Meeting Notes

Date: July 28, 2015
Time: 7:00-9:00 pm
Place: Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Rm A/B, Bethesda, MD 20814

Subject: Public Input on three (3) trail connector alignment options between the Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Trail near the Bethesda Pool.

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This meeting was held to discuss: Community input on the Capitol Crescent Trail (CCT)/Little Falls Trail (LFT) Connector Alignment Project near the Bethesda Pool CIM #1. Abbreviations: ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle), CCT (Capital Crescent Trail), LFT (Little Falls Trail), MCDOT (Montgomery County Department of Transportation), MNCPPC (Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission), WSSC (Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission).

1.0 Community Input Regarding Trail Connector Alignment Options:

1.1. For all options, the trail connector is to be 10’ wide

1.2. Option A was the preferred route for several people (“reasonable analysis”, “logical conclusion”, “convenient”)
   i. There is evidence of pedestrian foot traffic through the woods close to where the Option A trail alignment connector will connect to the CCT
   ii. There was concern about losing trees and shade adjacent to the pool
       a) Trees in the area include white pine, scarlet oak, sycamore, and locust
       b) The current level of design does not show locations of specimen trees but it is estimated that 3 trees will be removed. Trees will be surveyed and efforts will be made to route the trail connector alignment around existing trees in order to protect as many trees as possible
   iii. Emergency access should be considered; fire departments use ATV for trail rescues. The local fire department should be contacted to ensure the weight, size, and turning movements can be accommodated on the connector/boardwalk.
       a) The trail connector will need to be accessed by park service vehicles as well, boardwalk will have a 10,000 pound rating
   iv. Design of the trail connector includes a jog close to the crossing at Hillandale Road; this is a result of the existing topography and the need to make the trail...
connector ADA compliant. It will also serve as a means of bike traffic control and slow down bike traffic before crossing Hillandale.

v. Long-term maintenance for the boardwalk portion of the trail connector is 15-25 years for a typical boardwalk, 35-50 years for concrete decking.

vi. One suggestion was to consider borrowing property from the pool area to minimize trail connector alignment impacts just north of the pool.

vii. Concern was raised regarding ground cover underneath the boardwalk

   a) If the boardwalk is high enough, vegetation may establish.

   b) Erosion may be a problem

viii. The busiest part of the CCT is between Little Falls Parkway and Bethesda; Option A could lessen total traffic on this part of the trail.

1.3. Option B was preferred by some as it has less environmental concerns

   i. Three driveway crossings would make users uncomfortable

   ii. There is concern that some users may not use the trail and would continue to cut through the parking lot

1.4. Option C is least desirable

   i. Highest cost and environmental impact of all three options

   ii. The trail connector appears to take the place of public parking along Willett Parkway; is this the case? No, this alignment option extends portions of the LFT which would run/traverse within the existing green space parallel to Willett Parkway.

   iii. A rescue ATV turning radius should be considered in the ramp design

2.0 Safety concerns regarding all trail options:

2.1. The CCT is a fast-paced bicycle commuter route and is not necessarily pedestrian or family friendly. Approximately 90,000 monthly trips are made on it (approx. 1/2 bikes, 1/2 pedestrians).

2.2. The LFT is narrow and quiet; it would be difficult to share the LFT with more bicycle traffic

   i. Will trail connector invite more bicycle traffic onto the LFT? A concern voiced by a resident

2.3. Crossing Safety

   i. Hillandale Road is a public Right of Way; MNCPPC will work with MC DOT to use accepted traffic calming devices

      a) Suggestion was raised to provide a median refuge island in the center of Hillandale Road or speed bumps in advance of the crossing

      b) Many crossings occur at dusk or nighttime - the crossing should be lighted

      c) Maybe provide a pedestrian light that flashes to alert drivers when someone is crossing
ii. Per MNCPPC representatives: A separate study will be performed to investigate possible improvements and safety features at all at-grade trail crossings at roadways.

iii. Per a resident: It is possible that the current CCT crossing at Little Falls Parkway may be safer than a potential crossing at Hillandale.
   a) Drivers are familiar with the crossing at Little Falls Pkwy
   b) It is located between two close traffic lights and traffic does not typically get up to normal travel speeds before approaching CCT crossing.

iv. Resident Question: What is the safety concern that is driving the trail connector project?
   a) Is it Potential? Actual? Response: A safety concern is not driving this project. The project was established based on a recommendation from the “The Capital Crescent Trail Design and Implementation” (July 1992)
   b) It is requested that the project team provide data regarding safety issues.

2.4. Connector addresses pedestrian/vehicle conflicts, but does not address the problem that it is unsafe for pedestrians to use the CCT.

2.5. A resting/transition area is necessary at the connection point between the trail connector and the CCT; the current design shows this area as a 25' radius arc but will be further developed as the design progresses.

2.6. It is important to alert riders where the trail connector is and allow space for deceleration/acceleration.

3.0 Miscellaneous concerns and points of discussion at the meeting:

3.1. Light pollution from a traffic control device for the trail connector crossing at Hillandale could negatively affect firefly breeding habitats in the vicinity.

3.2. Per a Resident -
   Little Falls Trail is not well maintained; and it will be difficult for bicyclists to ride on the trail.
   Per MNCPPC: It is not in the current budget to resurface the trail at this time for minor repairs but major/emergency repairs will be done immediately. WSSC is currently doing utility work in the area.
   i. When the WSSC work is completed LFT will be scheduled for repair and resurfacing.
   ii. There is an emergency maintenance fund available for trail issues that become hazardous.

3.3. A new condominium development was built on Little Falls Parkway; is the existing sidewalk going to be widened to accommodate increased traffic to the CCT? MNCPPC Response: Not sure, MC DOT is responsible for all work in the Right-of-Way.

3.4. Would other areas benefit better from a trail connector? Glenbrook at Bradley? MNCPPC
Response: Parks is following the recommendations of the “The Capital Crescent Trail Design and Implementation” (July 1992) and a Trail Connector Analysis of various connector alignments were analyzed. This particular location ranked very high in the final analysis.

3.5. Is the cost of putting in the trail connector worth the benefit? Is this necessary? MNCPPC Response: Yes, based on the trail connector analysis.

3.6. Isn’t there already a connection at Dorset Avenue? MNCPPC Response: Yes,
   i. Dorset is a street, not a trail connection
   ii. Bikes do not cross from the LFT to the CCT at Dorset

3.7. Is the goal of the connector to benefit northbound traffic? MNCPPC Response: The goal is to not only connect northbound traffic but to: connects two (2) regional trails; provide Direct link to public facilities; link to a number of parks and metro stops within ¼ miles; close proximity to transit & employment, and serves a relatively high density area within ½ mile radius.

3.8. Parts of the CCT are in disrepair

3.9. The CCT is well travelled because it provides a direct link to public facilities, parks, employment, and high density residential areas

3.10. There are tree plantings planned in areas adjacent to the CCT; this takes place every fall.

4.0 The MNCPPC representatives were thankful for all community input and will take concerns into consideration

5.0 A second community meeting will be held September 8; the date will be posted & mailed to the residents who live in the area.

Please forward revisions and corrections to these meeting notes within seven (7) days of receipt.

Issued by:

Site Resources, Inc.