

T&E COMMITTEE #3
July 20, 2009

MEMORANDUM

July 16, 2009

TO: Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee
FROM: Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Staff Director
SUBJECT: Update—Metropolitan Branch Trail facility planning study

At the request of Councilmember Ervin (©A) the Committee has asked the Department of Transportation (DOT) to provide an update on the status of its facility planning study for the Metropolitan Branch Trail, a planned hiker-biker trail that would roughly parallel the CSX Metropolitan Branch between the Silver Spring Metrorail Station and Montgomery College's Takoma Park campus, eventually extending through the District of Columbia to Union Station. Portions of this trail have been built, including a small segment next to Montgomery College's Takoma Park campus. The facility planning study is to produce detailed plans for the portion of the trail between the Silver Spring Metro Station and Montgomery College. DOT staff will brief the Committee about its activities over the past three years and address questions.

Background. In FY04 the Department of Transportation undertook Phase I facility planning (a feasibility study) to determine alternatives, among which one would be selected for Phase II facility planning (preliminary engineering). Just under \$1.3 million was programmed for these studies.

Phase I was completed in 2006. On May 18, 2006 the Planning Board reviewed the Phase I work and recommended proceeding with Option 1, a route along the east side of the tracks, crossing Georgia Avenue on a bridge, following along Selim Road to a tunnel under Burlington Avenue, and then turning onto King Street to reach Fenton Street. This route was preferred by most bicycling advocates and by the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board as well. In early 2008 DOT estimated that the project would cost about \$20-26 million (in 2008 dollars, i.e., without inflation to mid-point of construction). The T&E Committee reviewed the study on June 26, 2006 and also recommended Option 1 (©B). For background, the packet for the Committee meeting is attached.

DOT completed preliminary engineering of Option 1 by early 2008, and at that time it asked several agencies for concurrence, including the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Montgomery College, State Highway Administration, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, and CSX. DOT received concurrence from SHA for a bridge over Georgia Avenue (US 29). But it has not heard definitively from CSX, and without its concurrence the project cannot be built as planned. This is a primary reason why the Executive has not yet recommended it for construction funding in the CIP.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALERIE ERVIN
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 5

April 15, 2009

To: Arthur Holmes, Director, Department of Transportation
Nancy Floreen, Chair, Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment
Committee

Re: Status of the Metropolitan Branch Trail

With ongoing construction of the Silver Spring Transit Center and adjacent projects in the Ripley District, I am requesting an update on the status of the Metropolitan Branch Trail project. Last year, the Department of Transportation (DOT) reported that their progress was stalled due to ongoing negotiations with CSX. The Committee asked that DOT provide Council with an update when negotiations had proceeded and new cost estimates were available.

I would greatly appreciate a full update on the project in June so that it can be considered for funding in the FY11-16 Capital Improvement Program. I believe that the Metropolitan Branch Trail is critical to downtown Silver Spring and needs to be constructed in tandem with the Silver Spring Transit Center so that the Center's goal of being a multi-modal transit Center can be realized.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Valerie Ervin".

Valerie Ervin

c: Bruce Johnston, Division Chief Capital Projects and Construction, Department of
Transportation
Edgar Gonzalez, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy, Department of
Transportation
Rollin Stanley, Director, Montgomery County Planning Department
Roylene Roberts, Acting Director, Silver Spring Regional Service Center
Glenn Orlin, Deputy Director, Montgomery County Council

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(A)



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

MEMORANDUM

June 29, 2006

TO: Arthur Holmes, Jr., Director
Department of Public Works and Transportation

FROM: Nancy Floreen, Chair
Transportation and Environment Committee

SUBJECT: Metropolitan Branch Trail project

On June 26, 2006 the T&E Committee reviewed the results of Phase I facility planning for the Metropolitan Branch Trail project. The Committee concurs with the Planning Board's recommendation that Option 1 in the Project Planning Prospectus—the master-plan option—should proceed to Phase II of facility planning (see the attached May 25, 2006 letter to you from the Board). We recognize that the alignment of the planned trail bridge over Georgia Avenue may need to be altered somewhat to allow for sufficient visibility of the traffic signals at the Georgia Avenue/Sligo Avenue intersection.

The Committee appreciates the work the Department of Public Works and Transportation has completed to date on this project. We look forward to the completion of Phase II facility planning for the Metropolitan Branch Trail project by the winter of 2007/2008 so that we can consider the project for funding as part of the FY09-14 Capital Improvements Program.

cc: Councilmembers
Derick Berlage, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board

(B)

T&E COMMITTEE #4
June 22, 2006

MEMORANDUM

June 20, 2006

TO: Transportation and Environment Committee
FROM: ^{GO} Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Staff Director
SUBJECT: Facility planning review—Metropolitan Branch Trail

Committee members are encouraged to review the executive summary and the section on public and stakeholder outreach from the Draft Project Planning Prospectus (©1-6), the Planning Board's recommendations (©7-8), the packet prepared by M-NCPPC staff (©9-25), and representative testimony and correspondence (©26-34). Together this material contains all the pertinent background information and it generally will not be repeated in this memorandum.

The Council appropriated funds under the Facility Planning—Transportation project for the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) to evaluate means for building a new shared use trail generally along the CSX Metropolitan Branch between the Silver Spring Metro Station and a completed section of this trail adjacent to Montgomery College's Takoma Park campus. DPWT has completed Phase I of facility planning for this project: the feasibility study stage.

This worksession is the opportunity for Committee members and other interested Councilmembers to provide informal feedback to DPWT as to whether to proceed to Phase II of facility planning—the detailed planning stage that will produce the precise project scope and develop reliable estimates of cost and community and environmental impact—and if so, what should be studied. DPWT will be ready to proceed to Phase II soon after this review. Phase II will take about 18 months to complete; on that schedule a Metropolitan Branch Trail project could be proposed for design and construction in the FY09-14 Capital Improvements Program (early 2008).

On May 18 the Planning Board reviewed this study, and it recommends proceeding with the Phase II study. The Board transmitted its detailed comments in a letter to DPWT (©7-8). During this worksession, DPWT staff will present the results of the Phase I analysis, and M-NCPPC staff will elaborate on the Planning Board's comments.

Analysis. Of all the options, three have emerged as the primary candidates for further study:

- *Option 1*, the master-planned option, which includes a new bridge over Georgia Avenue (MD 97) and a tunnel under Burlington Avenue (MD 410). It provides the best level of service for bikers, and will cost \$17-22 million. It is recommended by the Planning Board and the East Silver Spring Civic Association. If not for its cost, it would be the first choice of most stakeholders.
- *Option 5*, which provides a connection from the Silver Spring Transit Center to Montgomery College at the least cost (\$7-10 million) but at the least level of service, requiring bikers to dismount and walk their bikes across the 5'10"-wide walkway on the existing bridge over Georgia Avenue, a new trail built along the south side of the Philadelphia Avenue and Old Philadelphia Avenue rights-of-way (removing many on-street parking spaces), and crossing Burlington Avenue and a few local streets at grade. This option is favored by DPWT.
- *Option 5 Modified*, which is the same as Option 5, except that it includes a new bridge over Georgia Avenue and would simply designate Philadelphia Avenue as a shared use roadway (a.k.a., a Bike Route or a Class III Bikeway), although a shared use path would still be built along Old Philadelphia Avenue next to Fenton Street Urban Park. This option would cost \$10-12 million. It is proposed by the Planning staff as an interim to the ultimate master plan configuration (Option 1). It also is supported by the Washington Area Bicyclists Association, the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, and others, but also only as an interim to Option 1.

The cost issue should be central to the decision about this section of the Metropolitan Branch Trail. To put the costs in context, merely the *difference* in cost between Option 1 and Option 5—\$10-12 million (total length for either option: about 0.6 miles)—is roughly the same as the *combined* cost of the Matthew Henson Trail and the Silver Spring Green Trail (combined length: about 5.1 miles). Building the least expensive Option 5, at a cost of \$7-10 million, would still make it one of the most expensive bikeway projects ever built in the County. Nevertheless, the potential high use of this trail, which will be a piece of the regional trail network, merits a design that will transport bikers safely and conveniently.

The key elements of this trail should be: (1) that it clearly connect between the Metro Station and Montgomery College (where the Metropolitan Branch Trail currently extends from the south); and (2) that it cross Georgia Avenue safely and smoothly. Council staff concurs with the Planning Board, Planning staff, and other stakeholders that a new bridge, 12-14' wide between the parapets, should be built over Georgia Avenue. This would be sufficient for bikers to travel over Georgia Avenue rather than having to dismount for a 158' distance on the existing bridge.

The Burlington Avenue crossing is not as much of an impediment to bikers as is the Georgia Avenue crossing, and with a few specific improvements it would be even less of a deterrent. Most important is to reconstruct the intersection to eliminate the channelized free-right turn lane from southbound Fenton Street to westbound Burlington Avenue which, if not

removed, would continue to place free-flowing vehicles in the path of bikers and pedestrians. The plan for the Fenton Street Urban Park—which sits on that corner—calls for eliminating the free right-turn eventually anyway. The intersection is not a congestion bottleneck: according to the latest traffic count (in 2005) it had a Critical Lane Volume (CLV) of 1169, which is Level of Service C (and just barely worse than the Level of Service B threshold of 1150 CLV).

Therefore, a safe and convenient trail could be created in the interim by following the Planning staff's recommendation for Option 5 Modified, at a savings of \$7-10 million. Option 5 Modified also has the advantage of implementing the safety improvements at the Burlington Avenue/Fenton Street intersection and building a master-planned shared use trail along the west side of Fenton Street between Burlington Avenue and King Street; neither are part of Option 1.

Council staff suggests one minor revision to Option 5 Modified: that the trail be a shared use roadway along Old Philadelphia Avenue, and not a shared-use path next to it in Fenton Street Local Park. Old Philadelphia Avenue is merely an industrial street cul-de-sac and has almost no traffic; for this interim option Council staff does not see the rationale for creating a separate path over this one-block stretch.

Council staff recommendation: Proceed under Facility Planning Phase II to study Option 1, as well as Option 5 Modified (with the minor revision noted above) as a staged element of Option 1. Carrying Option 1 into Phase II would provide the detailed cost and scope information that the Council will need in early 2008 to make its programming decision. However, stakeholders should be prepared for the strong possibility that Option 5 Modified would be selected as the project to be built in the FY09-14 CIP—it accomplishes much of benefit that Option 1 would provide—and that, indeed, the master-planned improvement may be more than a decade off.

The \$7-10 million additional cost of Option 1 would be significantly reduced if the State Highway Administration were to rebuild the Burlington Avenue bridge over CSX with a longer span, even if the County were asked to participate in the cost of the longer span. However, the bridge's replacement is not scheduled in the most recent Consolidated Transportation Program. The last full inspection of the bridge was in 1998, and SHA found that the current bridge was in good condition, so it is unlikely that the State would consider replacing the deck or abutments for at least a decade, and possibly longer.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) has completed Phase I Facility Planning study for the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) from the proposed Silver Spring Transit Center to the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus of Montgomery College (refer to Figure #1, Location Map). The Metropolitan Branch Trail is included in the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, February 2000, as well as the 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan. The proposed path will be a shared-use off-road facility to accommodate a wide range of users such as children, pedestrians, recreational and commuter cyclists. A high level of use is anticipated on this trail since it provides commuters with an alternative mode choice and connects the campus of Montgomery College and the proposed Silver Spring Transit Center.

This project will extend the existing MBT by 0.6 miles from the Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus of Montgomery College to the proposed multimodal Silver Spring Transit Center. This will bring the trail length to 1.1 miles and completes the MBT in Montgomery County. It will also connect to the Capital Crescent Trail through Bethesda, to the C&O Canal Trail. This trail segment is one of the vital components of a 27-mile loop around the Capital.

Five trail alignment options have been developed as part of this Facility Planning study (refer to Figure #2). Input on the options was sought through the public participation from property owners, businesses and the public. Input from agencies was also sought. This prospectus provides background information on the alignment options that have been studied, compares the options (Table #1 and Table #2) summarizes the public input (Appendix G) provides an assessment of the environmental resources, and includes the study recommendations. A brief description of each of the Options is provided below:

- Option #1 follows Selim Road and is the most direct alignment. It has a grade separation at Georgia Avenue (proposed bridge) and Burlington Avenue (proposed tunnel) and a retaining wall between Selim Road and the CSXT/WMATA rail lines. It requires one business relocation.
- Option #2 follows the south side of Philadelphia Avenue and is less direct than Option #1. It has a grade separation at Georgia Avenue (proposed bridge), an at-grade crossing of Burlington Avenue (MD 410), and impacts 21 properties, including one business relocation.
- Options #3 follows the north side of Philadelphia Avenue and is less direct than Option #1. It has a grade separation at Georgia Avenue (proposed bridge) an at-grade crossing of Burlington Avenue (MD 410) and impacts 22 properties, including one business relocation.
- Option #4 follows Selim Road and Philadelphia Avenue and is slightly less direct than Option #1. It has a grade separation at Georgia Avenue (proposed bridge) a retaining wall along Selim Road next to the railroad, an at-grade crossing of Burlington Avenue and impacts 12 properties, including the relocation of three businesses.
- Option #5 follows the south side of Philadelphia Avenue and is less direct than Option #1. It impacts 9 properties and requires the relocation of one business. This Option has an at-grade crossing of Burlington Avenue (MD 410) and requires bicyclists to dismount to walk across the walkway on the existing Georgia Avenue bridge.

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The advantages and disadvantages of each alternative have been summarized in Table #1. A more detailed comparison is provided in Table #2.

Study Recommendations

This Study included a review of design information developed through facility planning, and information on potential impacts and public input. The benefits and impacts associated with each Option have been weighed. The study indicates that Option #1, is the most direct alignment, however, due to the safety and maintenance of the proposed tunnel, the close proximity to CSXT/WMATA tracks, and the high cost to implement, this Option is not recommended. Therefore, Option #5, which impacts the least number of properties, is recommended as an interim trail alignment and should proceed to Phase II.

Considerations for Phase II Facility Planning

Some Phase II Facility Planning activities for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Project have begun. Horizontal and vertical alignments and right-of-way work has been completed. There are a number of considerations for the Trail project as Phase II Facility Planning work moves ahead. The following activities will need to occur:

- Refinement of the engineering on the selected alternative to confirm right of way acquisition requirements, ADA compliance, soil borings, storm water management analysis, and to assess impacts to public parking and traffic movements.
- Coordination with MD SHA regarding trail crossings of Georgia Avenue (MD 29) and Burlington Avenue (MD 410).
- Coordination with CSXT and WMATA regarding proximity of trail alignment to the railroad corridor and acquisition of needed right-of-way.
- Coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust regarding the alignment impacts on their easement at the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station and on the abandoned underpass/walkway beneath the railroad.
- Consultation with Montgomery County Health and Human Services Department regarding potential impacts to Progress Place. Determination will be needed on whether the project will involve modification of the building or the relocation of social services.
- Coordination with the Silver Spring Transit Center Project to assure that the final alignment and elevation of the trail is accommodated in the transit center design.
- Initiation of contact with property owners or business owners who will be impacted or relocated including 1050 Ripley Street and the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station.
- Coordination with the following plans:
 - BiCounty Transitway project: to assure that alternatives under study are compatible.
 - Fenton Gateway Park: to integrate the MBT trail into the plan for the Park.
 - Ripley District redevelopment activities.

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Section IV Public and Stakeholder Outreach

Public Meetings

In January 2005, the Study Team identified three options on which it sought input. Option #1 followed the same alignment as the recommended Option from the M-NCPPC's Facility Plan report. Options #2 and #3 proposed new alignments along Philadelphia Avenue. Therefore, because they were new alignments, additional effort was made to solicit input from those potentially impacted property owners along Philadelphia Avenue.

Philadelphia Avenue Property Owner Meeting

Property owners along both sides of Philadelphia Avenue were invited to attend a meeting held on January 27, 2005 at the nearby Takoma Campus of Montgomery College. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the conceptual alternatives for Metropolitan Branch Trail alignments and to solicit comments on the alternatives. In total, 21 property owners were invited, but only 3 people attended the meeting.

Details on the background of the project and its context in relation to local and countywide planning efforts were provided. Display boards showing Options #2 and #3 along Philadelphia Avenue were available and handouts of all three options with descriptions of the trail details were provided to attendees. Project Team staff was available to answer questions regarding the project and its possible impacts. It was explained that Options #'s 2 and 3 shown for the Metropolitan Branch Trail were developed to work with the existing land uses and the planned 70 foot right-of-way for Philadelphia Avenue. If and when the Fenton Street Park is funded for design, the trail would be modified to be compatible.

Questions were answered regarding parking impacts, project timeline, and some specific design considerations.

Public Informational Meetings

The first public meeting was held from 6:30 - 8:30 PM on **March 22, 2005** at M-NCPPC offices in Silver Spring. The purpose of the meeting was to share information about the status of the project and the three alignment options under consideration for the trail. Notification of the meeting was mailed to those citizens whose names appeared on the County's GIS data base. The meeting announcement was also posted on the DPWT's news website.

Display boards at the meeting showed the County's project development process, existing and proposed regional bike routes, a project location map, and alignment details for the three proposed MBT Options. Conceptual renderings of the proposed new Georgia Avenue bridge were also shown. A handout was provided with a description of each option, a location map, and a comparison of the options. Written comments from attendees were solicited through a comment card that was distributed. A matrix of public comments is included in Appendix G.

The public comments were compiled and this summary was reviewed with the Study Team.

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- Overall support for the trail was expressed. Option #1 was preferred by the attendees who expressed a preference.
- Numerous people were concerned with the at-grade crossing of Burlington Avenue.
- Two frequent bicyclists indicated that if Option #2 were selected, they would not use the portion of the trail along Philadelphia Avenue due to concerns with sight distances at the driveways as well as business traffic in and out of the building entrances. They thought they would feel safer on the street.
- It was observed that a section of the Capital Crescent Trail with an at-grade crossing on a heavily traveled road is underutilized. It was noted that there was a marked increase in use of a trail when an at-grade crossing was converted to a grade separation.
- The owner of the King Street Garage expressed concern about losing a substantial part of his parking lot.
- Concern was expressed that a Philadelphia Avenue alignment would adversely impact the Sunday parking situation for Jesus House, DC, on Philadelphia Avenue.
- Concern was expressed about impacts to the Linden trees along Selim Road.
- One person was pleased that none of the options required the stairways along Georgia Avenue to be removed.
- Someone was pleased that the Capital Crescent and Metropolitan Branch trails will connect with the Silver Spring Transit Center directly, and concern that the Green Trail may not tie directly in to the Center.
- There were numerous questions about the project schedule.
- A number of people were concerned about project cost.

A second public meeting was held from 6:30 - 8:00 PM on **November 22, 2005** at M-NCPPC offices in Silver Spring. The purpose of the meeting was to share information regarding new options for the MBT developed since the last public meeting in March of 2005. The public was notified about the meeting and the meeting announcement was posted on the DPWT's news website.

Display boards at the meeting showed alignment details for the five options under consideration, existing and proposed conditions for the Georgia Avenue Bridge, and a project location map. The alignment details for Options #4 and #5 were presented to the public for the first time.

Option #4 takes the trail south from a new bridge over Georgia Avenue across to Selim Road connecting with Old Philadelphia Avenue through to be acquired property at 903 Selim Road and 906 Philadelphia Avenue. From Old Philadelphia Avenue the trail would travel along Fenton Street to connect with the existing trail south of King Street.

Option #5 would utilize the existing pedestrian walkway across Georgia Avenue. The trail would cross Selim Road at-grade and then travel along the south side of Philadelphia Avenue to Old Philadelphia Avenue to reach the west side of Fenton Street. The trail would continue along Fenton Street connecting with the existing trail south of King Street.

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At the meeting, written comments were solicited through distribution of a comment card. The public comments are shown in Appendix G and are summarized below:

- Attendees expressed support for Option #1 since it is most direct and provides grade separated crossings.
- Option #4 has an indirect route.
- More information is sought on estimated costs of Options, especially since cost seems to be driving the project design.
- Coordination with WMATA was cited as a cost factor. WMATA coordination was not an issue on the New York Avenue Station area portion of the Metro Branch Trail.
- For a major regional bike facility, Option #5 has inadequate width along the existing walkway along the Georgia Avenue Bridge.
- Attendees were concerned about an at-grade crossing of Burlington Avenue.
- A suggestion was made for phased project implementation (Silver Spring Transit Center to B&O Station; Bridge over Georgia Avenue; Selim Road/Philadelphia Avenue to Fenton Street and Fenton Street @ Burlington Avenue to Montgomery College).
- As an interim measure, the trail should be placed on-street along Philadelphia Avenue, which has low traffic volumes. This would eliminate the need for right-of-way acquisition along Philadelphia Avenue in the interim, until Option #1 or #3 can be implemented.
- Attendees suggested utilizing an on-street alignment along Philadelphia Avenue as opposed to a side path since the traffic volumes are low.
- One person asked about the method of notifying people about project meetings.

Other Coordination

Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station Meetings

Two meetings have been held to coordinate this project with the historic B&O Station:

October 19, 2004 Meeting: Project staff met with Ms. Nancy Urban, the Station Manager. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the initial concepts for the MBT and to solicit feedback from Montgomery Preservation, Inc. (MPI) on their preference for the trail to extend in front of or to the rear of the station building. Ms. Urban provided information to the Team on the daily and special event use of the Station building, the tenant's needs for daily parking, and general concerns about potential impacts of a new Georgia Avenue bridge on the historic character of the site. A request was made for Montgomery Preservation to submit a letter indicating a preference for the front or rear trail alignment.

December 29, 2004 Meeting: Project staff met with Mr. Wayne Goldstein (President of Montgomery Preservation Board (MPI), Ms. Nancy Urban, and Mr. Jerry McCoy of the Silver Spring Historic Society. Staff presented photo renderings of potential bridge crossings in response to a request that MPI had made. There was discussion about the potential impacts to on

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site parking with the options. There was discussion about the historic status on the pedestrian tunnel under the railroad tracks between the station buildings. It was explained that this is the beginning of an on-going project coordination process. A request was made for MPI to send a letter indicating their preference for front or rear alignment.

February 10, 2005 MPI Letter: In the letter sent to the County, MPI expressed support for the trail project and indicated a preference for the rear alignment. The letter also noted the conditions under which it would grant the easement for rail through their property. The letter can be found in Appendix B.

Historic Preservation Meeting December 29, 2004: Project staff met with Ms. Gwen Wright, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Supervisor, to provide her with project information and to discuss future coordination on historic preservation matters. She advised staff to contact MHT to verify any historic status for the bridge over Georgia Avenue. Staff advised her of the potential impacts to the underpass between the Station B&O Silver Spring buildings. She advised that there will need to be preliminary consultation with the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission regarding the underpass. Notes from the meeting are included in Appendix B.

Progress Place

Progress Place is a county owned building located at 8210 Colonial Lane in the Ripley District. The building is adjacent to the CSXT railroad tracks. The rear portion of Progress Place would be impacted by the portion of the MBT alignment extending west of Georgia Avenue to connect with the Silver Spring Transit Center. Since a portion of the building is situated adjacent to the railroad right-of-way, it is not possible to provide a direct connection to the Transit Center and avoid impacts to the building.

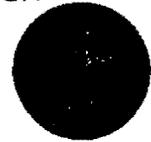
On November 18, 2004, project engineers and architects met with agency staff at Progress Place to discuss the potential impacts of the MBT on the facility. This site visit provided the Team an opportunity for viewing of interior structure and building space. Agency staff explained the building uses. Partial building plans served as the basis for developing a preliminary cost estimate for modifying Progress Place to accommodate the MBT and replace the impacted building area. These costs have been included in all of the Options.

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
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THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Office of the Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board
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May 25, 2006

023353

Arthur Holmes, Jr., Director
Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation
101 Monroe Street, 10th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Holmes:

At its May 18, 2006 meeting, the Planning Board held a public hearing on the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase I Facility Planning Project Prospectus. After hearing the planning staff recommendation for a modified Option 5 (see attached staff report) and receiving oral and written testimony from more than a dozen people, the Board unanimously recommended that Option 1 be carried into Phase II Facility Planning. Option 1 is the Sector/Master Plan alignment that provides for a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue and a new tunnel under Burlington Avenue (MD 410). It was the construction alternative recommended in the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Facility Planning study that was approved by the Planning Board in early 2001 and subsequently transmitted to Department of Public Works and Transportation.

The Board views a fully grade-separated trail as integral to and consistent with the County's multimillion-dollar investment to revitalize downtown Silver Spring. The alignment and design proposed under Option 5, and recommended by your staff, is wholly inadequate for a regional trail that is expected to generate nearly as many trail users as the Capital Crescent Trail in Bethesda after the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC) opens: 150-300 trail users per hour on weekends and 50-150 trail users on weekdays. The trail will serve as the principal non-motorized connection to the SSTC from Montgomery College and east Silver Spring neighborhoods. This 0.6-mile segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) is also a critical link in the regional trail system that connects Silver Spring with Union Station in the District, and with Bethesda and points west via the future Georgetown Branch Trail and BiCounty Transitway.

The Board is aware of and sensitive to the projected high cost of implementing Option 1. It believes that the planning staff recommendation for a modified Option 5 could save some money in the short term and that the alignment may be suitable as the interim trail. However, we believe that *interim* trails, particularly those like the MBT with complex alignments and issues, often become facilities that last 20-years or longer. As a result, the Board strongly recommends that the County make the proper investment now and not delay further the implementation of the Sector/Master Plan alignment.

Montgomery County Planning Board, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Phone: (301) 495-4605, Fax: (301) 495-1320, E-mail: mcp-chairman@mncppc-mc.org, www.mncppc-mc.org

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Arthur Holmes, Jr.
May 25, 2006
Page 2 of 2

Should you have any questions about the Board's decision or about planning staff recommendations, please call Chuck Kines in Transportation Planning at 301-495-2184.

Sincerely,



Derick P. Berlage
Chairman

DPB:CK:gw
Enclosure

cc: George Leventhal, Montgomery County Council President
Gary Stith, Director, Silver Spring Regional Service Center
Gwen Wright, Acting Chief, Countywide Planning
Rick Hawthorne, Chief, Transportation Planning
Glenn Kreger, Community Based Planning
Dan Hardy, Transportation Planning
Charles Kines, Transportation Planning
Larry Cole, Transportation Planning

ltr to holmes re MBT

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May 4, 2006

MCPB
ITEM NO. _____
5-18-06MEMORANDUM

To: Montgomery County Planning Board

Via: Gwen Wright, Acting Chief *GW by RCH*
Countywide Planning Division

Richard C. Hawthorne, Chief *RCH*
Transportation Planning

Glenn Kreger, Takoma Park/Silver Spring Team Leader *GK*
Community Based Planning

From: Charles S. Kines: (301-495-2184) Transportation Planning Coordinator *CK*
for the Park and Planning Department

Project: Metropolitan Branch Trail, Phase I Facility Planning
Montgomery College Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus to Silver Spring Transit
Center

Review Type: Project Prospectus

Applicant: Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation

Applying for: Agency Comments

Community-Based Planning Team Area: Takoma Park/Silver Spring

RECOMMENDATION: TRANSMIT COMMENTS TO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION (DPWT).

Staff recommend that the Planning Board transmit the following comments on the proposed project to the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation:

1. Proceed to Phase II of Facility Planning for a modified Option 5 that would include the following changes from the Project Prospectus:
 - a. Carry the trail over Georgia Avenue on a new pedestrian/bicycle bridge;

- b. Travel down Philadelphia Avenue as a signed shared roadway rather than as a shared-use path/hiker-biker trail; and
 - c. Travel along a shared-use path wrapping around Fenton Gateway Park connecting to and crossing Burlington Avenue (MD 410) at grade.
2. Consider dividing implementation of the project into three distinct phases:
- a. Phase 1 would include the trail segment between the Silver Spring Transit Center and Georgia Avenue;
 - b. Phase 2 would include the bridge over Georgia Avenue to the intersection of Philadelphia Avenue and Gist Avenue; and
 - c. Phase 3 would include the trail/route segment from Gist Avenue along Philadelphia Avenue and Fenton Street to the new pedestrian bridge over the CSX tracks at Montgomery College.

This would allow the County to spread implementation costs over time. It also would allow the County to implement the less complex segments during the first two phases, deferring the third and most difficult phase for a few years, thus allowing the County more time to study various alternatives and more precisely determine potential property impacts and engineering costs.

3. The Phase II facility planning efforts should include consideration of:
- a. Minimizing impacts to the historic B&O railroad station;
 - b. Incorporating "green" technology into the design of the trail via consideration of environmentally progressive drainage systems, paving surfaces, and amenities such as trash cans and benches;
 - c. Trail lighting;
 - d. Other Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) initiatives.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This facility planning study is intended to result in a project that would construct a ten-foot-wide shared-use path/hiker-biker trail between the Silver Spring Transit Center and the Montgomery College Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, a distance of about 0.6 miles. The project would complete the 1.1-mile segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) in Montgomery County.

MASTER PLAN GUIDANCE

The MBT is referenced and recommended in numerous master plans, including the 2000 Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD) Sector Plan, the 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan, and the 1995 Bicycle Plan for the National Capital Region (scheduled to be updated in 2006). The project is also the subject of a Facility Plan by Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning, approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board in January 2001.

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STAFF ANALYSIS

Context

The MBT is a part of the regional off-road hard surface trail system, connecting with other major trails such as the Capital Crescent Trail, the Rock Creek Trail, the Sligo Creek Trail (via the proposed portion of the Silver Spring Green Trail, to be constructed as part of the Silver Spring Transit Center) and the C&O Canal Towpath. See Attachment A, "Silver Spring Area Bikeways and Trails." While the segment studied as part of this project is only 0.6 miles in length and is intended primarily to connect the College campus with the Silver Spring Transit Center, the facility is also a critical link for regional bikeway connectivity and non-motorized transportation. The facility is not just recreational.

The trail continues south through the District of Columbia ultimately connecting to Union Station. Heading northwest, the trail connects to the Georgetown Branch Trail, which traverses Rock Creek Park (and the Rock Creek Trail) enroute to Bethesda where the trail becomes the Capital Crescent Trail and takes trail users to Georgetown, as well as to the C&O Canal Towpath. As a result, the quality of the trail experience is critical. Well-designed, grade-separated crossings of major roads are highly desirable.

The trail should be considered a key strategy in the County's toolbox to achieve and maintain the 50% non-auto driver mode share in the Silver Spring Transportation Management District (SSTMD). Each bicycle or pedestrian traveling along the path could mean one less car on the roads of the Silver Spring CBD. Including a section on the SSTMD would strengthen the Final Project Prospectus.

Connectivity

Numerous destinations will be connected by this project, including the college campus, the transit center, Progress Place/Shepherd's Table, and the historic B&O Railroad Station. As part of the larger bikeway/trail network, the trail ultimately will also provide connections to Takoma Park, Union Station in the District of Columbia and Bethesda and Georgetown via the Capital Crescent Trail.

Alignments studied

DPWT studied five options. See Attachment B, "Project Location Map With Five Options" and Attachment C, "Figure 2 - Detailed Comparison of Alignment Options." All options include a 10-foot trail parallel to the railroad tracks between the transit center and the B&O Railroad Station. For photographic renderings of the proposed designs for the bridge over Georgia Avenue, see Attachment D, "Photographic Renderings of Georgia Avenue Bridge Options."

Design alternatives for the options begin to differ at the Georgia Avenue crossing and then heading east. As a result, the descriptions of the five options below focus solely on issues and alignments east of Georgia Avenue. Likewise, with the exception of Option 1, all options

include an at-grade crossing of Burlington Avenue (MD 410; signalized) at Fenton Street, removing the free right turn lane from southbound Fenton Street onto westbound Burlington and extending the curb line, and thus shortening the distance to cross Burlington Avenue. Finally, for all options except number one, the trail is shown bisecting the future Fenton Gateway Park. To maximize park development potential, *staff recommend that any trail at this location be routed around the northern and eastern edges, rather than through the middle.*

The primary issues regarding the Phase I study relate to the cost-effectiveness of alternative techniques for crossing Georgia Avenue (US 29) and Burlington Avenue (MD 410). On several occasions over the past year, planning staff and bicycle advocacy groups have requested from DPWT more details on cost breakdowns for major components of all the options. The DPWT response is that the multiple alignments often analyzed in Phase I studies are not considered with sufficiently detailed engineering plans to provide reliable cost estimates.

Planning staff has utilized available information from DPWT to develop very sketch-level comparisons of the five Options described in the Project Prospectus. Planning staff agrees with DPWT that the cost of any selected alternative may change substantially as more detailed studies are completed in Phase II, yet the cost information provides an order-of-magnitude for comparing the cost of one alternative against another. Based on the available cost information:

- Staff concurs with the Project Prospectus recommendation that the cost of pursuing the tunnel under Burlington Avenue is not cost-effective at the present time, particularly since the tunnel option actually reduces valuable trail connections within the CBD.
- Staff disagrees with the Project Prospectus recommendation to use the existing six-foot-wide sidewalk on the CSX/WMATA Bridge to cross Georgia Avenue, because cyclists would be forced to dismount and a long-term commitment to maintain the sidewalk for public use is not available from WMATA or CSX. Planning staff feels a separate new bridge for the trail is needed to accommodate the large number of anticipated trail users.

Each of the Options is described in greater details below:

- **Option 1** is the master plan alignment studied and endorsed by the Planning Board in 2001. It includes a new separate pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Georgia Avenue and a new pedestrian/bicycle tunnel under Burlington Avenue (MD 410). Selim Avenue would be narrowed to accommodate the parallel trail and the intersection of Selim and Philadelphia avenues would be realigned to accommodate the new bridge landing. The proposed alignment also would require a retaining wall between Selim Avenue and the railroad right-of-way where steep grades exist.
 - Cost estimate: \$17M - \$22M.
 - Comments and Analysis: The study concluded that this alignment is still the preferred alignment in the long term. Full grade separation at both Georgia and Burlington Avenues would guarantee a high quality trail-user experience consistent with the Capital Crescent Trail and most sections of the Metropolitan Branch Trail in the

District of Columbia. However, the study concluded that the tunnel under Burlington Avenue may be very costly and the site very constrained due to proximity to the railroad right-of-way and existing supports for the Burlington Avenue overpass/bridge.

The Option 1 tunnel would also have expected operating budget impacts to the Silver Spring Urban District (SSUD) that would be responsible for regular maintenance. The SSUD repeated has stated that it does not support the tunnel and would prefer not to assume daily maintenance (sweeping, cleaning, trash removal, etc.) if and when the tunnel is ever built. Because the tunnel is located in an area not clearly visible from public areas and rights of way, the SSUD fears the tunnel may become a gathering spot for illegal activity and related squalid elements.

Staff also believes that personal safety issues need to be resolved, not just for the tunnel itself but also for the tunnel approach on King Street, which is not a through street and has no street-activating land uses. In the short term, staff does not believe it is worth pursuing the tunnel. However, in the long term the tunnel could be implemented when the Burlington Avenue bridge is fully replaced by State Highway Administration (SHA). At that time, the trail could be realigned by either the County or SHA to connect trail segments to the tunnel.

- **Option 2** takes the trail over Georgia Avenue on a new bridge landing just south of Philadelphia Avenue, then jogs north along Selim Avenue to connect to Philadelphia Avenue. The path runs along the south side of Philadelphia Avenue in the master planned right-of-way, impacting nine properties. Philadelphia Avenue would not be redesigned or reconfigured. The path would bisect the future Fenton Gateway Park before crossing Burlington Avenue and heading south toward the College campus.
 - Cost Estimate: \$11M - \$14M.
 - Staff comments and analysis: This alignment is not desirable due to required property acquisitions along Philadelphia Avenue, as well as adverse impacts on the current and future land uses along Philadelphia Avenue. The off-road trail would run along the property frontages of numerous automobile-oriented businesses, and as a result, cars would likely be frequently parked on or across the trail. Enforcement would be a persistent problem. Staff believes this Option would cause as many problems as it solves.

- **Option 3** is similar to Option 2, except the trail would run along the north side of Philadelphia Avenue and require the redesign and reconstruction of the entire road, making it one-way eastbound with perpendicular parking spaces. The option would also remove the connection between Gist and Sligo Avenues. The alignment would require numerous new driveways along both Philadelphia and Gist Avenues and require two at-grade trail crossings of Philadelphia Avenue as well.
 - Cost Estimate: \$14M - \$17M.

- Staff comments: Staff believes redesigning Philadelphia Avenue is unnecessary and undesirable. This option causes the largest number of property impacts. Running the trail along the north side of the road would require two additional at-grade trail crossings, creating two new potential points of conflict. Staff feel this option would cause too much disruption to the area for very little benefit in return.
- **Option 4** carries the trail over Georgia Avenue on a new bridge, but then takes the trail south along the south/west side of Selim Road for a short distance before crossing the road and connecting to the future Fenton Gateway Park by cutting through two properties (requiring two buildings to be torn down).
 - Cost Estimate: \$17M - \$22M.
 - Staff comments/analysis: Staff does not believe this is a practical option; there are too many unknowns and several unnecessary property impacts (including business displacement and land acquisition). In addition, the cost estimates are equal to Option 1, which is clearly the highest desirable alignment. It makes no sense to spend as much money on a less-than-desirable alignment. The alignment offers no additional benefits to Option 1.
- **Option 5** is recommended by DPWT for Phase II Facility Planning. It takes the trail over Georgia Avenue on the pedestrian walkway on the existing WMATA/CSX bridge, then travels north along Selim to connect to Philadelphia Avenue. The trail runs along the south side of Philadelphia Avenue, but is different from Option 2 in that the trail would be built within the existing right-of-way (as opposed to master planned) and not cause any direct property impacts. The trail then bisects the future Fenton Gateway Park to reach the Fenton Avenue/Burlington Avenue intersection.
 - Cost Estimate: \$7M - \$10M.
 - Staff comments/analysis: This option was developed in response to cost concerns raised by DPWT management for the other four options. DPWT held a public meeting in November 2005 just to present this new option to the public. The new option was not well received by many members of the project team, the general public, or bicycle and trail advocacy groups who attended the meeting.

The alignment carries the trail over Georgia Avenue on a pedestrian path that is inadequate for bicycle travel; it is too narrow for shared-use by both pedestrians and bicyclists. DPWT would require bicyclists to dismount and walk their bicycles across the bridge. Staff believes this requirement is unrealistic and likely to be ignored by most bicyclists. The MBT is identified and recognized as one of the region's "spine" bicycle trails. A six-foot-wide bridge is woefully inadequate for high volumes of trail traffic that would need the full width recommended in national bikeway design guidelines – fourteen feet.

Even with the dismount requirement, planning staff is not convinced that using the existing bridge meets national safety guidelines or that WMATA/CSX will permit perpetual use of the bridge for a trail expected to generate high volumes of bicycle and pedestrian traffic. When the new Silver Spring Transit Center is opened (on a parallel study/construction schedule), staff estimates that the MBT will achieve trail user numbers as high, or nearly as high, as the Capital Crescent Trail: 300-500 trail users per hour on weekends, 50-150 users per hour weekday. With such high numbers of anticipated trail users, the bridge will become a clogging point for trail users, causing conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists, and creating a significant public hazard and a nuisance.

DPWT views this alternative as the interim solution, enabling them to complete the project in a short period of time and delay the high up-front capital and engineering costs anticipated with Option 1. However, staff believes that once the interim trail is completed and opened, the momentum to further study the trail and complete the master plan alignment will be lost; the Option 1 concepts studied by DPWT and endorsed by the Planning Board in 2001 may be forgotten and future funding may be spent elsewhere.

The primary benefit of this option is a lower capital cost (bridge) than the other options. Staff believes the County should spend the money, or commit to spend the money (phasing) required to develop a high quality trail – particularly a high quality crossing over Georgia Avenue – and to spread the costs of the trail by dividing the project into phases.

- **Option 5 modified (planning staff recommendation).** This takes the trail across Georgia Avenue on a new pedestrian/bicycle bridge and then takes the trail route down Philadelphia Avenue as a shared roadway (bicyclists) and the existing sidewalk (pedestrians). The trail would then be on a new shared-use path going around the future Fenton Gateway Park, ultimately connecting to the Fenton/Burlington Avenue intersection.
 - **Cost Estimate:** Planning staff believes less than Option 2, but more than Option 5. This option would include a new bridge over Georgia Avenue (\$1M, plus construction and engineering) but not impact any properties east of Georgia Avenue. Staff estimates the cost at about \$10M - \$12M.
 - **Staff comments/analysis:** This option provides the highly desirable new bridge crossing of Georgia Avenue while impacting very few properties east of Georgia Avenue. Staff recognizes this option is not entirely consistent with the prior facility planning study, however a temporary diversion from the master plan alignment in the short term would allow the County time to fully study and make a genuinely informed decision on the tunnel, perceived as a complex component of the project. In addition, running the trail down Philadelphia Avenue – a low volume local street – may actually end up working in the long term, in part because it connects directly to Fenton Gateway Park (whereas Option 1 would not) and because the on-street route would allow more visibility for trail users.

This option would cause fewer impacts than Option 2 and provide advantages over Option 5 for a number of reasons. First, Option 5 modified does not require property acquisition along Philadelphia Avenue. Not only will this reduce project cost, but it also has fewer impacts to existing businesses and to existing on-street parking. Second, the new bridge over Georgia Avenue would meet national bikeway design standards and likewise will be able to handle the high number of anticipated trail traffic when the Silver Spring Transit Center is complete and the new performing arts center at the college is also completed.

Property and Parking Impacts

All options impact public parking and properties, particularly east of Georgia Avenue. Attachment B describes all the impacts. The number of private properties (mostly businesses along Selim and Philadelphia Avenues) ranges from nine properties with option 5 to 22 properties with Option 3. Option 2 impacts 21 properties, with Option 1 impacting 11 and Option 4 impacting 12. However, acreages are not always proportionate with the number of impacts. Option 4 leads the way with 1.06 acres of fee simple right-of-way impacts, with Option 1 following closely behind at 0.94 acres. Option 3 impacts 0.71 acres, Option 2 impacts 0.59 acres and Option 5 impacts 0.41 acres. Option 1, 2, 3, and 5 require the relocation of one business, while Option 4 would require relocation of three businesses.

Estimated public parking impacts range between 18 spaces for Option 1 to 39 spaces for Option 5, with Options 2 to 4 having 32, 24, and 26 respectively. All options will cause a loss of parking spaces at the Historic B&O Railroad Station.

Environmental

Environmental Planning staff finds that the trail causes no direct environmental impacts. There are few natural environmental features in the proposed trail corridor. However, in Phase II of the project there are several issues that should be addressed, including:

- ***Green space connectivity.*** The Metropolitan Trail represents an opportunity to create a corridor that provides a green experience providing comfort for the user traveling through an industrial area. A greener corridor/trail with adequate tree coverage will provide shade and reduce glare during hot summer months. The landscape plan should ensure that the user is presented with a series of park spaces or other destinations that are connected with tree lined streets. Green “wedges” or plantings separating the user from traffic is highly desirable.
- ***Low-impact design.*** Silver Spring is one of the most urbanized areas of the County and any public project should aim to minimize urban heat island effects. Pavement type should be reflective to reduce radiation and cool the temperature of surrounding air, thus reducing smog. Several trail pervious pavement types should be considered and/or the trail should use a low-impact design with bio-retention gardens to reduce rainwater runoff.

- **Green building/development concepts.** Trail amenities such as benches and trash receptacles should be reclaimed or recycled products.

Historic Preservation

All options would impact the B&O Railroad Station, a museum with offices that is also used for private parties and public educational events. This historic site is on the Montgomery County *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* and the National Register of Historic Places. The property's owners (Montgomery Preservation, Inc.) generally feel the trail would be an asset to the facility, bringing many new patrons to the site and generating some exposure. However, they are concerned about loss of on-site parking and the trail's impact on the station's platform, which is currently used as an outdoor spillover space for private parties and public events. DPWT and its consultants met with the property owner in April 2005 to discuss the impacts and potential mitigation measures. Specific impacts will not be known until Phase II of the project and additional coordination will be required. All changes within the environmental setting of the B&O Railroad Station will need to be reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation Commission via the Historic Area Work Permit process. There will be a high level of scrutiny of any changes that would make the Station less viable as a visitor destination.

The WMATA/CSX Bridge is a contributing feature of the National Register eligible Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad. It has not yet been evaluated or designated as part of the county's *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Generally, Historic Preservation Planning staff would not recommend altering the existing bridge to accommodate the trail. Given Transportation Planning Division staff belief, in order for the existing bridge to meet current national bicycle and pedestrian guidelines, it would need to be modified to at least include a higher fence to discourage trail users from throwing items onto Georgia Avenue, it may be preferable from a historic preservation standpoint to construct a new bridge adjacent to the existing bridge with a compatible new design (as recommended in several of DPWT's options).

Park Impacts

Fenton Urban Park (also known as Fenton Gateway) is currently an underutilized 0.286-acre park on Fenton Street north of Burlington Avenue (MD 410). The Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan recommends that the park be expanded through the acquisition of private property – a process that began in 2002 – and notes that the Fenton Street/Burlington Avenue intersection may need to be reconfigured.

At this time, the facility plan for the expanded park is not programmed. Since the type of facilities and their layout within the park are unknown, it cannot be assumed that a trail alignment that bisects the park will not affect the future park design. *Staff recommend the trail follow the street right-of-way around the park* (for Options 2 to 5, as well as 5A), which will also maximize visibility for trail users. For these options Planning staff has repeatedly asked DPWT to show the path going around the park, not through it. The trail alignment proposed in these options would ensure that the trail connects to both public parks in south Silver Spring, Fenton Urban Park and Jesup Blair Park (via the new pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks. Option 1 would only link to Jesup Blair Park.

Additional Design Issues To Consider During Phase II Facility Planning

- **Lighting.** Unlike the Capital Crescent Trail, the MBT would be open to the public 24 hours a day. As a result, the lighting of the trail and related on-street routes would require sufficient lighting to ensure personal safety and to illuminate trail users for motorists.
- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.** The current land uses immediately east and west of Georgia Avenue are occupied only during daylight hours. Because this trail will be used at night, particularly by college students traveling to the transit center, it will need to be designed to maximize sight distances and visibility, so that trail users can be seen and heard from all points along the trail. In addition, the trail will need to avoid what trail planners call the "cattle chute effect," which occurs when a trail passes through an area with high walls or fences on each side of the trail and the trail's user feels trapped when he/she encounters danger. This is one concern about the tunnel under Burlington Avenue (MD 410) and actually makes a case to run the trail down a public street like Philadelphia Avenue and ultimately through or adjacent to the future Fenton Urban Park.

HISTORY OF PROJECT AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

The *Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch Trail* (MNCPPC, 2001) was the first comprehensive study of the trail; it identified the preferred trail alignment from the transit center to the DC line, running the trail parallel to the railroad tracks, crossing Georgia Avenue on a new bridge and passing under Burlington Avenue in a new tunnel. The section between D.C. and the College campus is nearly completed, with a few gaps including the bridge over Piney Branch Road (MD 320). This project essentially is the last remaining segment to be implemented.

In June 2003, the County initiated this project study and held the first project team meeting. The project team met six times since then, with public meetings on March 22, 2005 and November 22, 2005. A separate public meeting just for affected Philadelphia Avenue property owners was held on January 27, 2005. DPWT project team members also held individual coordination meetings with the managers of both the B&O Railroad Station and Progress Place, representatives from the Montgomery Historic Preservation Board, and the project team members of both the BiCounty Transitway and the Silver Spring Transit Center.

The Transportation Subcommittee of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board met with DWPT staff on at least one occasion to discuss the project. However, the Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee has not submitted any comments on the project to DPWT project team staff.

COORDINATION EFFORTS

All options would require significant coordination with WMATA and CSXT with the trail alignment running parallel to rail lines, as well as for utilizing the existing bridge over Georgia Avenue recommended in Option 5. Options 1 to 4 require coordination with SHA on the new bridge over Georgia Avenue. Option 1 also requires coordination with SHA for the tunnel under Burlington, while options 2 to 5 require coordination with SHA for the removal of the turn lane from southbound Fenton Avenue to westbound Burlington Avenue.

RELATED PROJECTS

1. **Silver Spring Transit Center/BiCounty Transitway.** These are interrelated projects as far as the trail is concerned; the transit center's design is critical for a good trail connection to and through the station ultimately crossing Colesville Road above grade. Both vertical and horizontal alignments are critical to ensure a seamless trail connection. The MBT project will build the trail to the southern edge of the transit center property, while the SSTC project will construct an interim trail connection from the southern property edge to Colesville Road. Ultimately, the BiCounty Transitway project will construct the permanent trail through the SSTC area if/when a light rail alignment is selected to run alongside the CSX right-of-way.
2. **Silver Spring Fire Station.** When the new Silver Spring Fire Station Number One was designed (and is currently under construction), the County set aside a 35-foot easement to accommodate the future MBT alignment.
3. **Progress Place.** The proposed trail alignment would pass through the existing building and require the County to relocate Progress Place or redesign the building. This site will be further impacted by the realignment of Silver Spring Avenue/Dixon Avenue extended, should the implementation of these master plan roadways be reinitiated via redevelopment projects. The cost estimates above include the cost to redesign the building and/or replace the impacted building area to accommodate the trail.
4. **Midtown Silver Spring (KSI Condos).** This project is located at the corner of Ramsey Avenue and Bonifant Street. The Project Plan was approved on March 23, 2006 and the Preliminary Plan is currently under review. The applicant will be constructing the north side only of Ripley Street extended. The alignment of the MBT as it passes parallel to Ripley Street is undetermined because the ultimate alignment of the street is under discussion but as of yet undetermined.

CK:gw
Attachments

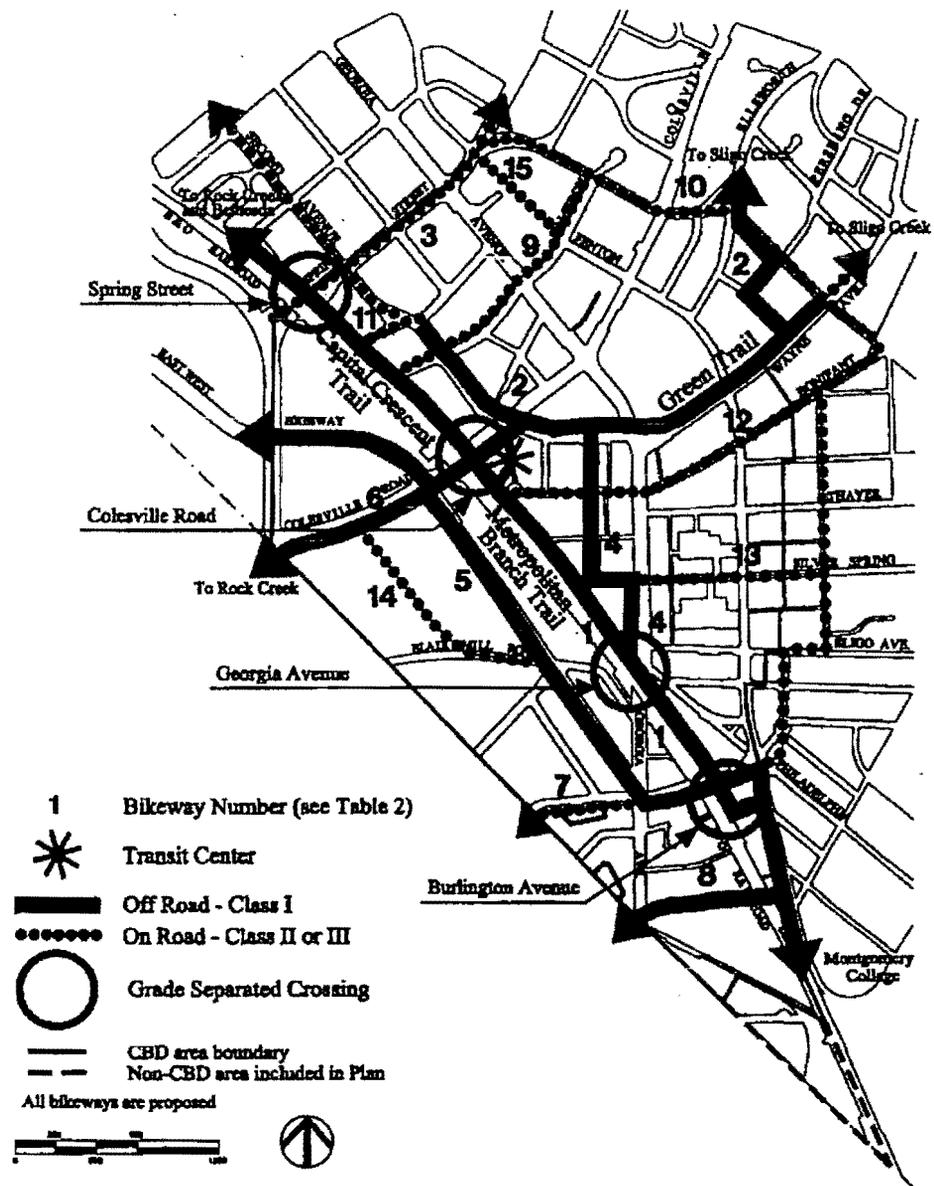
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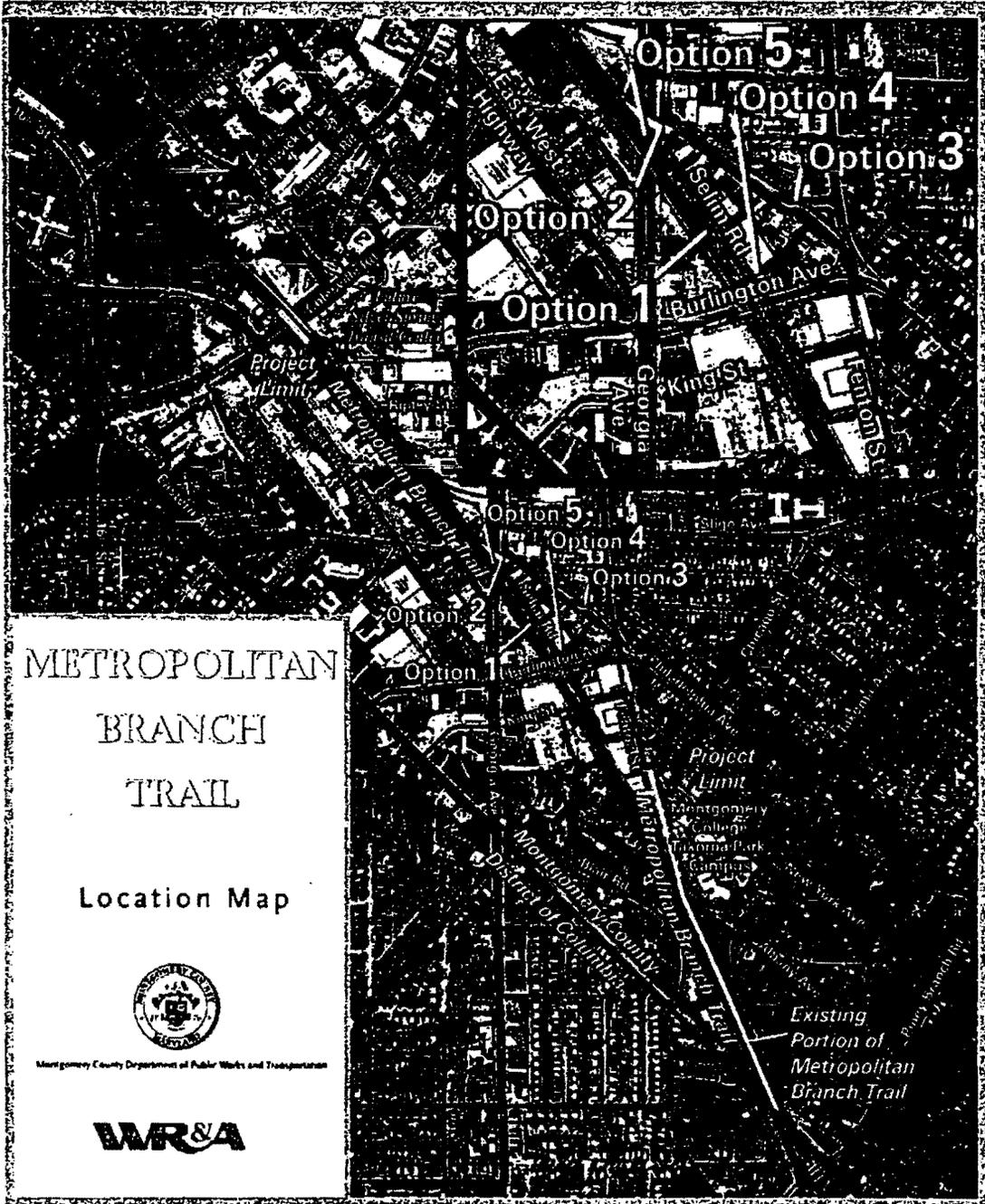
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Attachment A. Silver Spring Area Bikeways and Trails

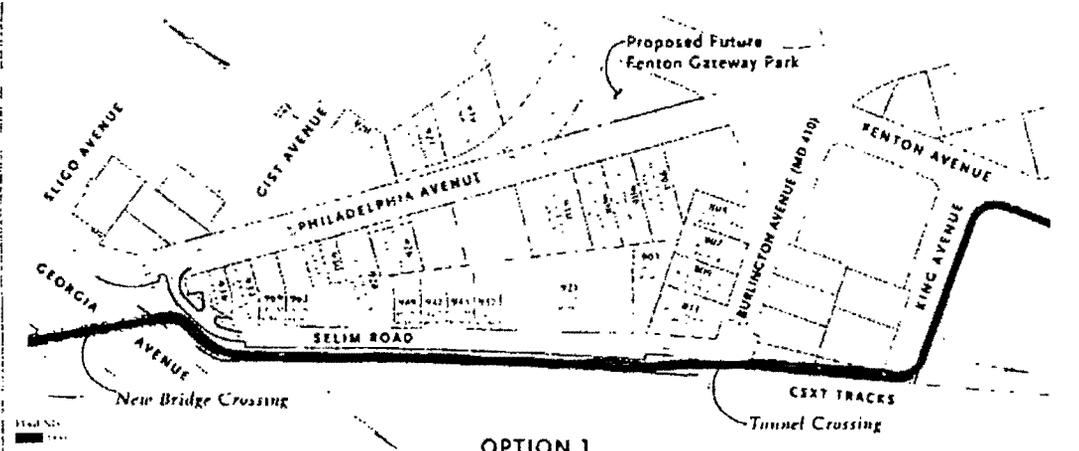
(Source: Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan)



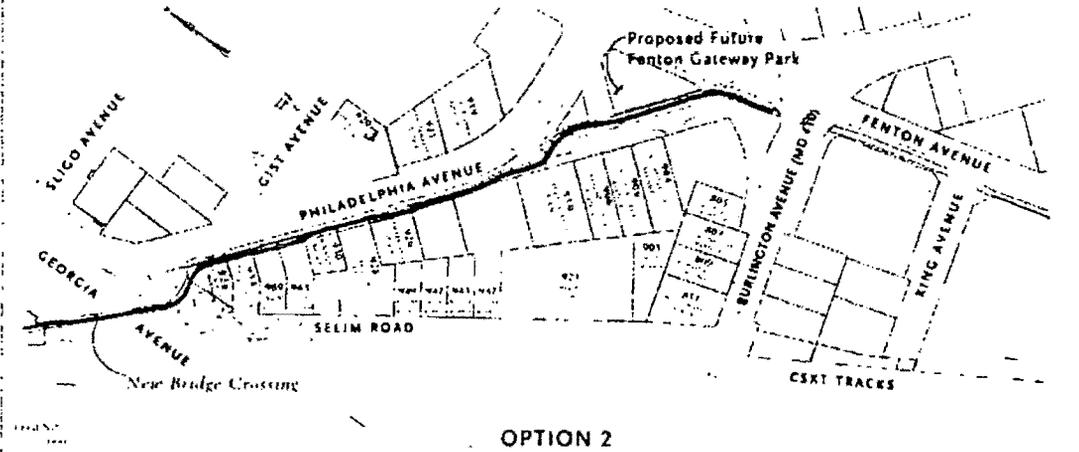
Attachment B. Project Location Map With Five Options



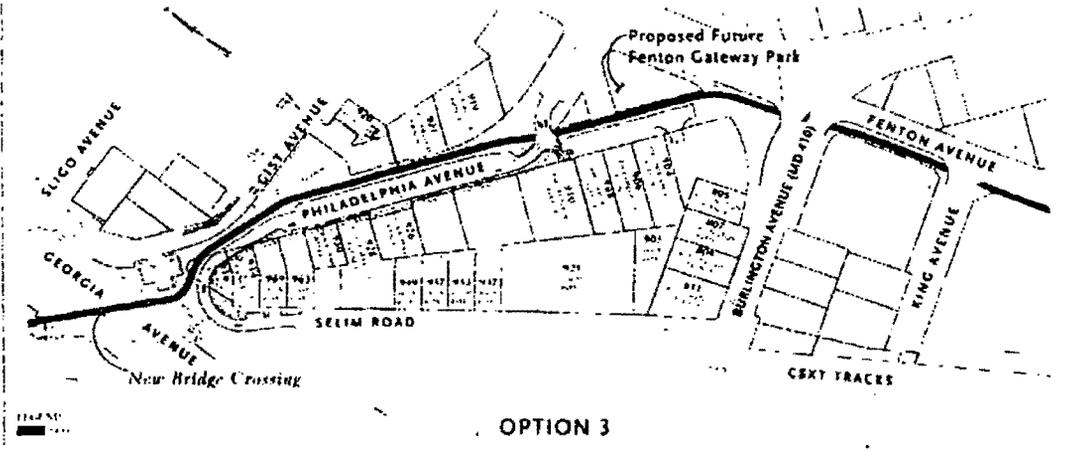
METROPOLITAN BRANCH HIKER/BIKER TRAIL



OPTION 1

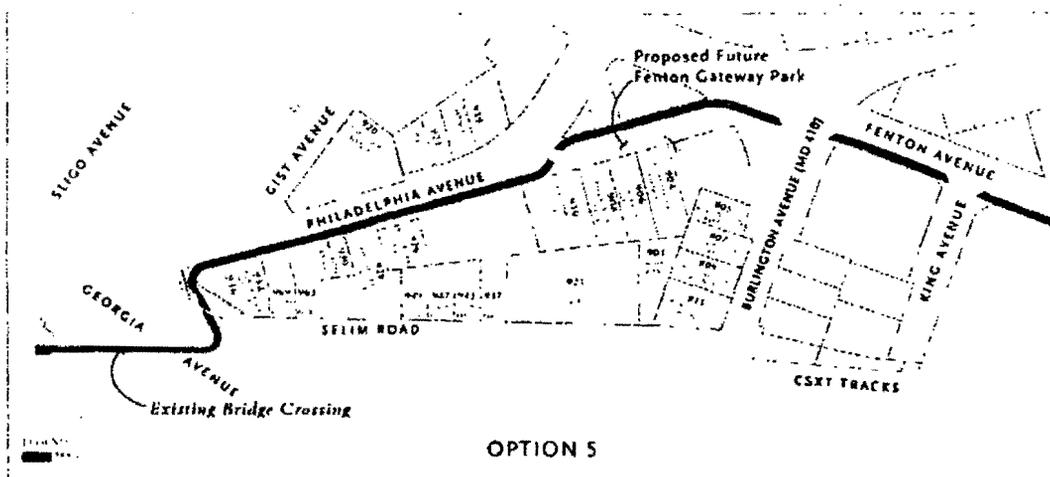
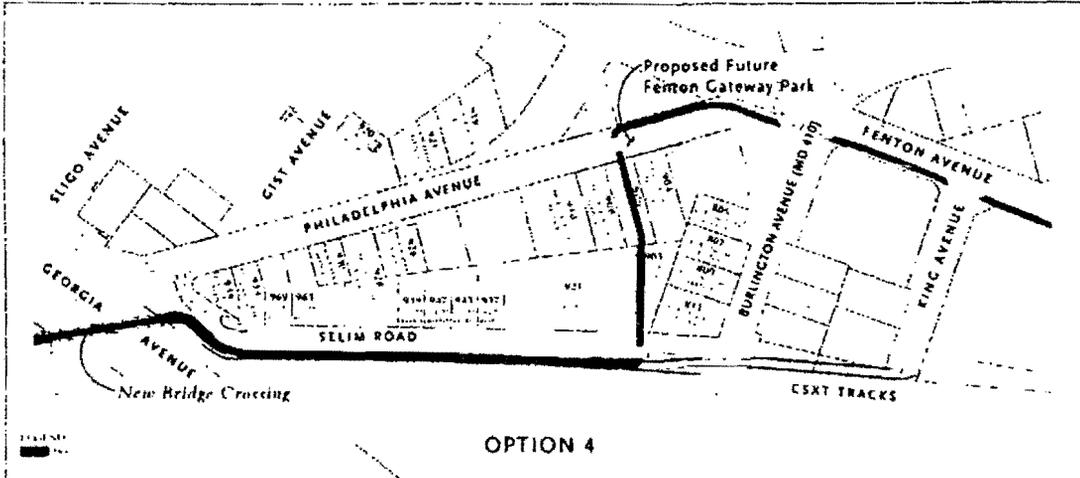


OPTION 2



OPTION 3

METROPOLITAN BRANCH HIKER/BIKER TRAIL



Attachment C

Detailed Comparison of Alignment Options

Factor/Option	Option #1 (Selim Road)	Option #2 (South side Philadelphia Avenue)	Option #3 (North side Philadelphia Avenue)	Option #4 (Selim Road/ Philadelphia Avenue)	Option #5 (South side Philadelphia Avenue)
Length	0.62 miles	0.61 miles	0.61 miles	.65 miles	.63 miles
Trail Quality/ Project Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most direct-highest quality bike facility • Meets all Project Goals • All Options the same west of Georgia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less direct route • Increased potential for conflict between trail users and cars • All options the same west of Georgia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less direct route • Increased potential for conflict between trail users and cars (less conflicts than Option #2) • All options the same west of Georgia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly less direct link than Option #1 • At-grade crossing of Selim Road and Burlington Avenue creates increased potential for trail user conflict with cars. • All options the same west of Georgia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less direct route • Increased potential for conflict between trail users and cars along Philadelphia Avenue • West of the crossing of Georgia Avenue, this option is the same as all others
Road/Driveway Crossings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade separated crossing at Burlington Avenue • New bridge over Georgia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At-grade crossings of Selim Road, Old Philadelphia Avenue, Burlington Avenue, and King Street • Eliminates channelized right turn lane from Fenton Street to Burlington Avenue • 7 driveway crossings on Philadelphia Avenue • Reconfiguration of Selim Road/Philadelphia Avenue intersection • New bridge over Georgia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At-grade crossings of Philadelphia Avenue, Burlington Avenue and King Street • Eliminates channelized right turn lane from Fenton Street to Burlington Avenue • New bridge over Georgia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At-grade crossings of Selim Road (at 903 Selim Road), Philadelphia Avenue, Burlington Avenue, and King Street • At-grade crossing of Burlington Avenue eliminates channelized right-turn lane from Fenton Street to Burlington Avenue • New bridge over Georgia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At-grade crossing of Selim Road, Old Philadelphia Avenue, Burlington Avenue, and King Street • Eliminates channelized right-turn lane from Fenton Street to Burlington Avenue • 7 driveway crossings on Philadelphia Avenue • Reconfiguration of Selim Road/Philadelphia Avenue intersection • Existing bridge over Georgia Avenue
Distinguishing Design Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burlington Avenue Tunnel • Retaining wall along Selim Road • Selim Road narrowed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily a widened sidewalk along the south side of Philadelphia Avenue, but maintains property access with trail crossings • Philadelphia Avenue is within approved/adopted 2000 Silver Spring CBD District/Vicinity Sector Plan. May require variance/exemption for this proposed typical section along Philadelphia Avenue • Need coordination with Fenton Gateway Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing connection between Gist Avenue and Philadelphia Avenue and Selim Road is eliminated • Philadelphia Avenue is within approved/adopted 2000 Silver Spring CBD District/Vicinity Sector Plan. May require variance/exemption for this proposed typical section along Philadelphia Avenue • Need coordination with Fenton Gateway Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining wall along Selim Road • Selim Road narrowed • Links trail directly to proposed Fenton Gateway Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philadelphia Avenue traffic lanes are narrowed • Philadelphia Avenue is within approved/adopted 2000 Silver Spring CBD District/Vicinity Sector Plan. May require variance/exemption for this proposed typical section along Philadelphia Avenue • Links trail directly to proposed Fenton Gateway Park
Public Parking Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net loss estimated 18 spaces (approximately) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net loss estimated 32 spaces (approximately) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net loss estimated of 24 spaces (approximately) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net loss estimated 26 spaces (approximately) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net loss estimated 39 spaces (approximately)
Utility Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant temporary/permanent overhead and underground line construction impacts along Selim Road and beneath Burlington Avenue • Potential impacts to utilities beneath Georgia Avenue (Verizon) at bridge pier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts to utilities beneath Georgia Avenue (Verizon) at bridge pier • Permanent overhead line construction impacts along Philadelphia Avenue (less severe than along Selim Road) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts to utilities beneath Georgia Avenue (Verizon) at bridge pier • Permanent overhead line construction impacts along Philadelphia Avenue (less severe than along Selim Road) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant temporary/permanent overhead and underground line construction impacts along Selim Road • Potential impacts to utilities beneath Georgia Avenue (Verizon) at bridge pier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent overhead line construction impacts along Philadelphia Avenue (less severe than along Selim Road)

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Factor/Option	Option #1 (Selim Road)	Option #2 (South side Philadelphia Avenue)	Option #3 (North side Philadelphia Avenue)	Option #4 (Selim Road/ Philadelphia Avenue)	Option #5 (South side Philadelphia Avenue)
Traffic Impacts (Permanent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrowing of Selim Road and adjusting intersection with Philadelphia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southbound right-turns would be signalized at the Fenton Street/Burlington Avenue intersection in lieu of the existing channelized right-turn lane. Slight differences in overall intersection operation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southbound right-turns would be signalized at the Fenton Street/Burlington Avenue intersection in lieu of the existing channelized right-turn lane. Slight differences in overall intersection operation. Philadelphia Avenue will become one-way from Selim Road to Old Philadelphia Avenue. Traffic to this section of Philadelphia Avenue must approach from the Selim Road entrance on Burlington Avenue. All Selim Road traffic will need to enter Philadelphia Avenue and follow to the intersection with Fenton Street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southbound right-turns would be signalized at the Fenton Street/Burlington Avenue intersection in lieu of the existing channelized right-turn lane. Slight differences in overall intersection operation. Narrowing of Selim Road and Fenton Street Trail users and automobiles may be required to stop for the at-grade crossing of Selim Road (located at the current location of 903 Selim Road). This will need further study and discussion/clarification due to the presence of inadequate stopping sight distance from the Burlington Avenue/Selim Road intersection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southbound right-turns would be signalized at the Fenton Street/Burlington Avenue intersection in lieu of the existing channelized right-turn lane. Slight differences in overall intersection operation. Narrowing of Philadelphia Avenue traffic lanes to 20' Bicycle traffic would stop to dismount and walk across the existing bridge
Right-of-Way Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 properties (approximately 0.94 acres fee simple right-of-way) Includes relocation of 1 business (EHB) and impacts to Progress Place More WMATA Property Impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 properties (approximately 0.59 acres fee simple right-of-way) More commercial property impacts Includes relocation of 1 business (EHB) and impacts to Progress Place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 properties (approximately 0.71 acres fee simple right-of-way) More commercial property impacts Includes relocation of 1 business (EHB) and impacts to Progress Place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 properties (approximately 1.06 acres fee simple right-of-way) Total property take assumed for 903 Selim Road and 906 Philadelphia Avenue Includes relocation of 3 businesses and impacts to Progress Place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 properties (approximately .41 acres fee simple right-of-way) Includes relocation of 1 business (EHB) and impacts to Progress Place
Historic Resources Impacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station Railroad underpass at B&O Station would be permanently closed Existing Georgia Avenue Railroad Bridge (if determined historic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station Railroad underpass at B&O Station would be permanently closed Existing Georgia Avenue Railroad Bridge (if determined historic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station Railroad underpass at B&O Station would be permanently closed Existing Georgia Avenue Railroad Bridge (if determined historic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station Railroad underpass at B&O Station would be permanently closed Existing Georgia Avenue Railroad Bridge (if determined historic) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station Railroad underpass at B&O Station would be permanently closed
Environmental Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No wetlands No forest stands or significant/specimen trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No wetlands No forest stands or significant/specimen trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No wetlands No forest stands or significant/specimen trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No wetlands No forest stands or significant/specimen trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No wetlands No forest stands or significant/specimen trees
Other Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety/security of tunnel Coordination with SHA for the Georgia Avenue bridge crossing Significant coordination efforts (both during design and construction) required with WMATA, CSXT, and SHA regarding adjacent construction along Selim Road and tunnel underneath Philadelphia Avenue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to planned Fenton Gateway Park Coordination with SHA for the Georgia Avenue bridge crossing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to planned Fenton Gateway Park Coordination with SHA for the Georgia Avenue bridge crossing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with SHA for the Georgia Avenue bridge crossing Significant coordination efforts (both during design and construction) required with WMATA, CSXT, and SHA regarding adjacent construction along Selim Road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some coordination with WMATA/CSX regarding proximity of trail to railroad

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Washington Area Bicyclist Association

GETTING THERE BY BIKE

Testimony of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association to the Montgomery County Planning Board on the Metropolitan Branch Trail

May 18, 2006

Good afternoon. My name is Wayne Phyllaier and I'm speaking today for the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), a local non-profit safety and educational organization dedicated to improving conditions for cyclists throughout the Washington region. I'm here on behalf of our 7000 WABA members to offer recommendations on how to build the critically important section of the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) between the Silver Spring Transit Center and the Montgomery College Takoma Campus.

The Metropolitan Branch Trail is a priority project for WABA. As envisioned, the trail would connect Union Station with Silver Spring loosely following Metro's Red Line. It would link the future Capital Crescent Trail in Silver Spring and with the trails of the National Mall, completing what has been called the Bicycle Beltway. A spur trail would also be built from Fort Totten to the West Hyattsville Metro and link up with the Anacostia Tributaries Trail Network. The MBT is a key bike facility in an area that lacks them. It would provide non-motorized access to five libraries, eight recreation centers and playgrounds, 28 schools, five colleges or universities, seven Metro stations and forty seven places of worship along the Trail.

WABA continues to support the DPWT Option 1 as the most direct alignment free from at grade crossings of major highways and free from interactions with motor vehicles that is essential if the general public is to accept and use the trail in high numbers. The DPWT recommended Option 5 is wholly inadequate for such an important regional trail in a dense urban area. The Option 5 crossing of Georgia Avenue would be on a sidewalk that is less than half the minimum recommended width for a shared use trail. The sidewalk crossing is totally unacceptable for a heavily used regional trail. The Option 5 sidepath trail down Philadelphia Avenue will become a linear parking lot for vehicles coming and going from the numerous auto shops and the church along this street. DPWT's recommendation that this problem be solved by police enforcement is unrealistic. The Option 5 crossing of busy East-West Highway at-grade at Fenton Street is most unwelcome. Every crossing of a major highway at-grade will greatly diminish the value and use of the Trail.

DPWT is asking the Planning Board to support Option 5 even though it goes against the Master Plan recommendation for grade separated crossings of both Georgia Avenue and East-West Highway, and against the views strongly expressed by the public at two DPWT workshops. The chief reason DPWT gives against building the trail bridge over Georgia Avenue and the underpass at East-West Highway is cost. Yet DPWT does not give any useful cost estimates for either the bridge or underpass in the Phase I report.

WABA recognizes it is unlikely the County Council will commit funding for all provisions of Option 1 at this time, given the projected possible high cost and the unresolved technical issues surrounding the East-West Highway underpass. However, we strongly believe that the alignment provided by Option 1 is the option that will create the safest and most usable Met Branch Trail. Fortunately the M-NCPPC Staff recommended "Option 5 Modified" offers a good way around this problem. "Option 5 Modified" addresses the cost issue by phasing construction to build the sections we can all agree on first. It also includes a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue that is so important to the safety of trail users, and does not waste bikeway funds building a dysfunctional sidepath trail along Philadelphia Avenue. However, "Option 5 Modified" fails to include a direct trail alignment along Selim Road and an underpass of East West Highway, both of which are strongly supported by trail advocates.

WABA strongly requests that the Planning Board support Phases 1 and 2 of the M-NCPPC Staff proposed "Option 5 Modified" which includes the bridge over Georgia Avenue, and move forward for detailed design and construction immediately. We urge the Planning Board to also recommend that the project include further development of design and cost information for the East-West Highway underpass to a level needed to support an informed decision to realign the Metropolitan Branch Trail along Selim Road in the future.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Wayne Phyllaier
For WABA



P.O. Box 30703
Bethesda, MD 20824

Testimony to the Montgomery County Planning Board
Regarding the Metropolitan Branch Trail

May 18, 2006

My name is Peter Gray and I am speaking on behalf of the Board of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail and our 2000 plus members. We ask that the Planning Board adopt Phases 1 and 2 of the Park and Planning Staff proposed "Option 5 Modified" for the Metropolitan Branch Trail ("Met Branch") which includes a bridge over Georgia Avenue, and move forward for detailed design and construction of that bridge immediately. We further ask that the Planning Board recommend that the project include further development of design and cost information for the East-West Highway underpass to a level needed to support an informed decision to realign the Metropolitan Branch Trail along Selim Road in the future.

Any successful trail design for the Met Branch should incorporate the qualities that have made the Capital Crescent Trail ("CCT") so successful, including the ability for users to cross major roadways on the numerous bridges and two tunnels on the trail. The CCT is the most heavily used trail in the region, with traffic counts greater than 500 users per hour in Bethesda at peak periods. One of the reasons for the high traffic count is the use of a tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue that allows the easy passage of bikers and hikers using the trail from neighborhoods east of Wisconsin. Another is the construction of a bridge over Bradley Boulevard just south of the Bethesda trailhead. Absent the Wisconsin Avenue tunnel on one side of downtown Bethesda and the bridge over Bradley Boulevard on the other side, the ability of bikers, pedestrians, wheelchair users and others to access downtown Bethesda would be greatly restricted. The overall use of the CCT is significantly enhanced by the access to the various bridges and underground passages at different points on the trail.

The underpasses and bridges on the CCT have maintained the basic 10 foot width of the trail or even widened the trail at those points. If the bridge over Bradley Boulevard or River Road had been only six feet wide and cyclists had to dismount when passing over either of those bridges, it would have severely restricted their usage of that crossing and been a strong disincentive for off road cyclists, including families with young children to use such a bridge. Such a restricted passage for those trail users would surely have retarded the success of the CCT throughout its length.

Furthermore, over the several years that the Delcarlia and Wisconsin Avenue tunnels have been in use there have been no safety or loitering problems associated with use of those underpasses. For illustration purposes, I have attached to this testimony pictures of what the proposed

underpass for the Met Branch would look like along with a picture of the current tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue on the CCT. The Wisconsin Avenue tunnel is 800 feet long, easily five times longer, much darker, with a much worse sight line, than the underpass proposed at East West Highway; yet good design with lighting and fencing have successfully addressed the many predictions of mayhem heard when we first proposed opening that tunnel. No one hesitates to use that tunnel now and the coalition feels that the fairly short underpass proposed under East-West Highway will also not pose a hazard to Met Branch users.

The CCT has been a wildly successful trail as it has been able to preserve its largely off road nature with bridge and underground passages at many major intersections. This has allowed trail users to feel insulated from car traffic. The Coalition hopes that the Planning Board will examine the success of the CCT and use that example to construct the Met Branch Trail in a similar manner, with as many crossings at major roadways as possible that also insulate trail users from cars. The coalition believes this can best be done by adopting Phases 1 and 2 of the M-NCPPC Staff proposed "Option 5 Modified" including the bridge over Georgia Avenue with detailed design and construction of the bridge immediately and further development of design and cost information for the East-West Highway underpass to a level needed to support the potential to realign the Metropolitan Branch Trail along Selim Road in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Gray, Vice Chairman, CCCT

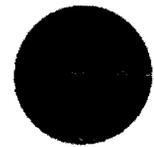
Trail

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June 2, 2006

Mr. George Leventhal
President
County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

023463



Dear Mr. Leventhal:

The Executive Board of ESSCA is in support of Option 1 of the Metropolitan Trail, as recommended by the Planning Board. This is the option originally endorsed by the Planning Board in the 2001 Master Plan. Option 1 would protect hikers and cyclist from cars and is endorsed by the Washington Area Bicyclist Association.

Option 1 would keep bicyclists from crossing a number of streets at grade, including Selim Road and Route 410. The tunnel would prevent the bicyclists from sharing and/or crossing streets with vehicular traffic, i.e. Fenton Street and Philadelphia Avenue. The tunnel under Burlington Avenue would be an enhancement to the trail and would not create safety problems. There is already a tunnel on the Metropolitan Trail eight times longer under Wisconsin Avenue and it has not been a safety issue.

We urge you to support Option 1 of the Metropolitan Trail in Silver Spring which will best serve both cyclists and pedestrians and is worth the extra expense.

Sincerely,

Bob Colvin
Bob Colvin
President
ESSCA
841 Gist Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

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Shepherd's Table Testimony
Item # 12 Metropolitan Trail
Montgomery County Planning Board
May 18, 2006

A Community Center
for People in Need

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Jacki Coyle, The Executive Director of Shepherd's Table, a Resource Center for people in need in Downtown Silver Spring. We began our service in 1983. Our presence as a service provider to those who are without homes and those with homes who are economically disadvantaged is critical to the vibrancy of the Silver Spring community. We are committed to staying firmly rooted in the downtown community, meeting the needs of hundreds of individuals each year. In 2005 we provided over 47,000 meals, rendered human service assistance to over 900 people, made medical care possible for over 400 people, gave prescription assistance to over 500 people, and provided eye care and glasses to over 600 people. In addition we gave clothing to over 100 people each month.

Shepherd's Table, housed in Progress Place, in the Central Business District, is located in a prime development site at the end of Silver Spring Avenue and next to the Metro tracks. We have been informed that plans to extend the Metropolitan Trail and to develop Ripley Street will seriously impact our ability to provide services in our present building. We have been informed that developers have an interest in the property on which we are located.

We believe that our present location is perfect for the services we offer, close to public transportation, with easy access to other services. It is tucked away in a somewhat commercial area, providing limited disruption to residential and commercial areas and still meeting the needs of our clients and guests. It is easily accessible to our over 900 volunteers who partner with us in providing basic human services.

We urge the Montgomery County Planning Board and all departments of the County government to commit to keeping Shepherd's Table at its present location. We welcome co-location with other development projects in our present location.

We ask to be present at the table where decisions will be made that impact our location and the services we provide. It is our desire to give a voice to the needs of the people we serve and to share the wisdom and knowledge we have gleaned over our 23 years of service. Finally we believe that it is important to have a voice in our own future.

With the support of our County Executive, Doug Duncan and many on the Montgomery County Council, including, Tom Perez, Steve Silverman and

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Shepherd's Table, Inc., 8210A Colonial Lane, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3350
 voice: (301) 585-6463 • fax: (301) 585-4718 • email: info@shepherdstable.org
 website address: www.shepherdstable.org

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 United Way of Central Maryland
Vice President/External Affairs
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 Charles Goldberg, MD
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 Housing Opportunities Commission
 Norris Sheppard
 Long & Foster Realtors
 Kathy Torrence
 Calvert

STAFF
 Executive Director
 Jacki Coyle
 Director of Social Services
 John Eckenrode

Designate
#8964



United Way
 of the National
 Capital Area
 Campaign Participant

George Leventhal, County Executive candidate, Ike Leggett, The Silver Spring Regional Office, the Department of Health and Human Services, we are committed to providing essential basic human services to those in need in downtown Silver Spring.

Tom Perez, our councilmember said, "Redevelopment that displaces the most vulnerable is not revitalization."

We believe that it is important not only to redevelop and revitalize our downtown community but to also maintain our commitment to the vitalization of all our citizens, including those who are most vulnerable and in need.

We trust that in your planning efforts you will honor the commitment of Shepherd's Table to remain in our present location.

Thank you!

Jacki Coyle
Executive Director
jcoyle@shepherdstable.org
301-585-6463

RECEIVED
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MAY 18 2006

#1

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

108 Sheffield St.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-589-5055 (phone & fax)

May 17, 2006

Derrick Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
The Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Via Fax 301-495-1320 and E-mail: mcp-chairman@rnccppc-mc.org

Dear Mr. Berlage:

We believe that providing bike paths in and around Silver Spring is an essential component of a comprehensive transportation solution. Toward that end, we want to state our strong support for completing the construction of the Metropolitan Branch Trail using Option 1 as outlined by the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation.

Construction of the Metropolitan Branch Trail is a critical step in extending the bicycle beltway through Silver Spring and for improving the safety of bicycle and pedestrian commuters. Of the options provided, Option 1 is the best choice because it provides both a bridge and a tunnel to create a direct, unimpeded and safe route into Silver Spring. The bridge is particularly important to this plan, and we urge that its construction proceed expeditiously.

We appreciate your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Debbie Spielberg, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board*
Darian Unger, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board*
Alan Bowser, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board*
Phil Olivetti, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board*
Kathy Stevens, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board*
Mitch Warren, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board*
Dale Tibbits, Former chair, Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee*
Webb Smedley, Transportation Committee of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board*
Wayne Phyllaier, Transportation Committee of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board*

*Organization references are for identification purposes only.

Daniel Meijer
929 Gist Avenue
Silver Spring Maryland 20910
(301) 585-1458

May 18, 2006

Montgomery County Planning Board
M-NCPPC
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring Maryland 20910-3760

RE: Agenda item 12, Metropolitan Branch Trail, Phase 1

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I wish to bring to the Boards attention that the traffic problems surrounding the activities from the Jesus House make it impractical to share the same local streets in this area for bike use.

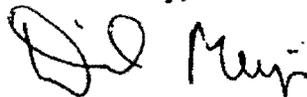
The Jesus House operates a 1020 seat assembly hall at 932 Philadelphia Ave. It has no parking or drop off driveway. Thus Philadelphia Ave. is directed impacted by the in & out activities of this facility. The Jesus House web site indicates daily programs, particularly on weekends, which include multiple programs. On Sundays, between 11-2 for example, Philadelphia Ave. is nearly impassable due to the traffic and illegal parking problems surrounding this house of worship.

M-NCPPC staff report "estimates the MBT will achieve trail user numbers as high, or nearly as high as the Capital Crescent Trail: 300-500 trail users per hour on weekends, 50-150 users per hour weekday[s]."

Its is irresponsible to direct 300-500 weekend trail users per hour on to a set of clogged narrow streets, currently incapable of handling the traffic from a 1020 seat assembly hall.

Thus Option 1, which bypasses this mess, is the only practical choice.

Sincerely,



Daniel Meijer

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