

Responses to Questions regarding the Purple Line and Associated Projects

On September 28 the County Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment (T&E) Committee invited staffs from the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), Purple Line Transit Partners (PLTP), and Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) to a meeting to answer questions regarding the implementation of the Purple Line and its associated projects: the Bethesda Metro Station Southern Entrance, the Capital Crescent Trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring (including the Interim Trail during construction), and the Silver Spring Green Trail along Wayne Avenue east to Sligo Creek Park. The Committee asked that written responses to all questions be provided by October 12.

On October 12 MCDOT provided to the Council responses regarding the Interim Trail and other County-related issues; they are shown below. MTA notified Council staff that it would need until next Tuesday, October 17 to provide responses from it and PLTP. When those responses are received, they will be circulated and posted on the Council's web page.

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Many suggestions have been offered to County DOT as to how to improve the currently designated interim trail, as well as identifying a second route through the Chevy Chase. (The Chevy Chase municipalities may wish to give a statement at this meeting.) What is County DOT's process and time-frame for identifying interim trail improvements?

We have received many good suggestions and have implemented changes as a result of suggestions received and other improvements identified by our engineers as a result of our review of the route. We are also continuing to work with the Town of Chevy Chase on a southern route for the alignment. As suggestions are received, staff reviews them in the field. These are categorized into improvements that can be made immediately, improvements that can be implemented in the coming weeks or months and improvements that will require more time or resources to implement as part of a more comprehensive project. Examples of immediate improvements include additional signage and removal of signs that were causing confusion to users attempting to follow the alternate trail alignment. Examples of medium term improvements include rerouting the alignment through East Bethesda to allow southbound/westbound users to use Cheltenham Drive and Woodmont Avenue instead of Pearl Street and Montgomery Avenue, adding pavement markings to Pearl Street and Maryland Avenue or working with the Bethesda Urban Partnership to install bike racks on the free Bethesda Circulator, which intersects the alternate trail route. We are also reviewing master plans to determine if any portion of the bicycle or pedestrian facilities called for in the master plan can be implemented quickly. Those master plan improvements that can be implemented quickly are considered medium term improvements, while full implementation of master plan improvements are considered long term improvements. Regardless of the timeframe required to complete these, we are committed to making improvements that not only provide immediate benefit to the alternate trail route, but that also provide lasting benefit to the community.

What are the County/State noise ordinances crews need to abide by?

MTA should respond to questions regarding applicable State noise ordinances. With the exception of construction of the Plymouth Tunnel, construction within the Silver Spring Transit Center, construction along and within the Purple Line alignment between Colesville Road and the intersection of Ramsey Avenue and Bonifant Street, and pile driving operations performed Monday through Friday pursuant to COMAR 25.02.03.02, or an approved noise waiver, the following maximum noise levels apply during construction work:

Monday - Friday Weekends/Holidays - Residential Zones

7 AM to 9 AM: 85 dBA

9 AM to 7 PM: 85 dBA

7 PM to 10 PM: 65 dBA*

10 PM to 7 AM: 55 dBA*

Monday - Friday Weekends/Holidays – Non-Residential Zones

7 AM to 9 AM: 85 dBA

9 AM to 7 PM: 85 dBA

7 PM to 10 PM: 67 dBA*

10 PM to 7 AM: 52 dBA*

Weekends/Holidays – Residential Zones **

7 AM to 9 AM: 55 dBA

9 AM to 7 PM: 65 dBA

7 PM to 10 PM: 65 dBA

10 PM to 7 AM: 55 dBA

Weekends/Holidays – Non-Residential Zones **

7 AM to 9 AM: 62 dBA

9 AM to 7 PM: 67 dBA

7 PM to 10 PM: 67 dBA

10 PM to 7 AM: 62 dBA

* or ambient dBA, whichever is higher, and up to 85 dBA with approved Noise Waiver

** or ambient dBA, whichever is higher

How and where will the East Bethesda neighborhood have access to the completed trail?

East Bethesda will have access via new trail connections at Pearl Street, both sides of East-West Highway, Sleaford Road and Kentbury Way.

Can the County/MTA/PLTP provide access to cross the trail at least in one place like at Lynn Drive or Pearl Street? This would make it MUCH easier for people and kids to bike/walk to the CCT trailhead and downtown Bethesda during the 5 years of construction (especially with other construction planned in the area).

Could there be a temporary bridge constructed from Pearl Street to Elm Street park for bikers and walkers?

There is a permanent bridge that will be built at this location to allow access across the Purple Line from the north side of the tracks to the trail connection to Elm Street Park. The County will inquire of MTA and PLTP whether this can be completed and made available to the community early.

What is the design/specifications of the trail (and tunnel) from the Pearl Street access point through the new trail tunnel and onto Bethesda Avenue?

It is not clear whether this question refers to the sidewalk in the Purple Line tunnel under 355 or to the future tunnel through Carr Properties redevelopment of the Apex building. MTA would need to answer questions about the sidewalk. The Carr redevelopment project provides a 16' wide by 14' high opening in which to finish a future tunnel. It does not daylight at Bethesda Avenue, rather it connects to the current CCT trail in Woodmont Plaza. The continuation of the tunnel from Carr's eastern property line (fronting Wisconsin Avenue) under MD 355 would daylight near Elm Street Park. This future project is under design by MCDOT.

What safety improvements will be made to the alternate/interim trail during construction?

The County has already implemented a number of safety improvements both prior to the trail closure and since the trail closed, including:

- Reconstructed the Jones Bridge Road/Jones Mill Road traffic islands and crosswalks to better accommodate cyclists.
- Constructed numerous spot improvements such as grinding down grade differences in sidewalks along the route to provide a smooth ride and ensure ADA accessibility, replaced sub-standard utility patches in the sidewalk (some are complete, more are in progress), reconstructed ADA ramps, added VMS signs to alert drivers to the presence of cyclists, etc.
- Added signage to better direct users from existing trail heads to the alternate route.
- Added signage to better direct users along the alternate route.
- Removed old signs for Georgetown Branch Interim Trail that were causing confusion.
- Verified the timing of signals is adequate for pedestrians and cyclists along the route.
- Initiated a traffic study of the Pearl Street in front of Our Lady of Lourdes/BCC High School. It is nearly complete and is awaiting feedback for Our Lady of Lourdes as some improvements impact their parking. Elements of the plan include constructing missing sidewalks, sharrows on Pearl, new crosswalks, etc.
- Evaluated modifying the route to utilize Cheltenham and Woodmont. This had previously been on hold due to anticipated construction impacts associated with Marriott. We recently received Marriott's first designs and are able to route Southbound/Westbound users via this route. We are working to complete the design and implement it. We expect the design to be complete in a month or so.
- Evaluated master plan improvements on Woodmont and Montgomery to determine what portions of the master plan can be implemented.
- Added a bike lane to Pearl between Montgomery and 410.
- Worked with MNCPPC to address signing and ADA improvements in Rosemary Hills Park.
- Installing signage to add the shared use path on the north side of Jones Bridge Road to the designated route. This requires eastbound users to cross Jones Bridge Road twice at Connecticut (a signalized intersection) which is why it was not deemed a preferred route previously but is

being added based on community input.

- Reviewed signage guiding trail users along the entire route as well as signage and markings that alert vehicles to the presence of cyclists. Signing and marking upgrades are under consideration for the entire route.
- Reviewed the intersection of Spencer and Grubb for potential pedestrian safety improvements. A pedestrian refuge island will be installed.

How wide is the median between the trail and the tracks between Bethesda and Connecticut Avenue? Will it be planted/landscaped or gravel/gravel/another non-green surface? What are the plantings proposed?

This question is best addressed by MTA. However, it is the County's understanding that the typical trail is 12' wide with 2' shoulders on each side, except where physical constraints such as existing right-of-way or existing structures prevent the full width. Likewise, the median width varies. There are places where it is 6 feet to 8 feet wide, and some where it is much wider, near the bridge over Connecticut Avenue and some where it is narrower in area east of the Air Rights Building which is tightly constrained. In all cases, there is a fence between the tracks and the trail. In most locations, the buffer has a grass swale in it to handle drainage. MTA will need also need to address the portion of the question related to plantings.

What measures will be in place to ensure construction traffic doesn't overtake residential streets nearby? Who will oversee coordinating this with several potentially very disruptive projects all scheduled to occur in downtown Bethesda during the next several years?

The County has requested that MTA provide it with its current schedule and regular schedule updates. We have not received this information. Our intent in requesting this is to identify potential impacts, not only in Bethesda but along the entire alignment in Montgomery County. Where we have been able to identify potential conflicts between developer and Purple Line construction, there has been coordination as is the case with Carr's redevelopment of the Apex Building in Bethesda or the Elizabeth Square Development in Silver Spring.

Is the trail completely funded? Is the Wisconsin Ave tunnel completely funded? If not, when will full funding be in place?

The trail is completely funded. The future tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue is funded for design only. The timing of construction funding is subject to future appropriation of funds.

How much is the trail projected to cost? How much is the tunnel projected to cost?

The cost of the Capital Crescent Trail is \$61,197,000. There is not enough information at this time to estimate the cost of the future tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue.

What stands in the way of implementing the proposal for a revised Art-in-Transit for the Talbot Avenue Bridge elements that was proposed by Charlotte Coffield and Roger Paden? Could the County do anything to help realize this proposal?

The County understands that PLTP and MTA have issued contracts to the selected artist and questions regarding potential changes to the Art-in-Transit program are best answered by MTA. We also understand the artist's work depends greatly on input from the community and will rely on the community as a source of information and photographs to document the history of the community and the importance of the bridge in that history. The County is certainly willing to work with PLTP and MTA should they decide to implement any proposals that arise from the artist's interaction with the

What plans will be made for the businesses in the 16th Street area to compensate them for the closing of their businesses due to construction? Will they be fully compensated? In Portland, the city provided low cost loans to businesses that were impacted by the construction period. Will the county do the same?

The Purple Line Community Development Agreement, as organized by the Purple Line Corridor Coalition, calls for an examination of the forms of assistance that can be provided to local businesses, be it from private, philanthropic or public sources.

Will light cycles at signalized intersections be controlled by the Purple Line (will it always be green for the Purple Line)?

Signals along Wayne Avenue are owned by the State, but maintained and operated by the County. The signals will be phased and timed to balance traffic, pedestrian and train operations.

Would it be possible for members of the community to meet with representatives of MCDOT/MTA about some pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures surrounding the new Talbot Avenue bridge? Whom should we contact?

Requests for traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures in areas surrounding the new bridge should be directed to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations at 240.777.2190. Additional information can be found at the following URL: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-traffic/>

Would it be possible for members of the community to meet with representatives of MCDOT/MTA about altering the route of the temporary Capital Crescent Trail, or perhaps supplementing the planned route? Whom should we contact?

Inquiries regarding the alternate route for the Interim Georgetown Branch Trail may be directed to Patricia Shepherd, Bikeway Program Coordinator at 240.777.7231.

Who will have responsibility for maintenance of the trail/surrounding area as well as enforcement of local laws along the bicycle trail?

Montgomery County will own and maintain the completed Capital Crescent Trail.