



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

April 1, 2014

Arthur Holmes, Jr., Director  
Montgomery County Department of Transportation  
Executive Office Building (EOB)  
101 Monroe Street, 10th Floor  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Mandatory Referrals for the Purple Line, Bethesda Metro Station South Entrance, Capital Crescent Trail, and Silver Spring Green Trail

Dear Mr. Holmes,

The Montgomery County Planning Board/Parks Commission reviewed the Mandatory Referrals of the above projects at our regularly scheduled meeting on March 20, 2014 and approved them with comments to your department (see Attachment 1), the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). While a specific set of comments is being sent to each agency based on which part of the project is in within its authority, we have also requested that the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation coordinate a joint response by MTA and SHA. A copy of that letter is attached, with the Planning Board/Park Commission's full set of comments (see Attachment 2).

While MTA is the overall sponsoring agency that has proposed to construct the four projects, this is a large and complex group of projects that requires funding from different sources and approvals from different agencies.

One of the major areas of concern regarding the Purple Line project is that pedestrian accommodation around many stations areas is inadequate and can be improved to achieve more ridership and safer conditions. Since many of these stations are accessible via County and State roads, coordination between MCDOT, SHA, and MTA is essential to prioritizing pedestrian access. The stations of greatest concern accessible by County roads are Lyttonsville, Woodside, and Dale Drive. For example:

- Lyttonsville Place is proposed to have 5-foot-wide sidewalks with no buffer from the road to the south of the bridge, even though this will be one of two access roads from the community to the station. While MCDOT staff has indicated that only two through lanes are needed on Lyttonsville Place, the current plan precludes wider sidewalks and bike lanes because space is also designated for “activity lanes”. We understand that the intent of the “activity lanes” is to accommodate a bus pull-off area (so traffic is not impacted) and kiss-and-ride. However, it is unclear why vehicular access is prioritized at a station primarily intended for pedestrian and bicycle access, especially when kiss-and-ride and bus pull-offs can also be accommodated on Brookville Road, which has a wider right-of-way. This road also has only a moderate traffic volume. **Please accommodate the attached recommendations.**
- The intersection of MD 390 and Spring Street includes an excessive crossing distance on the east leg, requiring two pedestrian signals and three refuge islands to break up the crossing. The intersection geometry also enables vehicles traveling northbound on 16th Street and turning right onto Spring Street to speed across one of the crosswalks. MTA is planning to acquire the Spring Center to the northeast of the intersection and reconstruct the Spring Street bridge over the tracks, so there is an opportunity to make major improvements for pedestrians in an area that connects the Silver Spring CBD with the Woodside Station. With the coming of the Woodside Station, the redevelopment of the Spring Center site after construction of the Purple Line, the completion of the Fenwick Place development at the southwest corner of Spring Street and Second Avenue, an approved redevelopment of the north Falklands parcel, and the potential redevelopment of the southeast corner of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street/Spring Street intersection, this pedestrian crossing will become far busier than it is currently. **Please accommodate the attached recommendations.**
- A better allocation of the public right-of-way is needed at the Dale Drive Station. This is the only station in Montgomery County where Purple Line trains would be forced to share a travel lane at the station; this has the unfortunate disadvantage of creating a situation where drivers will either have to wait behind a train stopped at the station or move into the right lane. In addition, the sidewalk on the south side of Wayne Avenue at the station is proposed to be five feet wide with no offset from traffic, removing the existing landscape panel that separates the sidewalk from the roadway. The proposed left turn lanes on Wayne Avenue at Dale Drive should not be built; this right-of-way should be used to provide a dedicated transit lane for eastbound Purple Line trains at

the station, as well as providing a pedestrian refuge on the west leg of the intersection.  
**Please accommodate the attached recommendations.**

One additional area where we request assistance from MCDOT is Long Branch Local Park. The Purple Line will restrict access (left turns in and out) to the community center and pool facilities along MD 320 (Piney Branch Road). MTA has committed to constructing a new driveway for the park to connect to the Barron Street signal, which will allow for left turns out of the park, but left turns in remain a problem. While this is a state highway, the park includes County facilities. We therefore request that MCDOT work with MTA, SHA, and M-NCPPC, Montgomery County Department of Parks to **help identify ways to allow left turns into the park directly from Piney Branch Road**, particularly during large community events and swim meets at the park; this would eliminate the need to make circuitous detours on County streets through the neighborhood.

While MTA should provide good pedestrian accommodation in the immediate area of the stations and along the route, it is likely that additional remedial work will be needed in the surrounding area, particularly in the blocks immediately adjacent to streets on which the Purple Line runs. MCDOT would likely be responsible for needed improvements on County roads and for a share of the cost on State roads. **Please work to provide these improvements.**

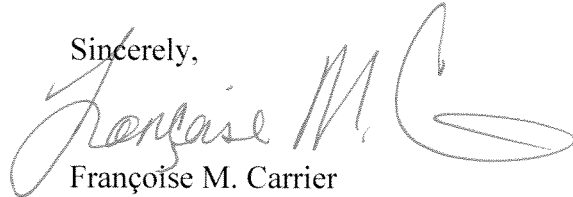
In regard to the Capital Crescent Trail, we are particularly concerned that transitions at the ends of the project in Bethesda and Silver Spring are inadequate. Trail use will be greatest approaching the central business districts, and particular attention is needed at the transition to Elm Street Urban Park and to the Metropolitan Branch Trail. As currently designed, the trail in Elm Street Urban Park has two 90 degree turns close together. This will be difficult for many cyclists to negotiate, especially bicycles with trailers. The junction with the Metropolitan Branch Trail at the Silver Spring Transit Center will also be problematic for trail users. At this location the trail narrows down to about 8 feet wide as it passes over a channel on top of the transit center. Since the channel has two knee walls, the functional width of the trail is about 4 feet wide. **Please work to provide the recommended improvements detailed in the attachment.**

We request that you coordinate your responses to the individual Planning Board/Parks Commission recommendations with MTA, SHA, and MDOT and provide them to us within

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45 days. If you have any questions or comments concerning our review, please do not hesitate to call me at 301-495-4605, or you may call David Anspacher of our staff at 301-495-2191.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Françoise M. Carrier". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Françoise M. Carrier  
Chair

Attachments

Attachment 1: Planning Board Comments to MCDOT

Attachment 2: Letter to MDOT

Cc: Gary Erenrich  
Glenn Orlin

## **PURPLE LINE MANDATORY REFERRAL**

### **General Comments**

Pedestrian access to the Purple Line stations in Montgomery County needs additional improvement, especially at the Lyttonsville, Woodside, and Piney Branch Road stations. In many locations sidewalks or paths are directly adjacent to the curb with minimum width sidewalks. Since pedestrian volumes around Purple Line stations will increase substantially once the Purple Line is operational, MCDOT should work with MTA and SHA to:

- *Commit to providing quality pedestrian and bicycle improvements between stations and the communities in their immediate vicinities.*
- *Conduct a thorough review of this project with the goal of meeting both AASHTO recommendations for pedestrian facilities as well as ADA Best Practices at a minimum.*
- *Identify near term and long term improvements to enhance station access.*

In addition, legal crosswalks exist at all intersections of two public roads per State law, and all crosswalks must be made fully ADA-compatible per federal law. Therefore:

- *All intersections must be made fully ADA-compatible. At intersections where a safe crossing cannot be provided, signs prohibiting the crossing to all pedestrians should be installed, but SHA must ensure that there are adequate crossing opportunities, particularly in the vicinity of all bus stops.*

A bus service planning study has not been completed to determine how RideOn bus service and other shuttle services will be adjusted (bus stop locations, routes, frequency, and span of service) when the Purple Line is completed. This is needed to inform decisions about station areas in final design, such as the location of crosswalks and where to located bus stops. MCDOT should:

- *Conduct a bus service planning study to determine how routes, frequencies, span of service and the location of bus stops will be adjusted when the Purple Line opens for service. MCDOT should also coordinate service changes for Metrobus routes with WMATA.*

Finally, Montgomery County can further support pedestrian and bicycle access to transit by:

- *Utilizing a "Bicycle Pedestrian Priority Area Projects" annual program to enhance pedestrian and bicycle station access in locations where redevelopment is unlikely in the next 5 to 10 years. This program was recommended by the full Council on March 25, 2014, pending budget reconciliation.*

### **Bethesda Station**

The Town of Chevy Chase continues to have concerns regarding impacts to Elm Street Urban Park and adjacent residences, noise impacts, and an access point to the Capital Crescent Trail. Therefore, MTA and MCDOT should:

- *Continue to work with the Town of Chevy Chase to address design refinements to the Purple Line and the Capital Crescent Trail to provide an additional grade-separated crossing of the trail and to reduce noise impacts and impacts to Elm Street Urban Park and residences adjacent to the park.*

### **Lyttonsville Station Area**

While the northeast leg of the intersection of Brookville Road and Lyttonsville Place has an acceleration lane today, it is unclear why it is needed when the intersection is controlled by a four-way stop and the only traffic coming from the south is originating at the RideOn maintenance depot. Therefore:

- *Eliminate the acceleration lane on the north leg of the intersection of Brookville Road and Lyttonsville Place. Instead use the space for wider sidewalks and bike lanes to provide continuity from the proposed sidewalks on the Lyttonsville Place Bridge.*

While Lyttonsville Place is one of two roads that residents will use to get to Lyttonsville Station, and it is a route that trucks use to get to the Lyttonsville industrial area, the Purple Line 30% engineering plans provide no bicycle accommodations and only the bare minimum (5-foot-wide sidewalks with no offset from the road) accommodation for pedestrians south of the bridge. To enhance bicycle and pedestrian access to the Purple Line station:

- *Widen the proposed 5-foot-wide sidewalk on both sides of Lyttonsville Place to at least 7 feet to meet AASHTO recommendations and provide bicycle lanes by removing the "activity lane."*

Furthermore, it is not clear that a bus stop on Lyttonsville Place is the best location for a few reasons. First, a bus stop on Lyttonsville Place requires an at-grade crossing, whereas a bus stop on Brookville Road could be located next to a stop-controlled intersection. Second, the curb-to-curb distance on Brookville Road is wider than Lyttonsville Place so there is additional space for a bus pull-off area. Finally, if the Forest Glen Annex provide shuttles from their campus to the station, it would be preferable to have a stop on Brookville Road, instead of Lyttonsville Place, so that the shuttles can turn around at the RideOn Depot instead of circulating through the community. While RideOn buses currently stop within the base, the Forest Glen Annex is upgrading security, and it is possible that they will rely on their own shuttle service in the future. Therefore, MCDOT should:

- *Consider a bus stop with a pull-off area on Brookville Road instead of Lyttonsville Place and improve the crossing of Brookville Road at Lyttonsville Place for pedestrians.*

There is a conflict between cyclists traveling on the Capital Crescent Trail and Purple Line passengers crossing the Capital Crescent Trail to get from the ramp to the Purple Line platform. Therefore:

- *The conflict point on the Capital Crescent Trail at the ramp from Lyttonsville Place should include features that inform bicyclists of pedestrian crossings.*
- *Provide a larger landing area at the base of the proposed ramp down to the Capital Crescent Trail from Lyttonsville Place. The landing and crossing could be designed to incorporate local historical and cultural enhancements.*

The Forest Glen Annex is the largest employer in the Lyttonsville area (2,000+ employees), and many employees and visitors will walk to the Purple Line station as part of their commute. To do so, these passengers will need to cross Brookville Road, a wide street with heavy truck volumes. MTA expects many passengers will use the Capital Crescent Trail to get to the station, avoiding the poor sidewalks and industrial area on Brookville Road. Therefore, to facilitate pedestrian travel between the Forest Glen Annex and the Purple Line station, MCDOT should:

- *Provide a traffic signal at the intersection of Brookville Road and Stephen Sitter Avenue.*

- *Since Stewart Avenue will be the main access route for employees at the Forest Glen Annex until a new access point on Brookville Road can be constructed, reduce the parking lane widths on Stewart Avenue to 8 feet and reallocate that space to the sidewalk area to achieve a 5 foot buffer and 10 foot sidewalk on the south side and a 9 foot sidewalk on the north side.*

Finally:

- *In addition to lighting the Capital Crescent Trail under the Lyttonsville Place Bridge, provide wall-wash lighting along the bridge abutment walls to enhance pedestrian safety.*

### **Woodside Station Area**

As currently designed, the intersection of 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Spring Street does not adequately prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists. The crossing distance on the east leg of the intersection is excessive, requiring two pedestrian signals and three refuge islands to break up the crossing. Furthermore, the intersection geometry enables vehicles traveling northbound on 16<sup>th</sup> Street and turning right onto Spring Street to speed through the intersection. While this may be an appropriate intersection design in areas with limited pedestrian activity, it is inappropriate in an urban area adjacent to both the Silver Spring Central Business District and a planned Purple Line station, where pedestrian activity will be substantial. Since SHA is responsible for the roads that form this intersection, MCDOT should coordinate with SHA to redesign this intersection to adequately prioritize pedestrians by:

- *Eliminating the free right turns and realigning Spring Street and the Spring Street Bridge to form a tee intersection with 16th Street, as part of the reconstruction of the Spring Street Bridge.*

Spring Street is the connection between the Silver Spring Central Business District and the Woodside Purple Line Station. As such it should be constructed as a gateway to Silver Spring and prioritized for pedestrians and bicycles. Furthermore, it is unclear why on-street parking is prioritized on a bridge where the pedestrian walkways are especially constricted, especially since parking meters will further reduce the clear width. Therefore, MCDOT should:

- *Eliminate both rows of parking on the Spring Street Bridge. Widen the proposed 5-foot-wide sidewalks to 13 feet wide. Separate the 16-foot-wide shared travel lane into 11-foot-wide through lanes and 5-foot-wide bike lanes.*

### **Silver Spring Transit Center Station Area**

During the Planning Board's review of the Purple Line mandatory referral on March 20, 2014, there was considerable discussion regarding the need for a direct connection between the planned Purple Line station and the existing Red Line station at the Silver Spring Transit Center. This connection is recommended in the Purple Line Functional Plan and is important because it will facilitate transfers between the two rail lines, but remains unfunded. The Maryland Transit Administration estimates that there will be 3,500 daily transfers between the Red Line and Purple Line by 2040. This represents almost 30% of Purple Line boardings and alightings at this station. Therefore, in coordination with MTA and WMATA, MCDOT should:

- *Design and construct a convenient direct connection between the Red Line and the Purple Line at the Silver Spring Transit Center station.*

### **Bonifant Street**

The following issues should be addressed to ensure adequate pedestrian access to the east of the Silver Spring Transit Center:

- *The ramp on the south side of the road is shared use path width, but the ramp directly across the street on the north side of “Bonifant Road” is smaller than shared use path width. Both ramps should be shared use path width and aligned.*
- *The sidewalk and curb on the north side of Bonifant Street between Dixon Avenue and the alley should be reconstructed so that they are in alignment with the sidewalks on either side.*
- *The sidewalk on the south side of Bonifant Street between the alley and Georgia Avenue appears to be as narrow as two feet wide at the eastern end. Ensure that this sidewalk meets the ADA minimum.*
- *The sidewalk bump out at the northeast corner of Georgia Avenue and Bonifant Street will be eliminated, narrowing the sidewalk to about three feet at the Quarry House entrance. Ensure that this sidewalk meets the ADA minimum (i.e. it has a clear width of at least 3 feet).*
- *The sidewalk bump out at the southeast corner of Georgia Avenue and Bonifant Street would be eliminated, but this elimination appears unnecessary. The bump out should be retained to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance on the east leg of the intersection.*

### **Silver Spring Library Station Area**

One area of concern at the Silver Spring Library Station is the southwest corner of the intersection of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street, where the Purple Line will form a fifth leg of the intersection. Pedestrians should be directed away from the apex of this corner, as it is the entry and exit location for the Purple Line trains. Therefore, in coordination with MTA and the Montgomery County Department of General Services (DGS):

- *The sidewalk at the southwest corner should be constructed to go directly between the Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street ramps and be 12 feet wide to accommodate a high level of activity. The space between that sidewalk and the radius curb should be made of a non-traversable surface to discourage pedestrians entering this location.*

An approved development at the southeast corner of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street will improve the pedestrian area, if constructed. If the project is not constructed, work with MTA to make the following improvement:

- *The proposed sidewalk at the southeast corner of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street should be constructed behind the ramps. While the current design meets ADA requirements, it is far from meeting ADA Best Practices, which should be followed at this major downtown intersection that is immediately adjacent to the station.*

There are barriers between the platforms at the Silver Spring Library station limiting crossings to the corner of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street and at the detectable warning surface (DWS) near Bonifant Street. Therefore, in coordination with MTA and DGS:

- *At the Silver Spring Library station, the area with the detectable warning surface should be widened and better integrated with the plaza at the corner of Bonifant Street and Fenton Streets.*



### **Wayne Avenue**

MCDOT is not recommending street trees on the north side of Wayne Avenue because per County Standard 700.01: “no tree plantings will be permitted if green space is less than 6 feet”. The County should reconsider this standard and allow street trees to be planted on the north side of Wayne Avenue, especially since the Purple Line proposed substantial impacts along the roadway. Therefore, MCDOT should:

- *Grant a design exception to allow street trees to be planted in the 5-foot-wide buffer on the north side of Wayne Avenue between the curb and the Silver Spring Green Trail.*

The Purple Line Functional Plan (page 31) recommends sidewalks that are at least 6 feet wide on the south side of Wayne Avenue. The 30% engineering plans include 5-foot-wide sidewalks, even though there appear to be opportunities to widen the sidewalks to 6 feet in the right-of-way.

- *The sidewalks on the south side of Wayne Avenue should be widened to 6 feet with landscaped buffers from traffic wherever the right-of-way is available to do so.*

### **Dale Drive Station Area**

While the pedestrian space is at almost the bare minimum on the south side at Wayne Avenue, the intersection at Wayne Avenue and Dale Drive is proposed to add a turn lane in each direction. Therefore, in coordination with MTA:

- *The intersection of Wayne Avenue and Dale Drive should be changed to eliminate these turn lanes in favor of providing a dedicated transit lane in the eastbound direction, shifting the platform one lane to the north and creating a pedestrian refuge on the west leg of the intersection.*

On the east side of Dale Drive, north of Wayne Avenue, MTA is proposing dual sidewalks along the school driveway. This is in addition to the sidewalks provided adjacent to Wayne Avenue. Therefore, in coordination with MTA and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS):

- *The dual sidewalks along Dale Drive between Wayne Avenue and the school driveway should be combined into one wider sidewalk that is offset from the curb. The sidewalk north of the school driveway should be offset from the curb similar to what exists now but with a straighter alignment.*

### **Manchester Place Station Area**

On Wayne Avenue between Sligo Creek Parkway and Manchester Road, there is extra pavement that may lead to unwanted vehicular movements. Therefore:

- *On Wayne Avenue between Sligo Creek Parkway and Manchester Road, a raised island should be constructed between the two turn lanes to guide vehicles into the correct lanes.*

### **Long Branch Station Area**

The Long Branch Sector Plan recommended a full-movement intersection on Arliss Street just north of the Long Branch Station platform, to facilitate access into the Town Center site. Therefore, in coordination with MTA and the Washington Real Estate Investment Trust (WRIT):

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- *Provide for a future northbound left turn lane into the Long Branch Town Center by either: 1) repurposing the northern portion of the proposed southbound left turn lane from Arliss Street to Piney Branch Road, or 2) adding a northbound left turn lane from Piney Branch Road to the Town Center.*

**BETHESDA METRO STATION SOUTH ENTRANCE MANDATORY REFERRAL**

The following changes should be considered:

- *On Elm Street at the intersection with Wisconsin Avenue, the existing eastbound movement should continue to permit all movements, if possible.*
- *Provide dual handicap ramps at the southwest corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Elm Street.*

In addition:

- *Should an agreement be made by mid April 2014 to demolish the Apex Building to allow an improved Bethesda station design to be built, MCDOT must submit the "alternative" Bethesda Metro Station South Entrance project design to the Planning Board as a mandatory referral. The Planning Board commits to an expedited review of a Bethesda Station area mandatory referral.*

## **CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL MANDATORY REFERRAL**

While MCDOT is the project sponsor for the Capital Crescent Trail, MTA is designing the trail. Therefore, MCDOT should work with MTA to accomplish the recommendations below.

### **General Comments**

Upon completion, the segment of the Capital Crescent Trail between Silver Spring and Bethesda will likely experience similar popularity to the existing segment between Bethesda and Georgetown. The design of the trail should reflect its importance as a facility of regional significance. Therefore:

- *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.*

The Capital Crescent Trail's importance as a bikeway will increase with the completion of this project, but a wayfinding plan has not yet been developed to direct trail users to and from the trail/bikeway. Therefore:

- *Implement a wayfinding plan on the trail at all access points and in locations beyond the trail to direct trail users to the trail.*

In many locations ramps connecting to the Capital Crescent Trail are not flared. This affects sight distance and makes it more difficult to maneuver between the trail and the ramps. Therefore:

- *All ramp connections to the Capital Crescent Trail should be flared to the extent possible to facilitate access to the trail.*

The engineering plans show a noise wall for the Purple Line located on the side of the Capital Crescent Trail that is away from the Purple Line. This could create a situation where noise from the Purple Line is augmented on the trail. Therefore:

- *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.*

### **Location Specific Comments**

The recently approved Bethesda Purple Line Station Minor Master Plan recommends that the Capital Crescent Trail "mainline route" cross over the Purple Line on a bridge and then travel along the northern edge of Elm Street Park (just south of the Purple Line) southwest to the intersection of Elm Street and 47th Street, where it branches into a "surface route" and a potential new "tunnel route." As currently designed there are two closely spaced 90-degree turns in Elm Street Urban Park. This will be difficult for many cyclists to navigate, especially cyclists with trailers, and will create a severe pinch point at a location that will experience high use. Therefore, to be consistent with the master plan:

- *Explore ways to provide a smooth transition for the Capital Crescent Trail into Elm Street Park avoiding sharp turns, including consideration of structural adjustments to the Air Rights Building garage.*

The ramp from the Capital Crescent Trail to the south side of East-West Highway would require an extremely sharp 180-degree turn to go east on East-West Highway, which will be difficult for cyclists to maneuver. It would be beneficial to have a longer landing area at the terminus to facilitate turns by cyclists, though this is complicated by the steep grade of the ramp. While this ramp has an 8.25% grade, it may be possible to create this landing area at East-West Highway by shortening the landing area at the junction with the trail. Therefore:

- *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.*

In addition, the sidewalk between the bridge and Montgomery Avenue is adjacent to the curb, even though there appears to be sufficient space for an offset. Therefore:

- *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.*

In some locations only stair access is provided to the Capital Crescent Trail, due to right-of-way limitations or other reasons. For people on bicycles this can be challenging, because carrying bicycles up stairs can be heavy and awkward, especially Capital Bikeshare bikes. Bicycle “channels” provide a groove on the side of the staircase that enables many cyclists to push their bicycles up and down the stairs. To facilitate bicycle access:

- *Provide a bicycle channel on the stairway connection to the Capital Crescent Trail at East-West Highway, Sleaford Road, and on the east side of Connecticut Avenue.*

The Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan recommends a shared use path (LB-4) on the south side of Newdale Road to connect the Capital Crescent Trail to the west side of Connecticut Avenue. Currently, engineering plans show a 5 to 6-foot-wide sidewalk in this location. MTA has indicated that “an 8-foot-wide shared use path cannot be accommodated due to the proximity of MSE Wall 1FO supporting the CCT.” However, the 30% engineering plans show a buffer between Newdale Road and this sidewalk, so it is unclear why the shared use path cannot be widened for most of its length. Therefore:

- *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 Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan recommends a shared use path (SP-82) along Coquelin Run between Jones Bridge Road and Chevy Chase Lake Drive, with a connection to the Capital Crescent Trail. The Purple Line 30% engineering plans reflect a 14-foot-wide underpass for SP-82; however, a connection between the two trails is not included. Design allowances should be included in final design so that this connection is not precluded in the future. Therefore:

- *Design the ultimate ramp connection between the Capital Crescent Trail and the Coquelin Run Trail during final design.*

Until this ramp connection is constructed, the distance between the two closest trail access points (Connecticut Avenue and Jones Mill Road) is about two-thirds of a mile, roughly a 14 minute walk. For trail users in this segment, the maximum walk time to any access point will be 7 minutes, or half the walk time from end to end. Therefore:

- *To enhance trail security, a temporary staircase should be constructed from the Capital Crescent Trail to the Coquelin Run right-of-way.*

The tie-in between the long ramp that connects Jones Mill Road to the Capital Crescent Trail appears to have inadequate sight distance. Therefore:

- *Provide a landing area between Jones Mill Road and Capital Crescent Trail that facilitates adequate sight distance and safe connections.*

To improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the Capital Crescent Trail:

- *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.*
- *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.*

In addition,

- *The gap between the two traffic islands at Station 1034+00 appears to be too narrow to adequately accommodate left turns from Jones Bridge Road.*

The proposed location of the trail in the September 2012 engineering drawings is on CSX property, within 50 feet of their track centerline, and therefore does not meet CSX's criteria for selling their property for a trail. Therefore, the best location for the trail appears to be on the south side of the tracks as shown in the 30% engineering drawings. This means that there are tradeoffs to consider between impacts to residential properties, the function of the Capital Crescent Trail, and the function of Talbot Avenue. Since this involves potential changes to circulation, emergency vehicle access, and private property, this issue will be explored in greater detail as part of the ongoing Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan. Therefore, MCDOT should work with MTA to:

- *Issue a change order to address the substandard trail width on the Capital Crescent Trail, between Michigan Avenue and Lanier Drive, if recommended by the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan.*

At this point there is no agreement between CSX Transportation and MTA to locate the Capital Crescent Trail on CSX property between Lyttonsville Road and 16th Street. If this issue is not resolved MCDOT will need to select an alternate routing for the trail. Therefore:

- *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 as a mandatory referral.*

Although Third Avenue is a low volume road, the proposed access point to the trail should avoid a mid-block crossing. Therefore:

- *Realign the trail access point to either Noyes Lane or Noyes Drive to avoid mid-block crossings.*

The connection between the Capital Crescent Trail and the Metropolitan Branch Trail is located on a channel on top of the Silver Spring Transit Center. It appears from the 30% engineering plans that the channel may narrow to about 8 feet between knee walls, which is an effective width of 4 feet after

reductions for shy distance. While this channel was constructed as part of the transit center, it remains inaccessible at this time so staff was unable to measure it. Regardless, all trails must have an effective width of at least 8 feet to be considered a shared use path. Between two knee walls this would mean the actual width would have to be at least 12 feet wide, to account for shy distance. Widening the connection between the two trails would require a change to the Silver Spring Transit Center green roof and is outside of the purview of the current Capital Crescent Trail project. However, Montgomery County should conduct a follow-up project once the Silver Spring Transit Center is complete to:

- *Investigate ways to widen the connection between the Capital Crescent Trail and the Metropolitan Branch Trail to be 16 feet upon completion of the Silver Spring Transit Center to achieve a 12-foot effective width.*

## **SILVER SPRING GREEN TRAIL MANDATORY REFERRAL**

While MCDOT is the project sponsor for the Silver Spring Green Trail, MTA is designing the trail. Therefore, MCDOT should work with MTA to accomplish the recommendations below.

### **General Comments**

Several ramps on the north side of the Wayne Avenue are shown at an inadequate width to accommodate the Silver Spring Green Trail. Therefore:

- *Ramps for the Silver Spring Green Trail should be a minimum of 8 feet wide and the trail should be pointed directly into the ramp wherever possible rather than coming in at a 90-degree angle.*

The design of the Silver Spring Green Trail should reflect its importance as a connection between the Silver Spring Metrorail station, Capital Crescent Trail, the Metropolitan Branch Trail, and the Sligo Creek Trail. Therefore:

- *Develop and implement a unique signing and branding plan for the Silver Spring Green Trail between Spring Street and Sligo Creek Parkway. Signing should be provided at regular intervals on the trail, as well as at all access points.*

### **Location Specific Comments**

With the completion of the Silver Spring Green Trail by 2020, only a one-block long segment of the trail will be incomplete. Therefore:

- *Design and construct the last remaining unbuilt and unprogrammed portion of the Silver Spring Green Trail, a one-block segment between Fenwick Lane and Cameron Street.*

The 4th Edition of the *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* states that the typical width of a shared use path is 10 to 14 feet wide, with the wider values applicable to areas with high use and/or a wider variety of user groups (page 5-3). In very rare circumstances, a reduced width of 8 feet may be used where specific conditions exist. While there is limited right-of-way along much of Wayne Avenue, there are locations where the trail could be expanded to the recommended 10 feet. Therefore:

- *Widen the Silver Spring Green Trail to 10 feet while maintaining a 5-foot-wide buffer with the curb where: 1) there is sufficient right-of-way, and 2) widening the trail would not make retaining walls higher. Candidate locations appear to be between Springvale Road and Greenbrier Drive and in front of the elementary and middle schools.*

The distance between ramps on the north side of Dartmouth Avenue is about 70 feet, even though the typical curb-to-curb distance for the rest of the road is about 25 feet. This is excessive for a residential street. Therefore:

- *Extend the curb at the northwest corner of Wayne Avenue and Dartmouth Ave to reduce the crossing distance for trail users.*

The Silver Spring Green Trail is proposed to be located adjacent to the curb at around Station 383+00, even though there appears to be sufficient right-of-way to provide an offset from the curb. Therefore:

- *Offset the trail from Wayne Avenue by building a retaining wall for the adjacent school parking lot.*



At the intersection of the Silver Spring Green Trail and the Sligo Creek Trail the connection is not flared. This affects sight distance and makes it more difficult to maneuver between the trail and the ramps. Therefore:

- *The connection between the Silver Spring Green Trail and the Sligo Creek Trail should be flared to the extent possible to facilitate access to the trail.*

The Sligo Creek Trail and the Silver Spring Green Trail will converge between the Sligo Cabin Park playground and Sligo Creek Parkway. This segment of the trail is currently a narrow sidewalk adjacent to the curb. MTA is proposing to widen the trail to 8 feet typically, and to 9 feet as it passes over the Wayne Avenue Bridge over Sligo Creek. Trail users tend to shy away from the road and bridge parapets by about 2 feet so the effective width of the trail will be only 5 feet on the bridge. This is substandard for any trail, but especially at a location where two major trails converge. Therefore:

- *The Silver Spring Green Trail on the Wayne Avenue Bridge over Sligo Creek should be widened to 14 feet (an effective width of 10 feet) to reflect expected demand. A barrier should be provided between the roadway and the trail on the bridge.*

The Wayne Avenue Bridge over Sligo Creek is a gateway to Silver Spring and should reflect its importance for motorists, train patrons, and trail users. When rebuilt, the new bridge should convey the same sense of arrival as does the East-West Highway Bridge over the Georgetown Branch in Bethesda. Therefore:

- *The existing stepped brick parapets on the Wayne Avenue Bridge over Sligo Creek should be replicated in the design of the new bridge. Ornamental lighting should be added to the bridge due to the high level of pedestrian and bicyclist activity on the bridge, as planned in the design of the existing bridge.*

The southwest corner of Wayne Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway is the receiving end of the Sligo Creek Trail but has a sidewalk width. Therefore:

- *Widen the southwest corner of Wayne Avenue and Sligo Creek Parkway to at least 8 feet. Sligo Creek Trail should be relocated behind the traffic signal pole so that users can directly access the ramp to cross Sligo Creek Parkway.*

Additional graphics that help to explain many of the comments can be found at:  
[www.mcatlast.org/purple](http://www.mcatlast.org/purple)



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

April 1, 2014

James T. Smith, Secretary  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
7201 Corporate Center Drive  
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Re: Mandatory Referral for the Purple Line

Dear Mr. Smith,

The Montgomery County Planning Board/Parks Commission reviewed and approved the Mandatory Referral for the Purple Line at our regularly scheduled meeting on March 20, 2014. Our comments to the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) are in Attachment 1, to the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) in Attachment 2, and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) in Attachment 3. As you know, this project is of statewide and regional importance. Accordingly, your assistance is requested to ensure a coordinated joint response by MTA and SHA, constituent agencies of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT).

While MTA is the overall sponsoring agency that will construct the Purple Line, this is a large and complex project that requires approvals from different agencies. Many of the major station areas are located on or near State highways and therefore the assistance of SHA is essential in achieving optimal pedestrian and bicyclist access to these stations. We believe that MDOT should take the lead to ensure the highest level of coordination between MTA and SHA, as well as input from MDOT's staff in order to achieve the best possible conditions for Purple Line passengers and surrounding communities.

While the project as currently designed is substantially consistent with the County's approved and adopted master plans, we believe that the pedestrian accommodation and station access in the project area must be improved to ensure the success of the Purple Line. The stations of greatest concern accessible by State roads are Woodside Station, located on MD 390 (16<sup>th</sup> Street), and Piney Branch Road Station, located on MD 193 (University Boulevard).

The introduction of a rail station and the land use changes recommended by approved and adopted master plans will fundamentally change the nature of many of the Purple Line station

areas from being largely focused on automobiles to being equally focused on pedestrians. Yet pedestrians are not adequately prioritized at these station areas. For example:

- MTA is appropriately proposing a marked crosswalk on MD 390 to provide access to the Woodside Station. However, the crossing as planned is unsafe because pedestrians would be directed to cross MD 390, a six-lane highway with a posted speed limit of 35 mph and an AADT of over 25,000 vehicles, without the protection of a traffic signal.
- The intersection of MD 390 and Spring Street includes an excessive crossing distance on the east leg, requiring two pedestrian signals and three refuge islands to break up the crossing. The intersection geometry also enables vehicles traveling northbound on 16th Street and turning right onto Spring Street to speed across one of the crosswalks. MTA is planning to acquire the Spring Center to the northeast of the intersection and reconstruct the Spring Street bridge over the tracks, so there is an opportunity to make major improvements for pedestrians in an area that connects the Silver Spring CBD with the Woodside Station. With the coming of the Woodside Station, the redevelopment of the Spring Center site after construction of the Purple Line, the completion of the Fenwick Place development at the southwest corner of Spring Street and Second Avenue, an approved redevelopment of the north Falklands parcel, and the potential redevelopment of the southeast corner of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street/Spring Street intersection, this pedestrian crossing will become far busier than it is currently.
- The proposed Piney Branch Road Station is one of only two Purple Line stations along the entire 16 mile alignment that have a single-ended platform. Station access is from the north side of the platform, so passengers coming from the south have to walk out of their way to get to the station. The longer travel time would decrease the station's catchment area and therefore its ridership. The Long Branch Sector Plan recommends a traffic signal at the intersection of MD 193 (University Boulevard) and Gilbert Street to not only improve station access, but also to facilitate a connection between the Sligo Creek Trail and the Long Branch Trail to the Northwest Branch Trail. SHA has not yet agreed to provide this traffic signal.

A thorough review of this project is needed with the goal of meeting both AASHTO recommendations for pedestrian facilities and ADA Best Practices at a minimum; the use of both of these policies is recommended by the Federal Highway Administration in providing access to transit stations.

James T. Smith, Secretary

April 1, 2014

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In commercial areas, a higher level of accommodation is required to ensure that transit patrons have safe and adequate access, that potential patrons are encouraged to use the Purple Line and justify the State's and County's significant investment in this facility, and to support and promote transit-oriented development. Needed improvements within the Purple Line corridor should be completed in the near term, with the rail facility itself. Other longer term improvements will probably be needed to enhance station access, improvements that will require a partnership between SHA and MCDOT as the P3 design progresses. It is important, though, that additional improvements be identified and dealt with as quickly as possible and responsibility assigned so that construction can be expedited.

Embedding the Purple Line tracks on University Boulevard is of particular importance in this coordination effort. While we concur with the decision to repurpose two travel lanes on University Boulevard for the Purple Line, we believe that this transitway should be accessible to the County's planned bus rapid transit service unless it is clearly demonstrated that this would have a negative effect on overall transit service.

In addition, we request assistance from the SHA for access to our facility at Long Branch Local Park. The Purple Line will restrict access (no left turns in and out) to the community center and pool facilities along MD 320 (Piney Branch Road). MTA has committed to constructing a new driveway for the park to connect to the Barron Street signal, which will allow for left turns out of the park, but left turns in remain a problem. While this is a state highway, the park includes County facilities. We would like MDOT and SHA to work with M-NCPPC, Montgomery County Department of Parks and Montgomery County DOT to find a way to allow left turns into the park directly from Piney Branch Road, particularly during large community events and swim meets at the park; this would eliminate the need to make circuitous detours on County streets through the neighborhood to make the turn.

While MTA is only required to meet minimum MDE standards for stormwater management on this project, there appear to be significant opportunities to retrofit existing untreated impervious areas that drain through the project area to help mitigate some of the existing water quality issues along this urban corridor. M-NCPPC requests that MDOT view this as an opportunity to provide additional stormwater management treatment to these areas and continue to work with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Parks to determine stormwater management opportunities within the impacted watershed. Additionally, it is imperative that the design team identify ways to maximize on-site treatment, ensure impervious runoff is actually intercepted, and balance the treatment facility

James T. Smith, Secretary

April 1, 2014

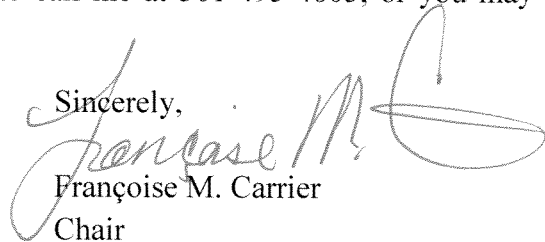
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capacity with the impervious areas draining to them. There is significant potential to address the state and local water quality goals by combining the efforts and funding of various agencies through this process.

Finally, I would like to ask that you identify a point of contact for issues that require a high level of coordination. This person would provide a way to make you aware of issues that come to our attention and have them addressed as efficiently as possible.

Thank you for your assistance in coordinating a joint response from MDOT that reflects coordination between MTA's and SHA's responses to the individual Planning Board/Parks Commission recommendations, as well as any necessary input from your staff. We request that these responses be provided to us within 45 days. If you have any questions or comments concerning our review, please do not hesitate to call me at 301-495-4605, or you may call David Anspacher of our staff at 301-495-2191.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Françoise M. Carrier". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Françoise M. Carrier

Chair

Attachments

Attachment 1: Planning Board Comments to MTA

Attachment 2: Planning Board Comments to SHA

Attachment 3: Planning Board Comments to MCDOT

Cc:

Jamie Kendrick

Mike Madden

Stuart Montgomery

Jeffrey Folden

Sean Johnson

Gary Erenrich

Glenn Orlin