



www.cctrail.org

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Andrew Tsai, Project Manager
Montgomery County Parks
9500 Burnett Avenue
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by e-mail only: Andrew.Tsai@MontgomeryParks.org

Re: Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail Position Paper -
Little Falls Parkway and CCT Intersection Improvements

Dear Mr. Tsai:

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT) is a non-profit volunteer citizens' group established in 1987 to promote the first class development of the 11.2 mile Rail-to-Trail conversion from Georgetown, D.C. to Bethesda and Silver Spring, MD, for multi-purpose, recreational use. The transformation from Georgetown to Bethesda from a disused single-track rail line to a first-class trail has been an impressive example of cooperation between civic groups and governments. The trail is possibly the most used trail in the county, with 516,974 pedestrian trips (or 1,416/day) and 324,971 (or 890/day) cyclist trips identified by the trail counter at nearby downtown Bethesda for all of 2017.

CCCT applauds the county's interest in improving how the Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Parkway intersect and appreciates its solicitation of comments from the public as to how this can be best accomplished. Here is CCCT's position on how to improve this intersection:

Our position is based on the following criteria:

1. Safety for all trail users and motorists;
2. A permanent solution that takes into account the fact that use of the trail and of the Parkway will likely increase due to the growth of downtown Bethesda - including the new Marriott headquarters, Purple Line users, and development at Westbard - all a short distance from downtown Bethesda along the trail. We feel it is important to plan for such long-term growth;
3. The environmental impact of any trail/road development, including minimal impacts on the nearby stream valleys;
4. The cost of suitable options; and
5. Minimizing the impact upon neighboring communities and parkway users, including traffic flows and traffic times.

Based on these criteria we believe that a bridge is the best long-term solution. It is the safest option because it eliminates any surface crossing of the Parkway by the Trail, thereby avoiding conflict between motorists and trail users. A bridge will best accommodate the increased usage of both the CCT and of Little Falls Parkway, as it will allow motorists to continue to use two lanes in each direction on Little Falls Parkway and eliminate any diversion for trail users. This further maximizes safety and minimizes delays for both motorists and trail users. Importantly, it also minimizes the impact of motor vehicles and bicyclists "detouring" into nearby residential areas as well as minimizing conflict with users of the Bethesda Pool. We think the marginal cost increase of a bridge over surface solutions may not be as great as feared when factoring in the savings of time and lessening of inconvenience. We prefer a bridge over a tunnel as a safer and probably less costly option. We therefore urge the County to take a close look at the costs and impacts (environmental, traffic and social) of a bridge.

We recognize, however, that such a permanent solution will take time to study and implement (it took many years to complete the bridge over River Road), and that a more immediate short-term remedy is needed in the interim. We believe that the best short-term solution to promote safety is to move the trail crossing of the Little Falls Parkway to the intersection of Arlington Road and the Parkway. We believe that this is the safest location for a surface crossing for all trail users and avoids situations where trail users either cross without a light or are tempted to avoid using a traffic light. It also requires the least diversion from the current trail path. Moreover, this alternative permits reopening the Parkway to two lanes in each direction and avoids an extra potential stop for motorists, thereby lessening motorists' temptation to travel through nearby residential neighborhoods. It also minimizes conflict with the users of the Bethesda Pool. We strongly believe that the rerouting of the trail should use a gradual curve on both sides of the Parkway (and avoid sharp 90 degree turns) and should widen the trail as it approaches the intersection from both sides so that there is adequate room for trail users to wait for the light to change. Consideration could also be given to separate bike and pedestrian lanes in this area. The details for the short-term recommendation are attached.

Respectfully submitted,



Ron Tripp, Chair,

Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail

attachment - 1 page

cc: Andrew.Frank@MontgomeryParks.org

Short-term Recommendation - Arlington Road/Little Falls Parkway Intersection

The intersection is dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists to cross because only a minority of cars drive straight at the intersection; instead, the majority of the traffic makes a right turn from Little Falls onto Arlington going into Bethesda, and turn left from Arlington onto Little Falls outbound from Bethesda. Thus, a trail user who must cross Little Falls at this intersection must compete with cars turning onto the path of the crosswalk. We do not favor an all-way red light, because of the temptation of trail users to cross with Little Falls with the green light, and the frustration of drivers who must wait even when no trail users are present.

We instead propose a modification of the intersection so that Arlington/Little Falls is reconfigured as a through street and Glenbrook/Little Falls as a feeder street (with one lane in each direction) intersecting at a 90 degree angle to Arlington/Little Falls. In so doing, the trail users would cross when Glenbrook/Little Falls cars have the green light. A sketch of the intersection is below. The reconfiguration is similar to the redesign of the Fairfax and Clarendon Roads intersection (located about 1/2 mile north of Arlington and Little Falls). The actual work at the Fairfax/Clarendon intersection only took a few days, so we assume the cost would not be significant.

We again reemphasize that the redesigned intersection is only an interim solution - that a bridge for cyclists and pedestrians over Little Falls Parkway is the best long-term option.

