ISSUES RELATED TO THE CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL & PURPLE LINE

1. How long has the Capital Crescent Trail been on Master Plans? *The November 1986 Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment designated the right of way as "a public right of way intended to be used for public purposes such as conservation, recreation, transportation, and utilities. It is not to be used for a continuous roadway."*[1]

2. How long has County owned it? How much did they pay? *The County paid $10.5 million in December 1988.*[2]

3. What is it used for? *Right now it is used as a trail – referred to as the Interim Capital Crescent Trail. Ultimately it is to be used as a right of way for a trolley and adjacent trail per the Georgetown Master Plan Amendment – January 1990.*

4. Clear cutting. The pictures being floated around show trees in the background, but my understanding is that there will be massive clear cutting. Please provide accurate details about how many trees will be cut and plans to replant. *The impact and potential mitigation will be identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that is scheduled to be available something this spring. The Georgetown Branch Corridor Study Final Report (May 1989) included an estimate of 700 to 750 large trees being removed with mitigation measures to be explored in the next phase of design.*[3]

5. How long would the trail be closed to users? *An estimate of the time the trail would be closed during construction of the Purple Line would have to come from the MTA project team. The Georgetown Branch Corridor Study Final Report (May 1989) includes a construction schedule that reflects a 2-2 1/2 year period.*[4]

6. A trail of 10' width is barely wide enough to accommodate the many uses of the trail, many of which are at vastly differing speeds (from children walking to adults biking). Can the Right of Way accommodate a trail wider than 10' and if so, what would be lost in order to accommodate this? *The paved portion of the trail west of Woodmont (once you get past the water fountain) is ten feet with a two foot lateral off-set on each side where there is room for the two-foot off-set on each side. East of Woodmont Avenue, the concept plan developed by the MTA includes the ten foot wide paved path and in most areas, an adjacent grass or other pervious surface that will likely vary in width. At this stage in the planning process, the approach is to identify a basic concept or objective – in this case a ten foot paved path while also optimizing the vertical and horizontal separation within acceptable safety and cost constraints. More detail on identifying specific areas along the trail where a flat two foot adjacent shoulder will likely be available is something that would normally be developed in the preliminary engineering phase.*

[1] Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment , January 1990, page 7
[2] Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment, January 1990, page 7
[3] See page 5-23.
[4] See Figure 2.27

SILVER SPRING ALTERNATIVES

A) The Direct Route Option for the Trail

What is the cost of building the Capital Crescent Trail across the Talbot Ave Bridge, along east side of the CSX tracks all the way directly into the Silver Spring Transit Center ? T*he MTA project team has indicated that they do not have this specific information at this point.*

What would the length of this route be? *It is approximately 4,800 feet from the bridge to the south side of Colesville Road.*[5]

If there is a point when the Trail is directly above or under the Purple Line transitway, what would the vertical clearance be between Transitway and trail*? Yes – in the Bethesda tunnel (see drawing CFG -01-04 on the MTA project website) and in Silver Spring just west of Colesville Road (see drawing CFG-04-05 on the MTA project web site). As for the vertical clearance between the transitway and the trail, we will have to ask the MTA. For clarification, is the question referring to the vertical distance from the track to the bottom of the trail platform?*

What would the likely, typical, and closest distance be between the catenary wires and a trail user? *The vertical clearance would likely be around 14 feet in a typical area based upon what is in place in some other systems. The horizontal clearance is difficult to estimate as it could vary. We will check with the MTA.*

If any ramps are needed to cross the Purple Line transitway, what would the length and grade of the northern end of the ramp (between ground and elevated levels) be? *This question will have to be answered by the MTA and that information may not be available at this time.*

What would the length and grade of the "southern" ramp be? *See response to previous question.*

B) The On Street Option(s) for the Trail

For each possible on street route please:

1. Provide the exact route, *the route would leave the CSX right of way at Spring Street and would continue on 2nd Avenue/Wayne Avenue to the Silver Spring Transit Center.*

2. The number of at grade street crossings, *Once on Spring Street, there are crossings at Fenwick Lane, Apple Avenue, and Colesville Road.*[6]

3. What is the cost of building the route? *This question will have to be answered by the MTA and that information may not be available at this time.*

4. Will any of the cost be paid by Montgomery County? *The financial plan for the Purple Line has not been developed at this point.*

5. Explain exactly how the Trail will cross Spring Street, Colesville Rd. *The crossing would be at grade within the marked crosswalk similar to the existing connection across Woodmont Avenue in Bethesda.*

[5] This is an estimate of the distance between the two points – not an estimate of the length of the facility.
[6] See Drawing CFG-04-02 on the project web site.

6. How much money may / will be saved by this option. *This question will have to be answered by the MTA and that information may not be available at this time.*

7. How much travel time will be lost to bicycle commuters and other users, and what is the decreased bicycle ridership resulting there from in comparison to the direct option? *Unknown and unlikely to be calculated. Obviously a less direct route that takes more time and will decrease bicycle ridership numbers.*

BETHESDA ALTERNATIVES

A) The Low & Medium LRT alternatives take the Tr*ail out of the Tunnel and through the Elm Street Park.*

1. What is the trail's exact route? *The trail will exit the right of way at the park, and then be on street on 47th Street, Willow Lane, and Bethesda Avenue. See drawing CFG – 01 – 02 on the project web site.*

2. Which streets will be crossed at grade? *Willow Lane, Wisconsin Avenue and Woodmont Avenue.*

3. Exactly how will the Trail cross Wisconsin Ave, *At grade in the crosswalk.*

4. What "damage", if any, will accrue to Elm Street Park? It is unclear what "damage" means in this context. *The park will no doubt be used by more people.*

5. What is the cost of this routing? *This question will have to be answered by the MTA and that information may not be available at this time.*

6. Will any of this cost be paid by Montgomery County? *The financial plan for the Purple Line has not been developed at this point.*

7. How much less costly is this option than the "High Cost Alternative"? *This question will have to be answered by the MTA and that information may not be available at this time.*

8. How much travel time will be lost to bicycle commuters and other users, and what is the decreased bicycle ridership resulting therefrom. *Bicycling transportation planning does not include studying travel time delays. Our budget just doesn't allow for it.*

B) In the High Cost Alternative (through the tunnel) what is:

1. the cost of building this alternative? *This question will have to be answered by the MTA and that information may not be available at this time.*

2. the length and grade of the eastward ramp (between the ground and elevated levels)*? At this point, we do not have this information. We know the Woodmont East applicant will be reserving space for a ramp that will provide for a ten foot wide walkway.*

3. the length and grade of the westward ramp? *See response to the previous question.*

4. the length of the trail segment which is level? *From Woodmont Avenue to tunnel entrance (part of Woodmont East II project) 250 feet;* the distance between the trail's floor and the train's top? *The MTA will have to answer this question.*

5. the likely distance between a trail user and any catenary wires? *The MTA will have to answer this question.*

6. the possibility of "trenching" the transit floor down 3 to 5 feet or so from the current surface to provide greater vertical spaciousness for trail users *The MTA will have to answer this question. One of the conditions for the Woodmont East application provides for an easement that is four feet below the top of the rail.*

7. If possible to build the 'trench', what is the estimated cost? *We will have to check with the MTA project team and I am not sure that they have the specific information available at this point.*

8. Will additional lighting be added in the tunnel? *We are almost certain but we need to check with the MTA project team.*

9. What will the noise level be in the tunnel for a trail user (in decibels)? *Information on noise levels will be available once the DEIS is published*

SEPARATION DISTANCES AND NOISE LEVELS

There are various measures of separation distance. One is track centerline to track centerline or to adjacent trail center line. Another is closest edge of transitway to closest edge of the trail.

In terms of danger or noise, the former is an average or "typical", the latter measure is more "worst case distance". For the questions below, please provide data for both the worst case and typical separation distance.

The level of noise varies due to speed, use of brakes, horn sounding, distance between the sound source and hearer of it. For each of the questions below, please provide the information for the "worst case noise" level (largest amount of noise generated). Please provide data for bus and for light rail.

All of the questions below relate to noise and will have to be addressed by the MTA project team. This information may not be available until the DEIS is available and when the DEIS is available it will be in a format that is consistent with NEPA and FTA guidance.

For the Bethesda Tunnel ---

A) What would the (vertical separation of track and trail be)

B) What would the noise level be (in decibels)

C) Will noise mitigation be needed due to a possible echo chamber effect

D) Will the noise prevent trail users from hearing other overtaking trail users?

For the Trail from the East end of the Bethesda Tunnel to the actual "BRANCH POINT"
(a distance of approximate 3.5 miles)

What percentage of the trail length will the separation distance be:

1) less than 15 feet; the noise level (in db) at this distance will be
2) between 16 and 25 feet: the noise level in db at this distance will be
3) between 26 and 35 feet; the noise level in db at this distance will be

For the Trail from the "BRANCHPOINT" to the actual Silver Spring Transit Center (a distance of approximately 1 mile)

What percentage of the trail length will the separation distance be:

1) less than 15 feet; the noise level (in db) at this distance will be
2) between 16 and 25 feet: the noise level in db at this distance will be
3) between 26 and 35 feet; the noise level in db at this distance will be

MORE QUESTIONS:

1. Width of trail would be only 10 feet? Byrne (of Takoma), and the Bethesda representatives, and I (of East Silver Spring) all think Trail must be wider than that to accommodate two lanes of bicycle, pedestrian traffic. *The width of the existing paved trail west of Woodmont is ten feet with two foot wide shoulders where room is available.*

2. How many trees would be cut down with single track? With double track? With stacked tracks? With bus alignment? All trees with metal tags on trunks? *The MTA will have to respond to this queston. We do not think the information will be available until the DEIS is made available. See also the response to question 4 at the beginning of this list of questions.*

3. Would the Jones Mill / Bridge alignment allow a light rail on the part of the Trail yet a bus on Jones Mill / Bridge roads? *No. The Jones Bridge Road alignment assumes a bus on Jones Bridge Road that would enter the Master Plan alignment at Jones Mill Road/Jones Bridge Road.*

4. How many trees, of what kind, would be planted? Two for every one cut down? (Several readers on the ESSCA listserv have asked this question.) *The MTA project team will have to answer this question and the answer may not be available until the DEIS is available.*

5. What is MTA's view of Byrne's stacked track idea? *The MTA provided a response at the MPAG meeting on February 19, 2008. While the idea has merit, the MTA team believes it also has some potentially significant drawbacks.*

6. Could the stacked track work with a bus? *See the answer to the previous question. For the most part, the same issues would likely apply to both modes.*

7. Is MTA thinking of waiting until there is a new FTA / new federal administration to ask for funding? *The MTA will have to respond to this question.*

8. Is it possible for Purple Line plans / details to change significantly after Federal money is approved? *Some changes (not major ones) can take place through preliminary engineering. Once you enter final design, it becomes more problematic to make changes of any significance.*

9. Is MTA now considering / entertaining new ideas in the light of the Silver Line rejection by the FTA? *The MTA will have to respond to this question. As of this writing the FTA has not rejected the Silver Line. The Dulles case does provide us with an example of the importance of cost containment when seeking federal funding. The latest FTA profile of the Dulles project was provided to the MPAG at the February 19, 2008 meeting.*

10. Can MTA envision, and accommodate, the idea that 20 years from now, autos could be limited / selectively prohibited during rush hour on EW Highway or Jones Mill /Jones Bridge Road (many cities around the world prohibit auto traffic on some roads at regular times), that the Purple Line could be a bus "in traffic" with other public transit routes there, instead of on the Trail (and the Trail preserved much as it is now)? In other words, could the PL between Silver Spring & Bethesda travel on a route that is not on the current Master Plan, especially if there were money saving in it?

    There is a road in this area (I-66 inside the beltway) that has a use restriction during peak hours. It is limited to carpools and buses. It is, however, a limited access facility. Limiting access to arterials that provide direct access to homes and schools and other land uses that are found on neighborhood streets would be very difficult.

11. I have driven during rush hour west between Silver Spring & Bethesda, and find no lengthy time doing so by Jones Mill / Bridge road to Medical Center – it takes me about 12 minutes, from the intersection of 16th & EW Highway, to get to Bethesda. Traffic going in the other direction from Bethesda seems heavier and slower. Yet the Woodside civic association in Silver Spring endorses the proposed Master Plan PL alignment going along the Trail to Bethesda, while several civic associations in Bethesda oppose it going to Silver Spring. Could MTA make some use, in modifying alignments, of the relative ease / speed of transportation from east to west – is that what the Jones roads alignment does*? We think this question is referring to the potential use of a reversible lane on Jones Bridge Road. We can ask the MTA project team but I think the reversible lane if implemented would be a short term solution even if it were operationally feasible. We will provide some data on the planned increase in jobs and housing in the respective CBDs between now and 2030. We also need to keep in mind that the project goes beyond Silver Spring and will provide much better access to jobs and affordable housing for a large segment of the County's transit dependent population. The opportunities for travel time savings east of Silver Spring along cost effective exclusive or dedicated right of ways is limited.*