.
- l. To the extent privately owned trees are damaged during the construction process, the MTA must commit to compensating the landowner for the value of

the tree, the cost to have it safely removed, and the cost of planting comparable replacement trees.

m. Lighting: see 5a

11. Trail/Transit Construction and Trail Availability

- a. **The trail should be available, in its best form, for use for the greatest extent possible during construction. The Purple Line RFP should provide a strong incentive to keeping the trail closure to a minimum and phase trail closures in a logical sequence, consistent with construction phasing/schedules.**
- b. **Comply with local noise ordinances of 65 dB(A) during daytime hours and 55 dB(A) during nighttime hours.**
- c. Water should be directed away from communities and environments where it would be damaging.
- d. Timely notification to all property owners to be affected by property takings, easements and temporary easements due to construction.
- e. Community review of contractors' plans for mitigating construction impact.
- f. Construction in residential areas must be limited to the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekdays and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends (if there will be work on the weekends)
- g. Construction vehicles, such as large dump trucks, will not be allowed to idle on neighborhood streets at any time
- h. Heavy construction equipment, such as front end loaders and bulldozers, will not be parked in neighborhoods.
- i. Construction access to the trail/transit right-of-way shall be from major roads such as Connecticut Avenue or Pearl Street.
- j. Construction employees will not be allowed to park on neighborhood streets and should park in public lots when accessible.
- k. All construction workers will have clearly visible identification and wear appropriate safety gear.
- l. Monthly updates on the status of construction activity and plans for the next month will be provided to identified community POC's and the homeowners adjacent to the trail.
- m. Phase construction so the trail is not closed for long periods during construction.
- n. Construction must be managed as to not impede traffic on major roads.

12. Planning

- a. The Capital Crescent Trail has been moved so as to stay on the south side of the Purple Line tracks through Lyttonsville to the Talbot Avenue bridge. Steps need to be taken to minimize the property takings caused by this change.
- b. Safe, secure ADA compliant access to Purple Line Lyttonsville Station is needed with entrances from Brookville Road and from the Lyttonsville Place Bridge as well from the Capital Crescent Trail to provide access from the Forest Glenn Installation.

- c. The community would like for the planners to consider including places along the trail where hikers and bikers can stop for food and drink, either from permanent shops or food trucks. Way finding signs indicating nearby commercial establishments should also be incorporated into the trail.
- d. Bike share and repair facilities should be incorporated into trail planning.

13. Questions and issues for further consideration

- a. Given current legal challenges, in effort to protect endangered species; individuals and groups are considering a "plan b" where the trail is restored/maintained as a park/path without the light rail and BRT is considered between Silver Spring and Bethesda.
- b. If CSX does not agree to locate the Capital Crescent Trail on CSX property between Lyttonsville Road and 16th Street, MCDOT must submit the revised trail plans to the Planning Board, the public and the county . The public must be made aware of this change, the new proposal and be given the opportunity (at least 4 opportunities, at least 2 of which should be in the evening or weekend) to comment to the MTA and County Council.

14. Points of clarification: Noise Walls

- a. Mandatory Referral 3-16: In the final design, any noise walls planned for installation should be placed directly adjacent to the track. In cases where the trail and the tracks are parallel, the noise wall should be placed between the track and the trail. A fence will be placed on the outer edge of the trail. This will improve the sound and visual quality along the trail by creating a solid buffer from moving rail equipment.
- b. MTA Responses: The current design placed the noise walls on the north side of the Capital Crescent Trail because noise walls between the Purple Line tracks and the Capital Crescent Trail would block the users view of the green track, which is aesthetically appealing to the trail users. It would also create undesirable scenarios where Capital Crescent Trail users are between two walls.
- c. Comment: The community's position is that IF by placing the noise walls directly adjacent to the track **reduces the noise** to trail users and adjacent home owners. Then in cases where the trail and the tracks are parallel, the noise wall should be placed **between the track and the trail. The green trail can be placed on either side of the trail. As there is currently a tree buffer between homes and the trail, the MTA/MCDOT should consider a natural barrier between the homes and the trail. Furthermore, as it is currently designed we have** undesirable scenarios where Capital Crescent Trail users are between two walls. (see 13 b)