

# Montgomery County lawmakers weigh \$127 million Capital Crescent Trail

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Montgomery County lawmakers are weighing spending upward of \$126.5 million to rebuild the popular [Capital Crescent Trail](#) that runs from Silver Spring to Georgetown. Used by more than 23,000 residents each week, according to 2006 data from the [Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail](#), the trail would be destroyed when the Maryland Transit Administration begins construction on the Purple Line, a 16-mile light rail planned from New Carrollton to Bethesda. Since 1990, the Purple Line plans have included a new trail to run alongside the rail.

Rebuilding the trail means expanding the tunnel in Bethesda where it travels beneath Wisconsin Avenue to protect runners and bicyclists from cars. The 12-foot-wide trail would run above the trains in the tunnel and cost an estimated \$50 million to rebuild, putting the total cost of rebuilding the entire length of the trail and adding new lighting, call boxes and landscaping at \$126.5 million.

For as long as rebuilding the trail has been part of the plan, the assumption has been that the county would bear the costs, said County Council Deputy Staff Director Glenn Orlin. As a result, the county Planning Board says Montgomery cannot afford to put the trail inside the tunnel. Instead, the county should build it across Wisconsin Avenue and spend \$3.4 million to build a bridge over the train tracks in Elm Street Park.

The County Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee, which heard from community leaders and local officials on Thursday, is scheduled to vote on the issue next week.

Expanding the tunnel beneath Wisconsin Avenue means rebuilding 35 support columns beneath the Apex building, which would be risky and costly, requiring the evacuation of the building, said Mike Madden, the Purple Line project manager for MTA.

Given the concrete problems that have delayed the construction of the Silver Spring Transit Center, trying to rebuild the tunnel would be irresponsible and could delay the project, said Wayne Phyllaier, treasurer for the advocacy group [Purple Line Now](#). "We don't want to put the whole system at risk for federal funding."

But making walkers and children cross busy Wisconsin Avenue is dangerous, said Ajay Bhatt, president of the [Friends of the Capital Crescent Trail](#).

[Town of Chevy Chase Councilwoman Pat Burda](#) said the county should wait on the Purple Line if the trail cannot run inside the tunnel.

Phyllaier suggested building a five-foot sidewalk beside the trains inside the tunnel, which appealed to several council members.

[Councilwoman Nancy Floreen, D-at large](#), said she wants to underground the tunnel despite the costs.

"It is hard, no question about it, but if we can build bike paths over I-270, Lord knows we can do this."

[rbye@washingtonexaminer.com](mailto:rbye@washingtonexaminer.com)