

Mandatory Referral for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phases 1 and 2, MR2016021

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Completed: 05/10/2016

DESCRIPTION

This project would complete the Metropolitan Branch Trail from the District of Columbia to the Silver Spring Transit Center. It would:

- Construct the remaining missing segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail in Montgomery County (New York Ave to Ripley Street)
- Construct a new underpass beneath Burlington Avenue
- Construct a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue

Applicant: Montgomery County Department of Transportation

SUMMARY

Major issues for this mandatory referral include:

- Trail alignment and crossings at the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station
- A trail width that is appropriate for the likely demand

Staff recommends **approval with comments** on the Mandatory Referral for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase 1 and 2.

COMMENTS

Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station

1. Improve the proposed alignment around the B&O Station by:
 - a. Reducing vehicular traffic crossing the trail and most importantly limiting vehicles backing up across the trail.
 - b. Providing a raised trail crossing if vehicles are permitted to cross the trail. Warning signs and pavements markings, such as green thermoplastic, should also be provided.
 - c. Creating a formal entranceway to the B&O Station parking lot to make motorists aware that the trail bifurcates two parking lots that serve the station.

- d. Eliminating the short tangent section between the back-to-back curves in the horizontal alignment at Station 113+03.
 - e. Straightening out the “s” curve at Station 115+00 to provide a smoother transition.
 - f. Adding transverse pavement markings / warning signs to prepare bicyclists for the turns.
 - g. Providing adequate lighting to ensure that trail users and motorists can negotiate the curves and trail crossing.
2. Continue working toward a memorandum of agreement with appropriate mitigation, easement approval, and issuance of a Historic Area Work Permit for the alignment under consideration in Mandatory Referral No. MR2016021.

Trail Width

3. Widen the trail from 10 feet to a minimum of 11 feet with 1 to 2-foot-wide shoulders:
- a. Along the CSX tracks between Ripley Street and the B&O Station (Station 105+08 to Station 112+79).
 - b. Along Selim Road (Station 118+28 to Station 123+04).
 - c. Along the CSX tracks between the Burlington Ave underpass and King Street (Station 126+00 to 128+70).

Trail Crossings

- 4. Consider using colored concrete or green thermoplastic at the driveway crossings on Fenton Street and King Street to convey that trail users have the right-of-way over motorists entering and exiting the parking garage.
- 5. Install signs at exits to the parking garage that warn motorists to watch for bicyclists on the trail.

Trail Lighting

- 6. Provide continuous lighting along the Metropolitan Branch Trail – including the proposed Georgia Avenue bridge – that is consistent with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards.

Security

- 7. Coordinate with the Department of Permitting Services Office of the Fire Marshal to determine how emergency responders can best locate trail users who call 911 (Marie LaBaw, 240-773-8917).
- 8. Coordinate with the Montgomery County Department of Parks and the DDOT Active Transportation Branch (Jim Sebastian, 202-671-2331) to understand the challenges that the District of Columbia has encountered with regard to trail security.

Data Collection

- 9. Install bicycle counters in at least two places on the Metropolitan Branch Trail, including a location northwest of Georgia Ave where trail use is likely to be the highest due to the proximity to transit and Downtown Silver Spring.

Coordination with the District of Columbia

10. Coordinate with the District of Columbia to identify and install mile markers and include a trail wayfinding plan along the entire trail in Montgomery County (including existing segments) that utilizes the same signing precedent that the DDOT has implemented on the portions of the trail in the District of Columbia.

Pavement Material

11. Confirm that the portions of the trail that are proposed to be concrete will be saw cut rather than tooled, to provide a smoother ride.

Fenton Street

12. Consider converting the striped-out area in the roadway to a landscaped buffer to provide greater separation from traffic for trail users, less impervious surface, and more space to accommodate street trees.
13. Reduce the parking row from 9 feet to 8 feet wide and widen the buffer between the trail and on-street parking by 1 foot.
14. Provide curb ramps and crosswalks across Fenton Street at the intersections with King Street and Islington Street to facilitate pedestrian travel.
15. At the intersection of King Street and Fenton Street, improve the opposite/ corresponding curb ramps to tie-in to the new project
16. Provide a smooth transition between the trail on the south side of King Street and the crosswalk across King Street at Fenton Street.

Burlington Avenue Underpass

17. Consider adding curb and gutter on the west side of the Burlington Avenue underpass to further reduce potential icing in the underpass.

Burlington Avenue

18. In addition to repaving the bridge over Burlington Avenue, reconstruct the deteriorating sidewalks on the bridge and evaluate whether this project can facilitate implementation of the Silver Spring separated bike lane network on Burlington Avenue.

Selim Road

19. At the proposed midblock crossing on Selim Road, consider locating the crosswalk in the middle of the parking space and converting the parking space to a curb extension to prevent motorists from parking in the crosswalk. In addition, flare the ramp to the trail for easier access.
20. Install a traffic-worthy barrier at the top of the retaining wall along Selim Road where the trail drops below grade. In addition, if the fence between the tracks and the trail is less than 2 feet from the trail, the fence should be a smooth surface in the event that bicyclists strike it.
21. Consider changing the typical section on Selim Road to a 17-foot-wide traffic lane and an 8-foot-wide parking lane to encourage motorists to park close to the curb.

22. Consider depressing the sidewalk and aprons between Station 507+00 and 509+00 to reduce the effort needed by disabled persons to traverse the sidewalk. If the sidewalk is depressed for a long length, bollards should be added to deter vehicles from parking on the sidewalk.
23. Consider providing a sidewalk connection to the path at Station 117+60.

B&O Station area

24. Provide tree protection measures to save the 28" tree on Georgia Avenue at the B&O Station.

General Comments

25. Corresponding sidewalk ramps should be shown on the opposite side of the street and upgraded, as needed, to achieve ADA compliance. Several ramps currently do not have detectable warning surfaces.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

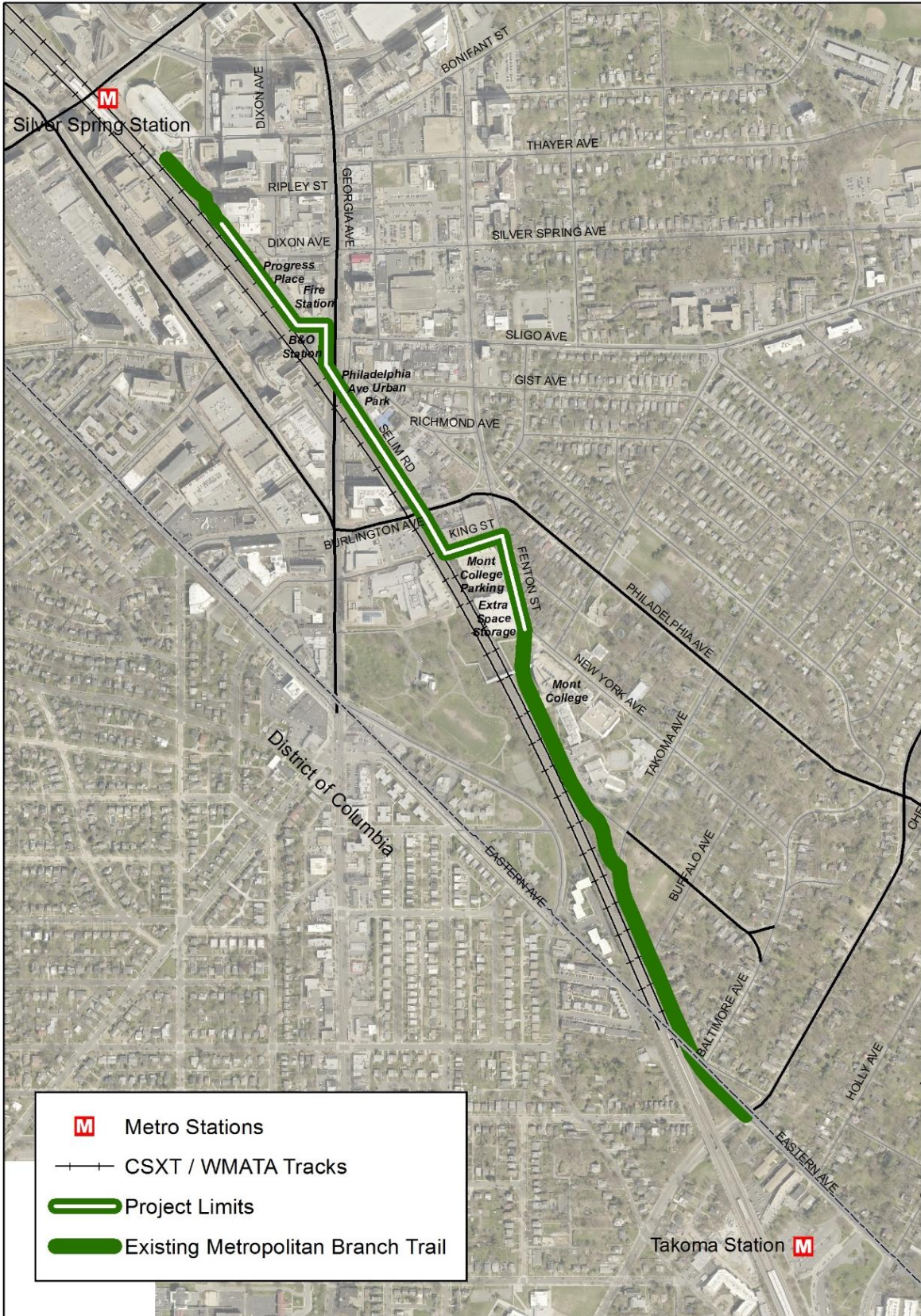
The Metropolitan Branch Trail is an 9-mile off-road shared use path that will ultimately connect Union Station in the District of Columbia to the Silver Spring Transit Center. It will generally parallel the CSXT/Wmata tracks and have a limited number of crossings by motor vehicles, facilitating a trail experience that is suitable to people of all ages and bicycling abilities. The trail will serve both recreational and transportation functions, providing direct access to Downtown Silver Spring, the Metrorail Red Line, MTA MARC service and the future Purple Line stations, and will form part of a 27-mile loop (in combination with the Capital Crescent Trail) between Union Station and Georgetown in the District of Columbia. Other important destinations within Montgomery County include Montgomery College and the City of Takoma Park.

The trail is in various stages of completion in Montgomery County and the District of Columbia. In Montgomery County the last remaining segments include New York Avenue to the end of King Street (Phase 1 of this Mandatory Referral) and King Street to Ripley Street (Phase 2 of this Mandatory Referral). A summary of the entire project in both the District of Columbia and Montgomery County is provided below.

The next few pages show existing conditions along Phase 1 and 2 of the project, from Montgomery College at New York Avenue to Ripley Street just south of the Silver Spring Transit Center.

Status of the Metropolitan Branch Trail

Location	Jurisdiction	Length (miles)	Status
Union Station to Bates Road	District of Columbia	5.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete
Bates Road to Fort Totten Metro Station		0.60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% design complete • Construction to begin 2017
Fort Totten Metro Station to DC Line		2.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% design to be completed summer 2016
DC Line to New York Ave	Montgomery County	0.50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete
New York Ave to End of King Street		0.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 subject of Mandatory Referral • Construction to begin June 2016 • Construction to end September 2016
End of King Street to Progress Place site		0.40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 subject of Mandatory Referral • Construction to begin November 2017 • Construction to end November 2019
Along Progress Place site		0.05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 subject of Mandatory Referral • Construction to begin upon completion of Progress Place (now under construction)
Along Ripley II site		0.05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 • Construct schedule dictated by completion of Ripley II development
Ripley II site to Silver Spring Transit Center		0.10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete
Total			9.00



The alignment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail

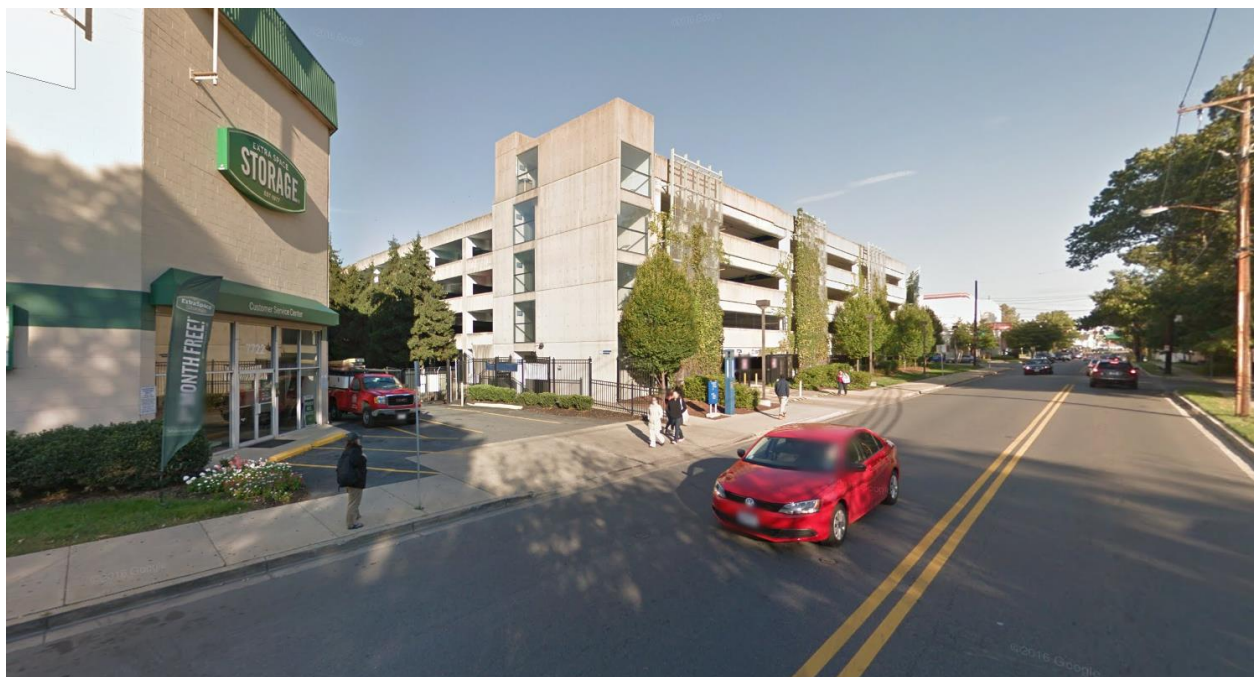
Phase 1

Phase 1 of the project would construct a 12-foot-wide trail that starts at the end of the existing trail on the west side of Fenton Street at Montgomery College.



A view looking northwest of the existing Metropolitan Branch Trail on the west (left) side of Fenton Street.

Heading northwest, the trail travels along the west side of Fenton Street, passing an Extra Space Storage facility and the Montgomery College parking garage.



The Metropolitan Branch Trail will travel along the west (left) side of Fenton Street.

The trail will turn left onto King Street and travels a short distance to the end of the block.



A view of King Street looking west. The Metropolitan Branch Trail will travel along the south (left) side of the road.

Phase 2

Phase 2 of the project consists of a 10-foot-wide trail that starts at the end of King Street, turns right and travels along the CSXT/WMATA tracks, behind the wood fence.



A view of the end of King Street.

The trail will travel beneath Burlington Avenue in a new underpass and emerge on Selim Road.



View looking southeast. The proposed location of the new underpass will be located beneath Burlington Avenue in the grassy area between Selim Road (left) and the CSXT/WMATA tracks (right).

The trail will travel along the west side of Selim Road. While MCDOT has worked to reduce the number of on-street parking spaces that will be removed, 10 metered parking spaces on the east side of Selim Road next to the auto repair business will be eliminated to accommodate the trail.



A view looking northwest on Selim Road. The trail will be located on the west (left) side of the road.

The trail will cross Georgia Avenue on a new bridge to the north (right) of the existing CSXT/WMATA tracks and a pedestrian bridge.



A view of the existing CSXT/WMATA tracks looking northwest toward the B&O Station.

The trail will travel around the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station, reducing the number of parking spaces from 13 head-in spaces to 5 parallel parking spaces. To the north of the B&O Station, the trail will continue between the CSXT/WMATA tracks on the west (left) side and the new Progress Place building on the east (right) side.



View looking northwest of the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station with the new Progress Place in the background wrapped in green Tyvek.

The segment of the trail along the new Progress Place will be constructed once construction of the building is completed by Washington Property Company. The segment along Ripley II will be constructed as part of Phase II of this project after completion of the residential building.



A view looking northwest toward Ripley Street.

MASTER PLAN GUIDANCE

The Metropolitan Branch Trail is a recommended shared use path in the 2000 Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD) Sector Plan and the 2005 Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan. The trail is recommended to travel largely along the CSXT/WMATA tracks, with a short diversion from the tracks between New York Avenue and King Street. The 2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan recommends grade separate crossings at Burlington Avenue and Georgia Avenue. It also indicates on page 101 (see Attachment A) that while it is desirable for the trail to travel through the CSX site (aka the historic B&O Railroad Station site), “site constrain[t]s may necessitate a different configuration.”

The Metropolitan Branch Trail is substantially consistent with approved and adopted master plans.

BACKGROUND

The *Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch Trail*, prepared by the Maryland-National Capital Parking and Planning Commission in 2001, was the first comprehensive study of the trail. It identified the preferred trail alignment from the DC Line to the Silver Spring Transit Center, running the trail parallel to the tracks, crossing Georgia Avenue on a new bridge and passing under Burlington Avenue in a new underpass. The plan noted (see Attachment B) that at the B&O Station “two options are possible for the trail: proceeding under the station canopy and connecting with the landing area for the new span over Georgia Avenue or proceeding around the north side of the station.”

In 2003 a division of the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT), now the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), initiated a facility planning study for the Metropolitan Branch Trail. A mandatory referral was conducted for Phase 1 facility planning by the Planning Board on May 18, 2006 (see Attachment C). The Planning Board supported a new bridge over Georgia Avenue and a new underpass beneath Burlington Avenue. On June 26, 2006 the County Council Transportation & Environment (T&E) Committee reviewed the facility plan and concurred with the Planning Board's recommendation (see Attachment D).

STAFF ANALYSIS

The extension of the Metropolitan Branch Trail, from Progress Place to New York Avenue, is one of the most important unbuilt master-planned bikeways in the County's master plans. It will provide excellent connections between Silver Spring and the City of Takoma Park, and ultimately to Union Station in the District of Columbia once DDOT completes its remaining section. Combined with the Capital Crescent Trail, it will effectively form a loop through the District of Columbia via Bethesda.

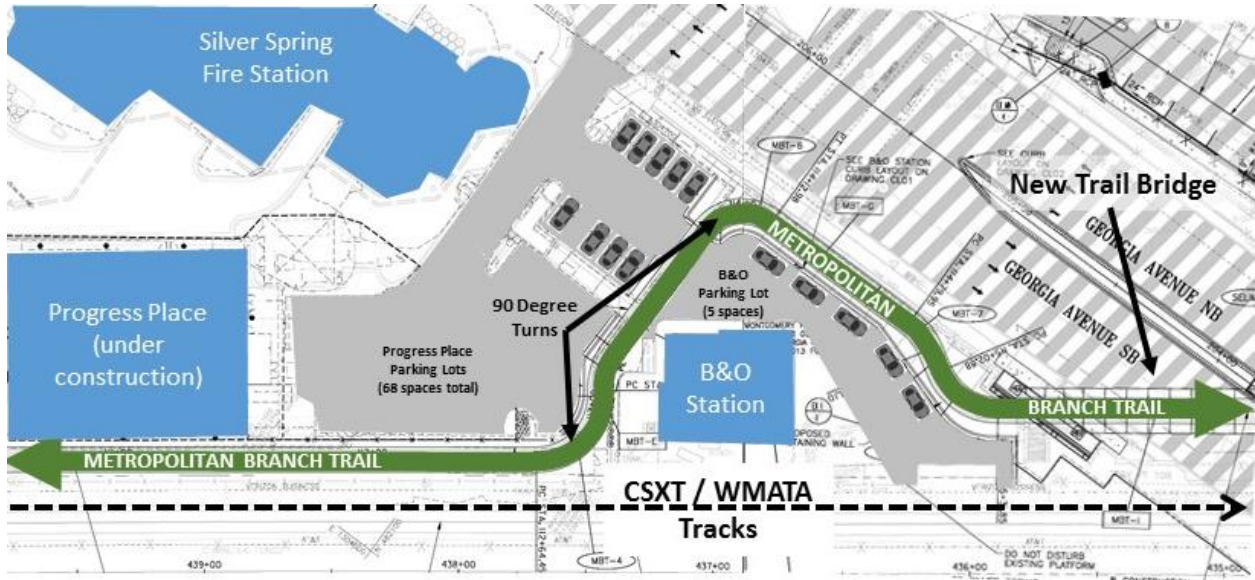
Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station

There has been much discussion between the County, bicycling advocates, and Montgomery Preservation, Inc (MPI, the owner of the B&O Station) over the past 10 years regarding the alignment of the trail at the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station.



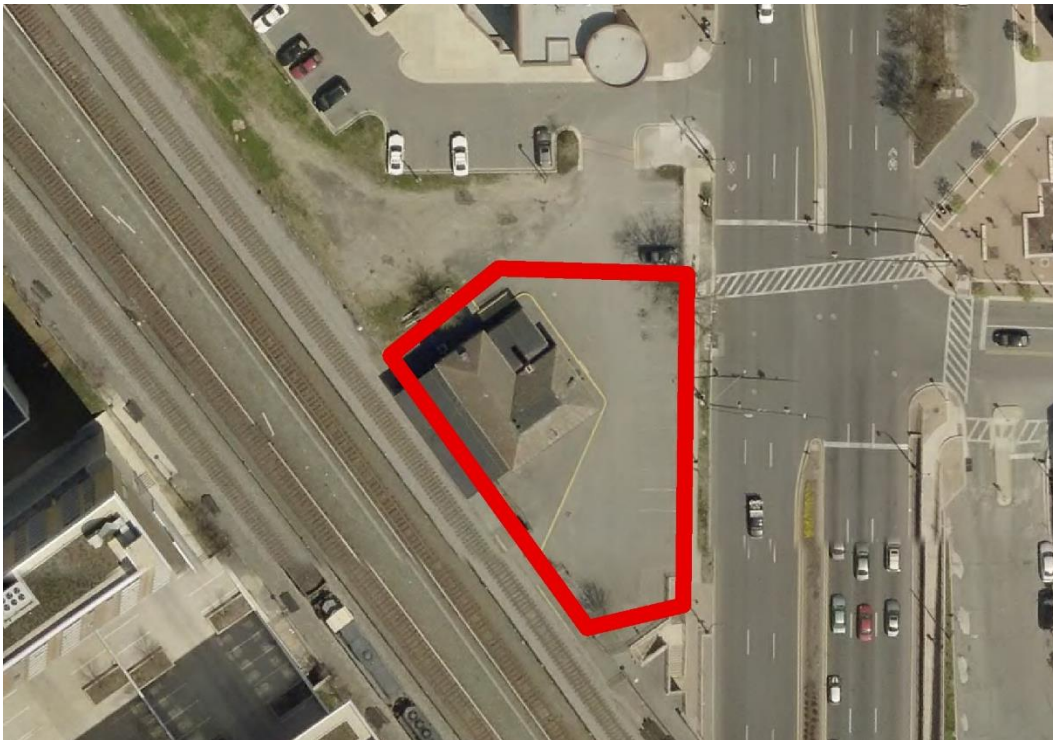
View looking south toward the Silver Spring B&O Station.

Many bicycling advocates support the alignment along the CSXT/WMATA tracks underneath the B&O Station canopy, as this is the most direct route between a proposed new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue and the Silver Spring Transit Center. Bicycling advocates are concerned that a proposed alignment around the B&O Station, which includes two 90-degree turns and would have conflicts with parking vehicles, would diminish the quality of the trail.



Plan View of the Metropolitan Branch Trail at the B&O Station

On the other hand, Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) and MPI are concerned that an alignment beneath the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station overhang would have an adverse impact. MHT is charged with evaluating the Metropolitan Branch Trail's impact on National Register-listed or -eligible properties pursuant to federal and state laws. MHT also holds a perpetual historic preservation easement on the property, which gives MHT the legal responsibility to protect the property from incompatible changes. In effect, MHT has the authority to deny a trail alignment that passes through the B&O Station easement area if it determines that the project would be inconsistent with the terms of the easement.



Approximate location of the preservation easement area for the B&O Station

Because MHT holds a preservation easement on this property, the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance requires that the County secure MHT approval of the project prior to applying for a Historic Area Work Permit. MHT's correspondence with MCDOT makes clear the State Historic Preservation Office's preference for the alignment around the station and that they would not look favorably on a trail alignment that travels beneath the B&O Station canopy (see Attachment E). While desirable from a trail alignment standpoint, staff does not see a way forward with the alignment under the canopy.

Planning Department staff supports the ultimate construction of a high-quality trail, which will provide a new, safe transportation alternative, enabling many more people to view, enjoy, access, and benefit from the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station, and which, if constructed sensitively, may enhance the station's use and the viability of the historic resource. The proposed trail's two 90-degree turns around the B&O Station are responding to the tradeoffs in a complex and built-up urban environment. While the trail alignment around the station is not preferred, it is functional. In fact, a section of the existing trail in the District of Columbia has had two sharp turns in close proximity to each other since 2010 (though these turns may be eliminated in the next few years as part of a park improvement project).



Two sharp turns in the District of Columbia Portion of the Metropolitan Branch Trail at R St NE

Staff therefore recommends that MCDOT **improve the proposed alignment around the B&O Station by:**

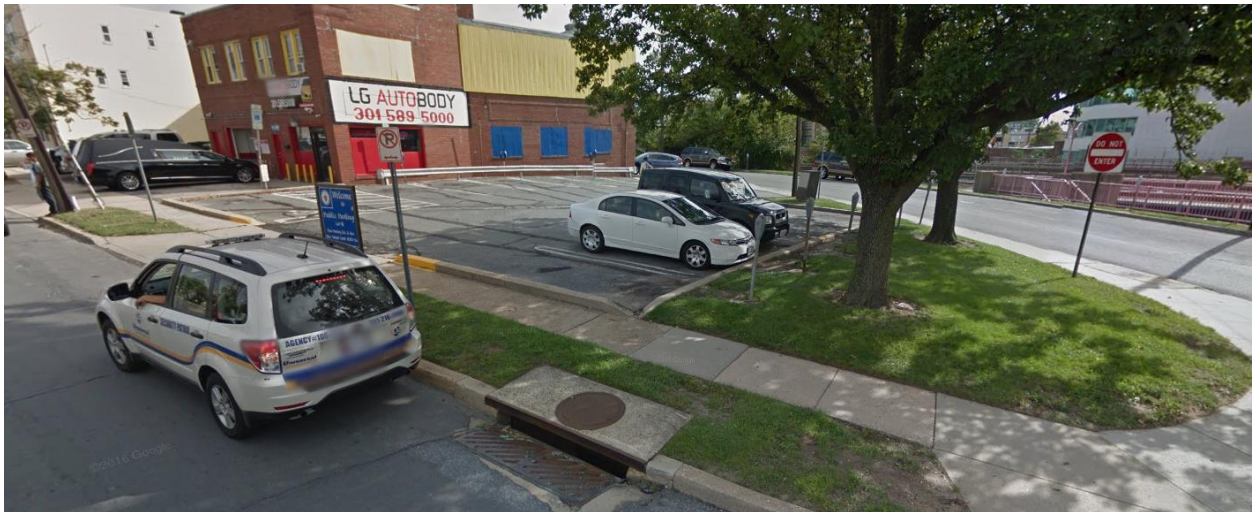
- a. **Reducing vehicular traffic crossing the trail and most importantly limiting vehicles backing up across the trail.**
- b. **Providing a raised trail crossing if vehicles are permitted to cross the trail. Warning signs and pavements markings, such as green thermoplastic, should also be provided.**
- c. **Creating a formal entranceway to the B&O Station parking lot to make motorists aware that the trail bifurcates two parking lots that serve the station.**

- d. Eliminating the short tangent section between the back-to-back curves in the horizontal alignment at Station 113+03.
- e. Straightening out the “s” curve at Station 115+00 to provide a smoother transition.
- f. Adding transverse pavement markings and warning signs to prepare bicyclists for the turns.
- g. Providing adequate lighting to ensure that trail users and motorists can negotiate the curves and trail crossing.

Staff recommends continuing to work toward a memorandum of agreement with appropriate mitigation, easement approval, and issuance of a Historic Area Work Permit for the alignment under consideration in Mandatory Referral No. MR2016021.

Park Impacts

The project impacts a Commission property identified as Philadelphia Avenue Urban Park. This 0.19-acre property is the oldest park in Montgomery County, dating back to 1928. The property is improved with a county public parking lot with meters and other minor landscaping. Although the property is owned by M-NCPPC, the Montgomery County Department of Parks does not offer any recreational benefits to the community at this location. Therefore, the Department of Parks does not have any comments on the project’s impacts to this property.

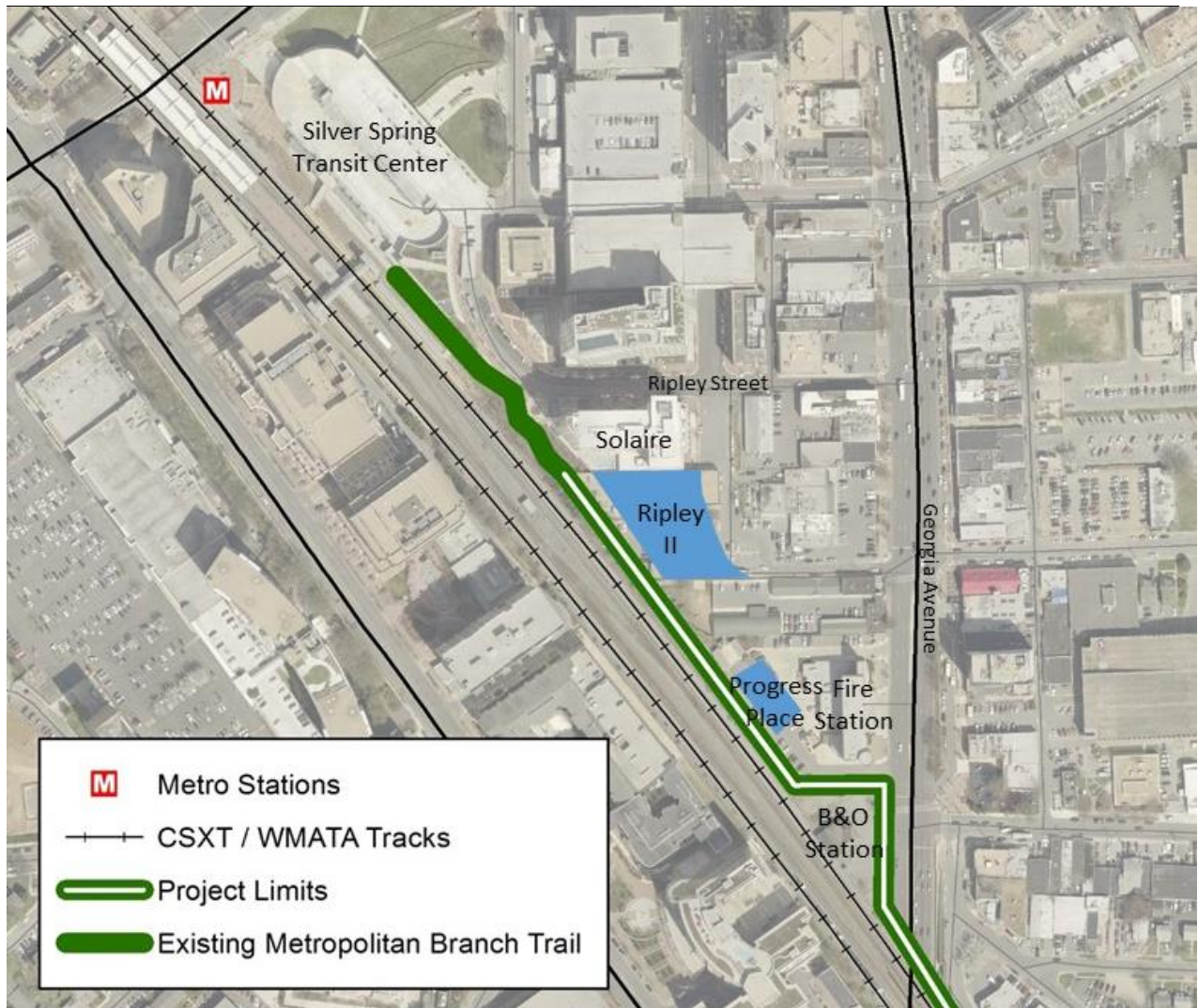


A view of the Philadelphia Avenue Urban Park looking toward Selim Road

Potential Interim Alignment

Based on the current project schedule, the Metropolitan Branch Trail from the DC Line to the northern edge of Progress Place will be complete by November 2019. Market conditions will in part dictate when the last 250-foot-long segment along the planned Ripley II development project (between the northern edge of Progress Place and the existing Solaire Silver Spring building) is complete, which may or may not

be by November 2019¹. MCDOT has considered a number of interim alignments for the trail in the event that the completion of Ripley II extends beyond 2019. The most viable conceptual interim trail option is along the western Georgia Avenue sidewalk between the B&O Train Station and Ripley Street. Improvements would need to be made to the sidewalk to accommodate the trail at this location.



Location of Ripley II

Trail Width

While methods for anticipating trail usage are limited, the Metropolitan Branch Trail is likely to have a large number of pedestrians and bicyclists due to the proximity to the Silver Spring Transit Center, the MARC station, the Silver Spring Red Line station, the future Purple Line station, the connection to the future Capital Crescent Trail, and the proximity to Downtown Silver Spring and Montgomery College. While the typical width for a shared use path in Montgomery County is 10 feet, trails need to be wider in areas of high demand to avoid the congestion problems that degrade the user experience on other

¹ The developers of Ripley II have submitted a preliminary plan and a site plan, which will likely be considered by the Planning Board in fall 2016.

popular trails in the region, including portions of the Capital Crescent Trail in Montgomery County, the Rock Creek Trail in the District of Columbia, the Mount Vernon Trail in Virginia, and the W&OD Trail in Virginia. In response to the need for a wider trail facility, Phase 1 of the project proposes a 12-foot-wide trail on Fenton Street and King Street. Phase 2 of the project proposes a trail width ranging from 8 feet (effective width) in the underpass to 10 feet typically between King Street and the Silver Spring Transit Center. The 2012 AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (page 5-3) has the following recommendation on trail width:

“Wider pathways, 11 to 14 ft...are recommended in locations that are anticipated to serve a high percentage of pedestrians (30 percent or more of the total pathway volume) and high user volumes (more than 300 total users in the peak hour). Eleven foot...wide pathways are needed to enable a bicyclist to pass another path user going the same direction, at the same time a path user is approaching from the opposite direction.”

Precedents for a wider trail include the Capital Crescent Trail, which is planned to be 12 feet wide with two-foot-wide shoulders, and the Metropolitan Branch Trail in the NoMa area of the District of Columbia, which is 14 feet wide in sections. **Therefore, we recommend that the trail be widened from 10 feet to a minimum of 11 feet with 1 to 2-foot-wide shoulders:**

- a. **Along the CSX tracks between Ripley Street and the B&O Station (Station 105+08 to Station 112+79).** Potential ways to accomplish this include a lot curb retaining wall or another short retaining wall on the track side of the trail.
- b. **Along Selim Road (Station 118+28 to Station 123+04).** One potential way to widen the trail is by narrowing the proposed landscape buffer from 6' - 5" (min) to 5' - 5" (min), including the top of curb and brick pavers.
- c. **Along the CSX tracks between the Burlington Ave underpass and King Street (Station 126+00 to 128+70).**

Grade Separation

A critical component of the project is to provide a new underpass paralleling the Red Line / CSX tracks beneath Burlington Avenue and a new bridge paralleling the existing CSX bridge over Georgia Avenue. This will create an environment that is conducive to bicycling by people of all ages and bicycling abilities.

The underpass beneath Burlington Avenue will have a clear width of 12 feet and vertical clearance of 12 feet. A clear width of 12 feet equates to an effective width of 8 feet, which is the minimum width of a shared use path. This is tight, but MCDOT has indicated that “The underpass width was maximized during design. The width is constrained by the SHA bridge substructure, existing underground utilities and the need to maintain Selim Road traffic during construction.” While not ideal, a trail width of 8 feet for a length of 70-feet is acceptable in a constrained environment.

On the new Georgia Avenue trail bridge, the clear width between handrails will be 14 feet, or an effective width of 10 feet, since bicyclists tend to shy away from vertical objectives such as walls and railings by about 2 feet. While this is one foot less than the recommended minimum 11-foot-wide trail, a reduced trail width is reasonable for this short distance.

Trail Crossings

Particular attention needs to be provided at all driveway crossings to enhance trail safety.

Motorists will access the B&O Station parking lot through a driveway that connects the fire station/ Progress Place parking lot to the B&O Station parking lot, passing the trail. The mandatory referral submission does not appear to have fully designed this crossing, but MCDOT has indicated that motorists who park in the two fire station parking spaces closest to the trail will be directed by signs to back into the parking spaces.

Staff's expectation is that, to comply with the signs, some motorists (particularly those who do not frequently use the parking lot) would drive across the trail into the B&O station, and then back into to parking spaces by crossing the trail a second time. Staff is concerned with safety at this location due to the increased potential for conflicts when vehicles are required to back-up.

Staff suggests improving safety at this crossing by modifying a portion of the proposed Progress Place parking lot, planned to be located between the Fire Station and the B&O Station, to have a one-way loop. Progress Place is currently under construction. The entire site will have 68 parking spaces, of which 23 are located in the area between Progress Place, the Silver Spring Fire Station, and the B&O Station, and the rest are located to the north of Progress Place and the Silver Spring Fire Station. This alternative would preserve the five remaining parking spaces at the B&O Station, but would eliminate two of Progress Place's parking spaces adjacent to the trail crossing. It would also improve the trail crossing by adding a raised crossing between the two parking lots.



Alternative Parking Lot Configuration at Progress Place

On Fenton Street and King Street, three driveways will intersect the Metropolitan Branch Trail, including two driveways for the Montgomery College parking garage and one driveway for the Extra Space Storage facility.

The proposed project has a number of features to alert both motorists and trail users to look for each other and slow down at these driveways. In addition, MCDOT should consider the following enhancements:

- **Consider using colored concrete or green thermoplastic at the driveway crossings on Fenton Street and King Street to convey that trail users have the right-of-way over motorists entering and exiting the parking garage.**
- **Install signs at exits to the parking garage that warn motorists to watch for bicyclists on the trail.** While there are existing "Stop for Pedestrians" warning signs inside the garage approaching the exit, bicyclists travel at a faster speed than pedestrians and motorists entering and exiting the garage should be warned to anticipate them.



Driveways at Extra Space Storage (left) and the Montgomery College Parking Garage (right)

Trail Lighting

Lighting will have a major impact on how well the trail provides access to the Red Line station, future Purple Line station, and Downtown Silver Spring. Since the span of service for the Purple Line and Red Line is about 18 hours every day, adequate lighting is essential for the function, safety, and security of the trail.

A plan for continuous lighting will be developed as part of final design of this project, including lighting on the new bridge over Georgia Avenue and in the underpass beneath Burlington Avenue. Therefore, **provide continuous lighting along the Metropolitan Branch Trail – including the proposed Georgia Avenue bridge – that is consistent with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards.**

The existing segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail in the City of Takoma Park lacks lighting, but the City is seeking funding for lighting along their portion of the Metropolitan Branch Trail through a grant application.

Security

Security on the District of Columbia portion of the Metropolitan Branch Trail has been a continuing issue. In particular, when the trail first opened 911 dispatchers were unable to locate distress calls on the trail because the trail was not addressed (e.g. 700 Main Street). Therefore, we recommend that **MCDOT coordinate with the Department of Permitting Services Office of the Fire Marshal to determine how emergency responders can best locate trail users who call 911 (Marie LaBaw, 240-773-8917)**. In the District of Columbia, part of the solution was to establish addresses for segments of the trail. The Planning Department can help to establish addresses for the trail in order to meet this requirement. Staff also recommends that **MCDOT coordinate with the Montgomery County Department of Parks and the DDOT Active Transportation Branch (Jim Sebastian, 202-671-2331) to understand the challenges that the District of Columbia has encountered with regard to trail security**.

One way to enhance security is to make trail users more visible to other trail users and people on nearby public streets. On most of the Montgomery County portion of the trail, multiple access points and a high level of activity will increase trail user's visibility. On the least visible section of the trail, where the trail passes beneath Burlington Avenue between the end of King Street and Selim Road, trail users will not be visible for a short distance. To address this issue, the project proposes lighting, emergency call boxes, and unmonitored cameras in this location.

The table below shows the approximate distance, walk time, and bicycling time between the proposed trail access points. Note that the access point at Dixon Lane will be completed as a 6-foot-wide sidewalk as part of the redevelopment of the Ripley II.

Travel Time between Trail Access Points

From	To	Length (feet)	Walk Time (min)	Bike Time (min)
End of King Street	Selim Road (midblock)	450	1:50	0:50
Selim Road (midblock)	Georgia Ave & Selim Road	500	2:10	0:50
Georgia Ave & Selim Road	Georgia Ave & B&O Station	425	1:50	0:40
Georgia Ave & B&O Station	Dixon Lane Extended	650	2:40	1:10
Dixon Lane Extended	Ripley Street	425	1:50	0:40
Total		2,450	10:20	4:10

Note: Assumed walking speed is 4 feet per second and bicycling speed is 10 feet per second

Data Collection

Collecting data is essential to building long-term support for walking and cycling, and for improving conditions for walking and bicycling. Several jurisdictions in the region, including Montgomery County, have permanent counters in place to measure walking and bicycling. In Montgomery County, the Department of Parks installed counters at two locations on the Capital Crescent Trail in 2014 and 2015. Therefore, we recommend that MCDOT **install bicycle counters in at least two places on the**

Metropolitan Branch Trail, including a location northwest of Georgia Ave where trail use is likely to be the highest due to the proximity to transit and Downtown Silver Spring. The counter hardware selected for use along the Metropolitan Branch Trail should have a high degree of accuracy, be able to differentiate between pedestrians and bicyclists and be integrated into a regional trail count interactive map (see: <http://ow.ly/6wY43004qKo>). Counters such as Arlington’s “Bikeometer” on the Custis Trail are particularly effective at highlighting trail usage by day, month, and year.



“Bikeometer” on the Custis Trail

Coordination with the District of Columbia

The Metropolitan Branch Trail passes through three jurisdictions, therefore it should be designed, to the extent possible, as a seamless experience for trail users. We recommend that MCDOT **coordinate with the District of Columbia to identify and install mile markers and include a trail wayfinding plan along the entire trail in Montgomery County (including existing segments) that utilizes the same signing**

precedent that the DDOT has implemented on the portions of the trail in the District of Columbia. Coordinate with DDOT Active Transportation Branch (Jim Sebastian, 202-671-2331 or Michael Alvino, 202-671-1321).



Mile marker and wayfinding conventions used on the District of Columbia portion of the trail

Pavement Material

Along Fenton Street, the trail is proposed to be constructed of concrete with longitudinal expansion joints down the middle of the path and transverse joints located every 5 feet. While asphalt provides a smoother surface, concrete is an acceptable material for shared use paths and offers many benefits over asphalt. When using concrete, it is important to construct and maintain a smooth riding surface. Per the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (page 5-26), the transverse joints in Portland cement needed to control cracking should be saw cut, rather than tooled, to provide a smoother ride. Therefore, MCDOT should **confirm that the portions of the trail that are proposed to be concrete will be saw cut rather than tooled, to provide a smoother ride.**

Additional Comments

On Fenton Street:

- The project proposes to establish a buffer by stripping out a segment of Fenton Street just south of King Street. **Consider converting the striped-out area in the roadway to a landscaped buffer to provide greater separation from traffic for trail users, less impervious surface, and more space to accommodate street trees.**
- Montgomery County's standard on-street parking width is 8 feet wide, but the proposed row of parking on Fenton Street is 9 feet wide. **Reduce the parking row from 9 feet to 8 feet wide and widen the buffer between the trail and on-street parking by 1 foot.**
- **Provide curb ramps and crosswalks across Fenton Street at the intersections with King Street and Islington Street to facilitate pedestrian travel.** The bus stops at King Street and New York Avenue should be shown.

- Limit the height of the landscaping proposed at Station 133+00 to 2 feet to limit sight distance obstruction between trail users and vehicles exiting garage.
- **At the intersection of King Street and Fenton Street, improve the opposite/ corresponding curb ramps to tie-in to the new project**
- As currently design, it appears that pedestrians and bicyclists traveling on King Street toward Fenton Street will have to veer right to turn left across King Street. **Provide a smooth transition between the trail on the south side of King Street and the crosswalk across King Street at Fenton Street.**

At the Burlington Avenue underpass:

- While the proposed plans include storm drain pipes on both sides of the trail, they only show curb and gutter on the east side of the trail. **Consider adding curb and gutter on the west side of the Burlington Avenue underpass to further reduce potential icing in the underpass.**

On Burlington Avenue:

- **In addition to repaving the bridge over Burlington Avenue, reconstruct the deteriorating sidewalks on the bridge and evaluate whether this project can facilitate implementation of the Silver Spring separated bike lane network on Burlington Avenue.**

On Selim Road:

- **At the proposed midblock crossing on Selim Road, consider locating the crosswalk in the middle of the parking space and converting the parking space to a curb extension to prevent motorists from parking in the crosswalk. In addition, flare the ramp to the trail for easier access.**
- **Install a traffic-worthy barrier at the top of the retaining wall along Selim Road where the trail drops below grade.** While MCDOT has previously indicated that a traffic worthy barrier will be added, it does not appear to be reflected in the mandatory referral submission. **In addition, if the fence between the tracks and the trail is less than 2 feet from the trail, the fence should be a smooth surface in the event that bicyclists strike it.**
- The typical section on Selim Road is proposed to have a 16-foot-wide traffic lane and a 9-foot-wide parking lane in order to allow trucks to enter and exit the auto shops. **Consider changing the typical section on Selim Road to a 17-foot-wide traffic lane and an 8-foot-wide parking lane to encourage motorists to park close to the curb.**
- The driveway aprons proposed near Roadway Centerline Station 507+00 and Station 509+00 will give the sidewalk a rolling appearance. **Consider depressing the sidewalk and aprons between Station 507+00 and 509+00 to reduce the effort needed by disabled persons to traverse the sidewalk. If the sidewalk is depressed for a long length, bollards should be added to deter vehicles from parking on the sidewalk.**
- There are small slivers of space between the path and the proposed wall at several locations where the pavement should be extended to the wall, including Stations 125+05 (east side), 126+80 (west side), 128+15 (west side), and 128+25 (west side).
- **Consider providing a sidewalk connection to the path at Station 117+60.**

At the B&O Station area:

- Add the boundaries of the historic B&O station to the plans and label as historic.
- **Provide tree protection measures to save the 28" tree on Georgia Ave at the B&O Station.**

In the Progress Place area:

- Show how the proposed alignment will transition to the existing segment of trail at Station 105+08.

And general comments:

- The landscaping sheets have a major deciduous tree labeled "QC". This is not in the plant list.
- **Corresponding sidewalk ramps should be shown on the opposite side of the street and upgraded, as needed, to achieve ADA compliance. Several ramps currently do not have detectable warning surfaces.**

PUBLIC HEARING

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation conducted a public hearing on the Metropolitan Branch Trail on Wednesday, May 4, 2016.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends **approval with comments** on the Mandatory Referral for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase 1 and 2

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: 2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan
- Attachment B: *Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch Trail*
- Attachment C: Mandatory Referral for the Metropolitan Branch Trail (May 25, 2006)
- Attachment D: Council T&E Committee Staff Report on Metropolitan Branch Trail (June 26, 2006)
- Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor (April 25, 2016)

Attachment A: 2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan

There will also be an important regional connector trail, the park-like Silver Spring Green Trail. It will link two regional park trails: Sligo Creek Park and Rock Creek Park. Two key destinations on this connector are the Transit Center and the Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch Trail. Another such trail will connect Montgomery College and the City of Takoma Park with Rock Creek Park.

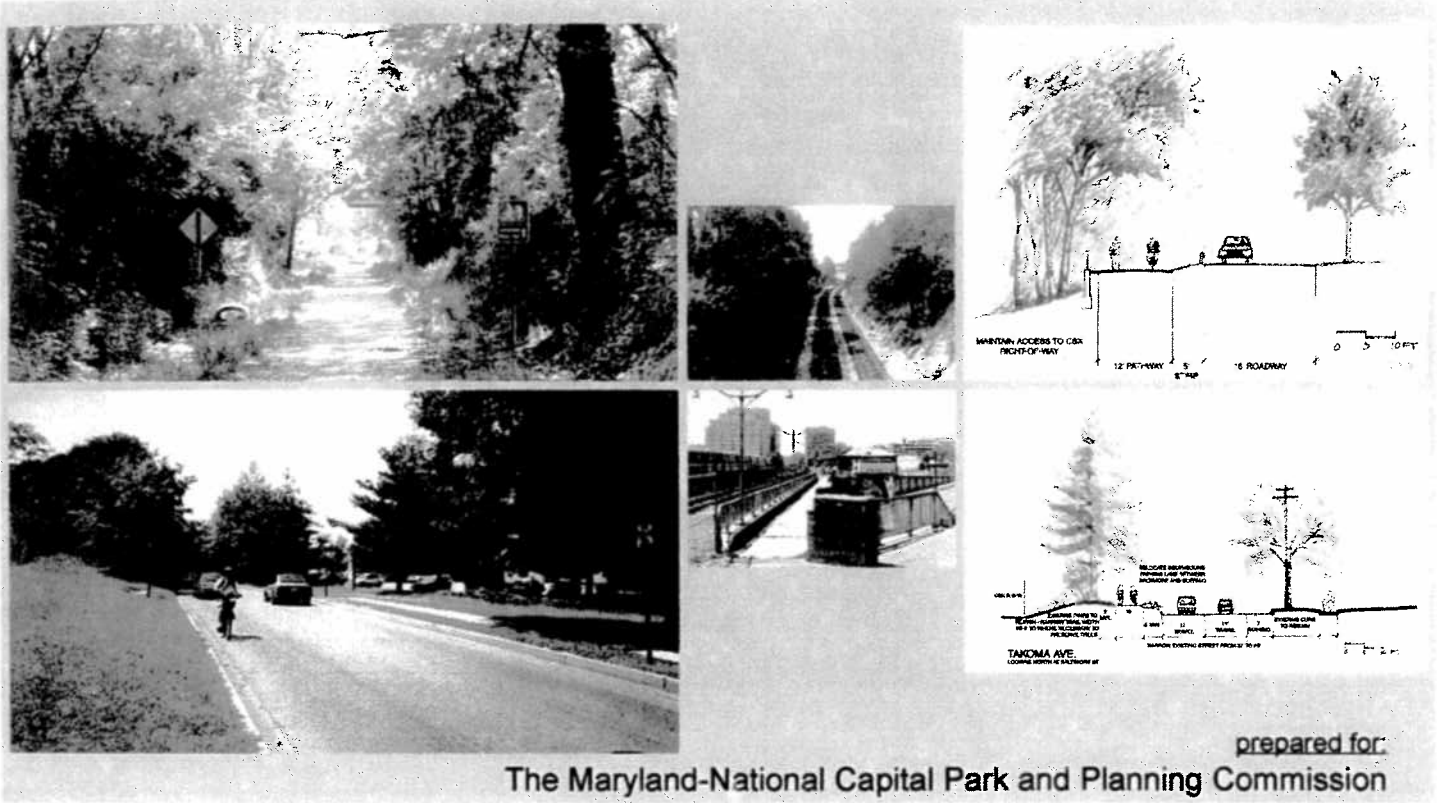
Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch Trail Guidance

- The Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch Trail should be a direct and continuous off-road trail for pedestrians and bicyclists parallel to the proposed Georgetown Branch Transitway and the Metro Red Line in the CBD. Additional rights-of-way or easements are necessary to complete the trail. Several issues concerning exact trail alignment where there are site constraints will be addressed during facility planning.
- Design of the Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch Trail should consider aesthetics, comfort, visibility, compatibility, safety, and accessibility. Opportunities to understand the community's setting could be achieved through the use of vistas and signs to inform trail users about areas of interest along the way.
- The trail and transitway should be adequately separated. The trail design should provide for adequate space between the trail and the Georgetown Branch Transitway, landscaping, attractive fences and walls, and rest areas (Figure 11). The recommended right-of-way/easement is 35 feet to accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians. This right-of-way may be reduced to 20 feet in constrained locations where the pedestrians follow a slightly different alignment and only cyclists are accommodated.
- The trail should cross Colesville Road on a bridge and go through the Transit Center, preferably separated from conflicting pedestrian movements. A bike stop should be provided in the Transit Center with lockers, bike rental services, and amenities for trail and transit users. Provision must be made for those trail users who are destined for the Transit Center and those who are passing through it.
- The Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch Trail should connect safely to the Silver Spring Green Trail and to nearby regional trails. It should also connect to local bikeways and other destinations of interest.
- A future concept study of the Ripley District, or a trail facility plan, should include specific recommendations for the trail route and bikeway connections which address Progress Place, possible combinations with future open spaces, and options for locating the Trail along streets generally parallel to the rail line rather than right next to it. While the continuation of the Metropolitan Branch Trail through the CSX site is desirable, site constraints may necessitate a different configuration. However, good connections must be provided at each end to ensure continuity of the bikeway.

Attachment B: Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch Trails

Facility Plan for the

Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch Trails



prepared by:
Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C.
in association with
Daniel Consultants Inc.

approved by:
Montgomery County Planning Board

January 2001

Attachment B: Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch Trails

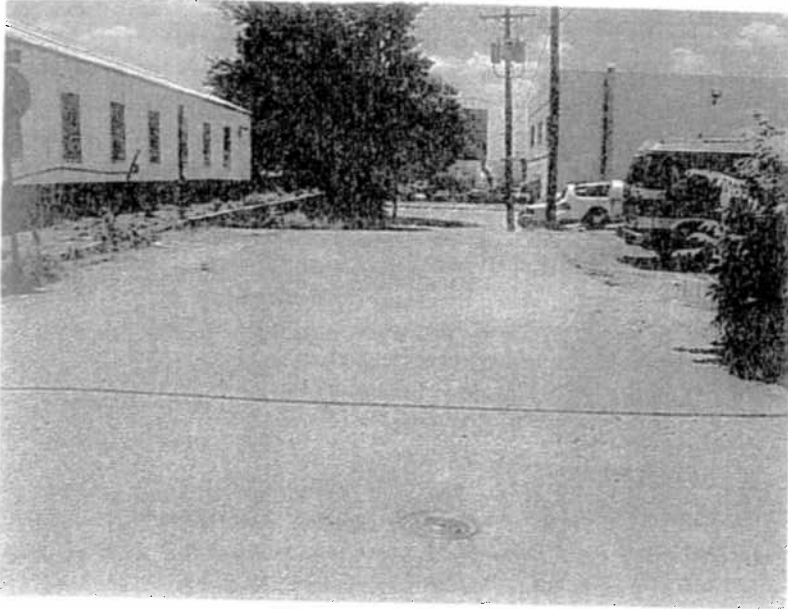


Figure 61: View south showing Colonial Avenue

Avenue. as an on-street bike way. From Dixon the on-street route will turn right onto Ripley and left onto Colonial through the public parking lot on the Little Tavern Track and connect back to the preferred alignment along the CSX/WMATA right-of-way.

Figure 62: Plan detail showing Ripley District

Upon completion of the Silver Spring Green Trail segment along Wayne Avenue in front of the Discovery Communications Headquarters, the interim route will shift to the opposite

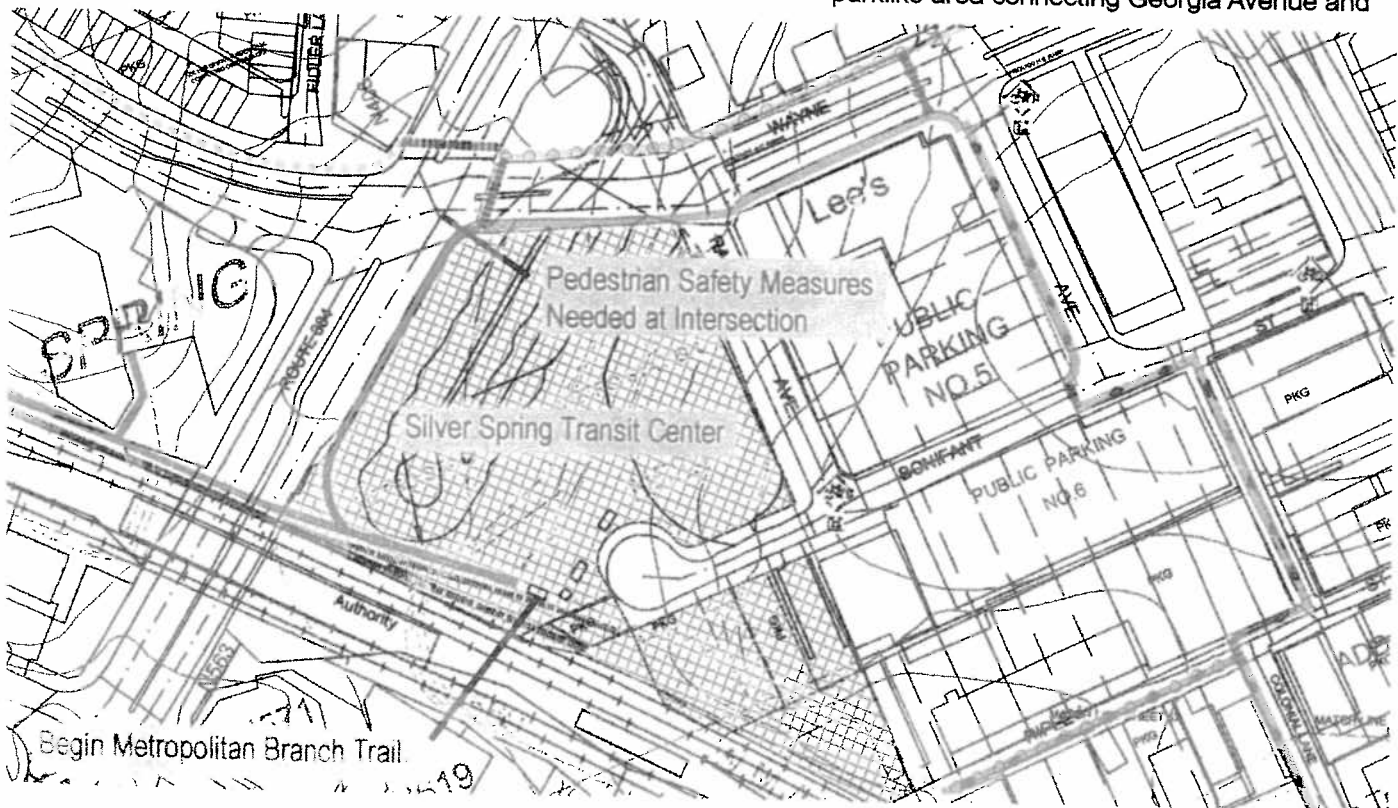
(westbound) side of Wayne Avenue and cross at Dixon Avenue to avoid the construction zone of the Silver Spring Transit Center.

Upon completion of the Silver Spring Transit Center and the Transitway/Trail through to Ripley, the trail will utilize an on-street route along Ripley to bypass Progress Place, until an addition can be constructed allowing for the relocation of the loading dock and the food preparation area.

The interim trail will then connect to the Permanent Alignment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail, south of the public parking lot at Progress Place. This will open the trail through to the historic B&O Station building.

Permanent Trail

The Metropolitan Branch Trail will proceed through to the historic B&O Station building. The trail design incorporates a single shared-use path with landscape and adjacent sitting areas, instead of two separate paths for bicycle and pedestrian use. This will allow for larger and more cohesive landscape areas providing a better growing environment for trees, shrubs and groundcover. The 35' wide right-of-way is envisioned as a long linear parklike area connecting Georgia Avenue and



Attachment B: Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch Trails

East-West Highway businesses and offices with the Silver Spring Metro area. The design for this area will need to be completed when more information is available about the proposed adjacent uses.

Montgomery Preservation, Inc., now restoring the historic B&O Station building, envisions the building serving as an important point along the trail. The historic B&O Station building area will eventually provide bicycle racks, water, access to rest rooms, interpretive panels and displays and possibly a small community room.

Two options are possible for the trail: proceeding under the station canopy and connecting with the landing area for the new span over Georgia Avenue; or proceeding around the north side of the station.

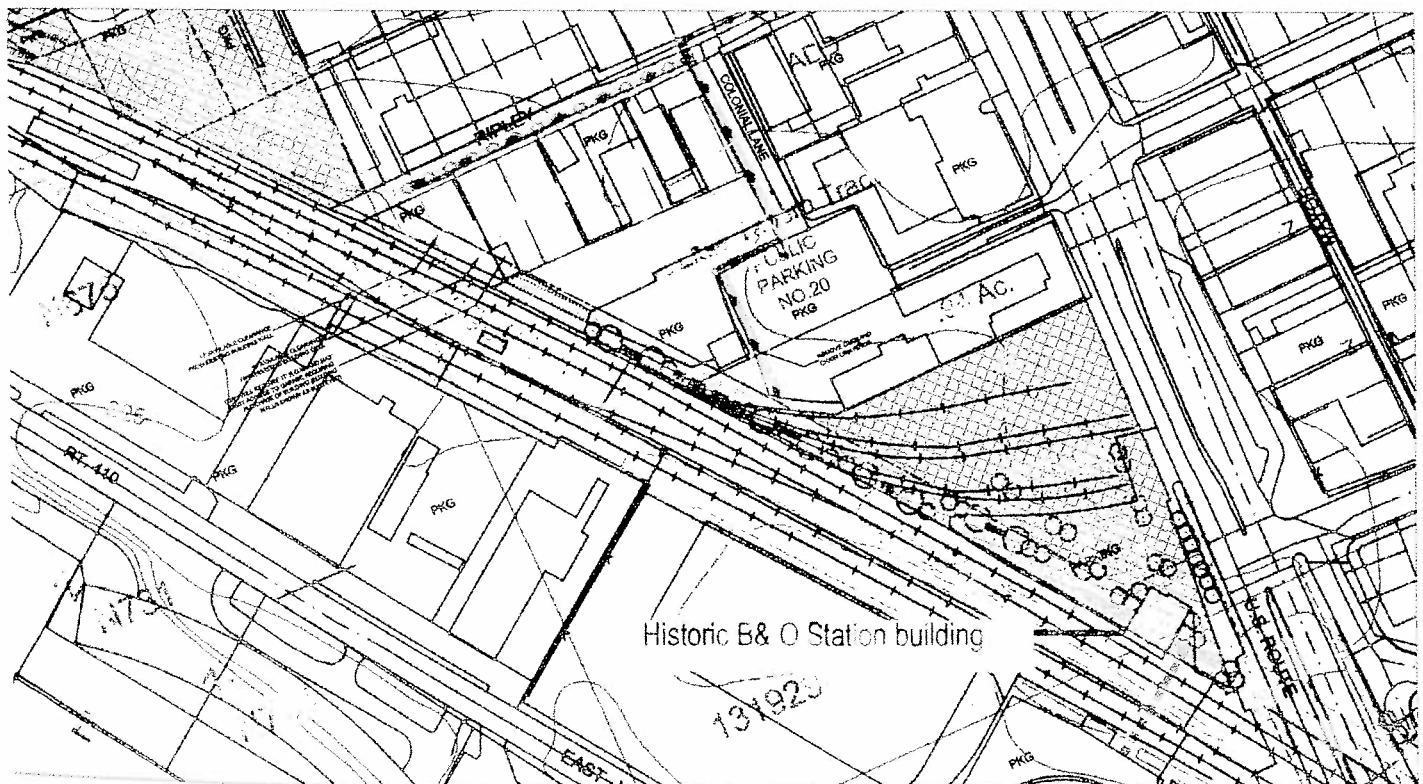
The north side option requires an exchange of land with the adjacent development parcels to replace parking spaces that will need to be removed to accommodate this trail alignment.

The canopy option will require a significant barrier between the live freight tracks and the trail. For this reason, the north side option may be more appropriate.



Figure 62:
View north from the
historic B&O Station
building

Figure 63:
Plan detail showing
historic B&O Station
building area



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Attachment C: Planning Board Comments on Metropolitan Branch Trail, May 25, 2006



RECEIVED
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
COUNCIL
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Office of the Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board
2006 JUN -6 PM 4:11



023353

May 25, 2006

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.

Attachment C: Planning Board Comments on Metropolitan Branch Trail, May 25, 2006

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

8



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





April 25, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: David Anspacher, FP&P
FROM: Scott Whipple, ^{SW}Historic Preservation Supervisor
SUBJECT: Metropolitan Branch Trail
Capital Improvement Project No. 501110
Mandatory Referral No. MR2016021

Pursuant to federal and state laws, the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), Maryland's State Historic Preservation Office, is charged with evaluating the Metropolitan Branch Trail's impact on National Register-listed or -eligible properties (see MHT correspondence, Circles 3-11). A cultural resource survey undertaken for the project identified two properties as historic: the **Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad**, which has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and the **Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station**, which is listed in the National Register and designated in the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation. MHT also holds a perpetual historic preservation easement on the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property.

Under Chapter 24A of the *Montgomery County Code*, the County must obtain a Historic Area Work Permit, approved by the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission, for the construction of the segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail that crosses the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property. Because MHT holds a preservation easement on this property, the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance requires that the County secure MHT approval of the project prior to applying for a Historic Area Work Permit.

As part of the ongoing consultations between the County and MHT, the County developed a series of alternatives for the construction of the shared-use facility. In 2013, the County consulted with MHT to consider the potential impacts to historic properties of three options: Option #1 with Detour, Option #6 and Option #7. Option #1 with Detour was the County's preferred alternative at that time. MHT provided the County with "comments made in accordance with applicable preservation law [that] should be considered preliminary 'pre-application' consultation" (MHT correspondence, March 13, 2013, Circle 4).

Each of the alternatives under consideration at that time involved construction of a 10' wide trail that crossed through the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property. Under Option #1 with Detour, the trail would cross the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station's platform under the station's canopy and connect with an approach ramp to a new bridge crossing over Georgia Avenue. This alternative required bicycle riders to dismount and walk their bikes through the parking lot if the owner of the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station was holding an outdoor event on the station platform area. Under Options #6 and #7, the proposed alignment diverted the trail from the CSXT/WMATA tracks to loop through the train station property along the north and east boundaries of the parcel before connecting with a new approach ramp and Georgia Avenue bridge crossing (Option #6) or the existing pedestrian bridge spanning Georgia Avenue (Option #7), which would require bicycle riders to dismount and walk over the bridge.

Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, April 25, 2016

In reviewing the options in 2013, MHT concluded: "The construction activities within the historic property boundary have the **potential to adversely impact** the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station" [emphasis theirs] before noting, "As the holder of a preservation easement on the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station, the State of Maryland has a responsibility and legal mandate to preserve and protect the historic integrity of the property." Further, MHT wrote, "The Trust does not believe that Option #1 with Detour is the only prudent and feasible alternative that meets the project's goals."

MHT's 2013 letter made clear the State Historic Preservation Office's preference for Option #7:

Since the project has the potential to adversely affect the historic property, could permanently impact the building's ability to function, and ultimately may not gain the approval of the Trust's Easement Committee as currently designed, we sincerely hope that the project team will take our comments and suggestions into consideration... The Trust believes that Option #7 meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards while achieving the project's goals...

Any proposed Changes/Alterations at the property must be permissible under the terms of the Deed of Easement and meet the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. As described in detail above, any excessive alteration of the property's context is not likely consistent with the *Standards* and therefore, could be deniable under the Deed of Easement. Of all of the options presented, I suggest further investigation into the possibility of moving forward with Option #7 as it is most closely aligned to the owner's submitted request dated February 7, 2012 and has the least impact of those currently proposed to the property's context.

In response, the County prepared the revised plans that are the subject of the Mandatory Review under consideration, which it provided to MHT as part of the project's ongoing consultation. As explained in greater detail in MHT's August 20, 2015 correspondence to the County, MHT has found that the current project plan "continues to impact the historic railroad and station" and "the revised trail alignment will have an **adverse effect** on the historic Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad and Silver Spring Railroad Station." However, the correspondence praised the revised plans for including an "alignment that avoids traveling through the station's canopied platform. The platform area provides indispensable museum programming space and is critical for interpreting the historic function of the building." MHT also suggests additional measures that would mitigate the impact of the project. (MHT correspondence, August 20, 2015, Circles 10-11)

The County, Montgomery Preservation, Inc. (the owner of the B&O Railroad Station), and the Maryland Historical Trust will continue to work towards development of a memorandum of agreement resolving adverse effects and subsequent MHT easement approval that would enable to project to proceed.

Preservation staff supports the ultimate construction of the trail, which will provide a new, safe transportation alternative enabling many more people to view, enjoy, access, and benefit from the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. Preservation staff concurs with MHT's assessment of the project's impacts and the need for mitigation as expressed in the March 13, 2013, and August 20, 2015, correspondence. If constructed sensitively, with appropriate mitigation in place, the Metropolitan Branch Trail may serve to enhance the station's use and the viability of the historic resource.

Staff Recommendation:

Preservation staff recommends that the Planning Board provide comments to the County encouraging continuation of the consultation process and ultimate MOA adoption, easement approval, and issuance of a Historic Area Work Permit for the alignment under consideration in Mandatory Referral No. MR2016021.

FILE COPY



*Maryland Department of Planning
Maryland Historical Trust*

*Martin O'Malley
Governor*

*Anthony G. Brown
Lt. Governor*

*Richard Eberhart Hall
Secretary*

*Matthew J. Power
Deputy Secretary*

March 13, 2013

Ms. Sogand Seirafi, P.E.
Chief, Transportation Planning and Design Section
Department of Transportation
100 Edison Park Drive, 4th Floor
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Re: Metropolitan Branch Trail – Phase I
From the Silver Spring Transit Center to Selim Road
Montgomery County, Maryland

Dear Ms. Seirafi:

Thank you for providing the Maryland Historical Trust (Trust) with several reports pertaining to Montgomery County's (County) proposed construction of the Metropolitan Branch Trail through downtown Silver Spring, Maryland. We are writing to provide our comments on the undertaking's potential to impact historic properties, particularly the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. The Trust administers multiple review responsibilities that involve the undertaking and its planned improvements to the historic property, as discussed below.

Trust staff carefully reviewed the following reports, submitted by Whitman, Reardon and Assoc. on behalf of the County: *Phase I Cultural Resources Survey of the Montgomery County Metropolitan Branch Trail, Montgomery County* (Dovetail 2012); *B&O Station Alternatives for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase I* (WRA 2013); and the *Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase I Facility Planning Final Project Prospectus* (Montgomery County 2006). The reports provide updates and project developments that have occurred since our last correspondence in August 2005 and present the latest information on cultural resource investigations, proposed plans and alternatives analysis. The submittal also included Determination of Eligibility (DOE) Forms prepared for properties fifty years old or older within the undertaking's Area of Potential Effects (APE) for Phase I development.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Trust: The Trust holds dual roles in reviewing not only the entire undertaking itself, but also any proposed improvements to the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property, for compliance and easement purposes. While each role has defined legal responsibilities and parameters, the shared focus of our involvement is to ensure the appropriate treatment of Maryland's significant historic properties during project planning and implementation. We offer the following discussion to clarify the Trust's multiple review responsibilities for this project.

The Trust, as Maryland's State Historic Preservation Office, must review projects that entail federal and/or state agency involvement (including funds, permits, or licenses) to assess their effects on historic properties, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and the Maryland Historical Trust Act of 1985, as amended, State Finance and Procurement Article §§ 5A-325 and 5A-326 of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Both historic preservation laws require the involved federal/state agency to

Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, April 25, 2016

Ms. Sogand Seirafi, P.E.
Metropolitan Branch Trail – Phase I
Page 2

consider the effects of the proposed project on significant historic properties, including architectural and archeological resources. Part of the review process involves consultation between the agency (or its designee) and our office to identify and evaluate historic properties that may be affected by the project and to develop measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate any adverse effects on significant historic properties.

We understand that the County currently plans to construct the Metropolitan Branch Trail in two phases. We acknowledge that the two phases of the undertaking have the potential to combine into a single undertaking, and that Phase II will require an MDE/COE Joint Permit Application. We appreciate the County's efforts to initiate consultation with the Trust early in project planning and we have reviewed the submitted materials as part of this continuing consultation process. The Trust's comments made in accordance with applicable preservation law should be considered preliminary "pre-application" consultation. As project planning progresses and the need for federal/state funds and/or permits have been firmly established, the Trust will continue formal consultation, as applicable, with the County, relevant federal and/or state agencies, and other involved parties. Our preliminary compliance review comments are presented below.

The Trust also has a role in the review of the proposed undertaking as the owner of a perpetual historic preservation easement on the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station, one of the historic properties potentially affected by the project. Through the granting of a preservation easement, the owners of the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station have agreed to relinquish partial development rights, to maintain the property, to provide limited public access, and to obtain prior approval for any changes or alterations. In exchange, the Trust promises to protect the property by ensuring continuous compliance with the terms of the easement. It is the Trust's responsibility to protect against undesirable development or indirect deterioration of the easement property. The easement can prohibit alteration of the structure's significant features, changes in the usage of the building and land, or subdivision and topographic changes to the property. Property owners may submit applications for the alteration of an easement property for review by the Trust's Easement Committee and authorization by the Director of the Trust. Our comments regarding the proposed impact to the Trust's easement property are also presented below, with specific recommendations provided at the end of this letter.

Historic Properties within the Undertaking's APE: The Phase I Cultural Resource Survey conducted by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group identified 22 properties that meet the age threshold for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Two of these properties were previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register. These properties are the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station (MIHP No. M: 36-15) and the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad (MIHP No. M: 37-16). The Trust concurs that the remaining 20 properties identified by the Phase I cultural resources study are not eligible for listing in the National Register. Prior consultation with the Trust concluded that the project is unlikely to affect significant archeological resources, and therefore, no additional archeological investigations are necessary.

Project Description and Proposed Alternatives: The proposed Metropolitan Branch Trail will be a shared-use facility to accommodate a wide range of users such as children, pedestrians, recreational and commuter cyclists. The project will extend the existing trail by 0.7 miles between the Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus of Montgomery College to the Silver Spring Transit Center. Construction of this phase will complete the Metropolitan Branch Trail within Montgomery County and is a vital component of a 27-mile

Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, April 25, 2016

Ms. Sogand Seirafi, P.E.
Metropolitan Branch Trail – Phase I
Page 3

loop around the Capital. According to Montgomery County, the goal of the trail is to provide safe, off-road access to activity centers; connect users to other existing and proposed trails; increase recreation opportunities; and provide an alternate mode of transportation through the area.

Montgomery County originally investigated five alternatives for constructing this segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail at the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. All five options included a 10' wide trail running along the CSXT/Wmata tracks. The trail would travel through the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station platform, under the existing station canopy. Options #1-4 would require the construction of a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue. An approach ramp would be constructed on the station property to access the new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue. Option #5 would utilize the existing pedestrian bridge over Georgia Avenue. The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation recommended Option #5 due to costs, safety and maintenance issues, in addition to impacting the least number of properties. However, Option #1 was ultimately selected by the Montgomery County Council in 2006.

Since 2010, Montgomery County has investigated three additional alternatives (Option #1 with Detour, Option #6 and Option #7) that attempt to avoid impacts to the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property. Under Options #6 and #7, the proposed trail alignment would divert from the CSXT/Wmata tracks to follow the front and side parcel boundaries of the station property, basically looping around the station building. Option #6 would include the construction of a new trail bridge crossing over Georgia Avenue and an approach ramp on the station property. Option #7 would utilize the existing pedestrian bridge over Georgia Avenue. Options which utilize the existing 5'10" pedestrian bridge would require trail users on bicycles to dismount and walk their bikes over the bridge. Option #1 with Detour would be the same as Option #1 described above. Under Option #1 with Detour, the trail would be constructed through the Silver Spring B&O Station platform/canopy area, with an approach ramp and new bridge crossing over Georgia Avenue. However, Option #1 with Detour would require bicycle users to dismount their bikes and walk through the station parking lot when outdoor events are held within the station's platform/canopy area.

Analysis of Potential Effects on Historic Properties: Options carried forward for analysis by the County include Option #1 with Detour, Option #6 and Option #7. As noted previously, Options #2-4 were dropped by the County in 2006. In the report *B&O Station Analysis of Alternatives for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase I*, the County identified Option 1 with Detour as the preferred alternative. We have considered the potential impacts to historic properties under Options #1 with Detour, #6 and #7.

The two historic properties within the undertaking's APE include the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad and the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. The Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad is currently utilized by the CSXT and WMATA. Historic elements of the railroad within the project area include the track alignment and a combined railroad/pedestrian bridge crossing Georgia Avenue. Proposed project activities with the potential to impact the railroad include: the construction of a trail adjacent to the railroad alignment; construction of a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue in the vicinity of the existing railroad bridge; and the utilization of the existing railroad bridge over Georgia Avenue for the new trail. Based on current plans and renderings, it appears that the proposed project activities would not adversely impact the historic railroad. The character-defining features of the railroad would remain intact under these alternatives.

Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, April 25, 2016

Ms. Sogand Seirafi, P.E.
Metropolitan Branch Trail – Phase I
Page 4

The Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station is a Colonial Revival-style depot constructed in 1945. Although the Phase I Cultural Resources report states that the building is in fair condition and has diminished integrity of setting, we disagree with those statements. The station building has undergone a beautiful restoration. While the setting outside of the historic property boundary has changed considerably over the years, we believe that the setting and integrity within the historic boundary remain intact. Construction activities proposed within the station's historic property boundary include: the construction of a trail within the station platform/canopy area; installation of a fence under the canopy to separate the trail from the station; construction of an approach ramp to connect the trail with a new bridge crossing Georgia Avenue; and other railings, fences and retaining walls. The proposed trail would change the use of the property and change historic physical features within the historic property. The construction activities within the historic property boundary have the **potential to adversely impact** the historic Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station.

Suggested Treatment of Historic Properties: As the holder of a preservation easement on the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station, the State of Maryland has a responsibility and legal mandate to preserve and protect the historic integrity of the property. Our last correspondence on this subject matter, in August 2005, noted that the Trust obtained a preservation easement on the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station in 2001 and we encouraged the County to develop alternatives that limited impacts within the station's easement boundary. It is clear from our review of the County's actions, as documented in the project submittal, that the repercussions of the Trust's preservation easement were not fully considered during the County's decision making process until 2010.

As noted above, the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation first recommended Option #5 as the preferred alternative in 2006. This is the alternative that utilizes the existing pedestrian bridge over Georgia Avenue. Although rejected by the County Council, this previous recommendation by the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation demonstrates that other viable alternatives exist that would avoid major impacts to the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property while continuing to satisfy the project's goals. The Trust does not believe that Option #1 with Detour is the only prudent and feasible alternative that meets the project's goals.

One of the best ways to preserve a historic structure is to ensure that it maintains its usefulness and vitality. Last year, Montgomery Preservation, Inc. hosted dozens of public programs, meetings and special functions at the station. The ability to host these events is essential for the survival of the historic property and the organization. The Trust believes that the Metropolitan Branch Trail project could bring new opportunities to the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. As a historically significant transportation-related resource, the property should be able to adapt to new transportation uses, such as a pedestrian trail, and thrive as the focal point of new users. However, the trail as currently designed does not respect or compliment the historic function and features of the property. The purpose of the station's platform/canopy area is to provide an open circulation space to facilitate a connection between the station, its users and the transportation mode. Under the County's preferred plan, this platform is largely commandeered and partitioned off for the use of the trail. This restricts the station's ability to interface with the trail users as well as prevents the easy use of the platform as a multi-purpose event space. In addition, the trail's crossing of Georgia Avenue on a new bridge structure also requires the use of a portion of the historic property for approach ramp work. The approach ramp will reduce the open space surrounding the station and eliminate parking spaces. As a result, the proposed trail design introduces uses and features that diminish its historic integrity and jeopardize the building's ability to stay vital.

Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, April 25, 2016

Ms. Sogand Scirafi, P.E.
Metropolitan Branch Trail – Phase I
Page 5

Since the project has the potential to adversely affect the historic property, could permanently impact the building's ability to function, and ultimately may not gain the approval of the Trust's Easement Committee as currently designed, we sincerely hope that the project team will take our comments and suggestions into consideration. As outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, the trail project should not alter any of the property's character-defining spaces. The Trust believes that Option #7 meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards while achieving the project's goals.

MHT Easement Coordination:

Per the Deed of Easement, recorded February 2, 2001, for the property known as the Silver Spring B&O Railroad, Section 4(D) Changes and Alterations (i) states "*without the express written consent of the Director of the Maryland Historical Trust (the "Director"), Grantor shall not cause, permit, or suffer any construction which would alter or change the Property or the Exterior or Interior of any improvements thereon as described and depicted in Exhibit A...*" The procedure for reviewing any proposed changes/alterations requires the property owner or their authorized representative to complete and submit a Change/Alteration Project Proposal Application and submit it to the Trust one week prior to a scheduled meeting date. All Applications must be received in hard-copy and with an original signature. Our Application, procedures for review and 2013 Easement Committee dates are all found on our website here: <http://mht.maryland.gov/easement.html>.

As neither the property owner, Montgomery Preservation, Inc., nor an authorized representative requested review, the Easement program did not formally review the following reports for comment: Whitman, Requardt and Assoc. on behalf of the County: *Phase I Cultural Resources Survey of the Montgomery County Metropolitan Branch Trail, Montgomery County* (Dovetail 2012); *B&O Station Alternatives for the Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase I* (WRA 2013); and the *Metropolitan Branch Trail Phase I Facility Planning Final Project Prospectus* (Montgomery County 2006). The last formal review for Changes/Alterations at the property was requested by Montgomery Preservation, Inc. on February 7, 2012 where I, as Director approved an "alternate alignment for the Metropolitan Branch Trail (plans dated April 6, 2011)". This approval was extended upon Montgomery Preservation, Inc.'s request on February 19, 2013.

Any proposed Changes/Alterations at the property must be permissible under the terms of the Deed of Easement and meet the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. As described in detail above, any excessive alteration of the property's context is not likely consistent with the *Standards* and therefore, could be deniable under the Deed of Easement. Of all of the options presented, I suggest further investigation into the possibility of moving forward with Option #7 as it is most closely aligned to the owner's submitted request dated February 7, 2012 and has the least impact of those currently proposed to the property's context.

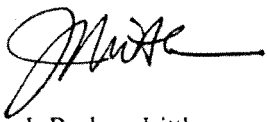
Continuing Consultation with the Trust and Consulting Parties: We look forward to working with the County and the project's consulting parties to select an alternative that achieves the project goal of providing an improved trail facility while respecting the Trust's legal mandate to preserve the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property. We are confident that we will be able collaboratively identify an alternative that ensures that the property is able to accommodate all users and uses, today and in the future.

Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, April 25, 2016

Ms. Sogand Seirafi, P.E.
Metropolitan Branch Trail – Phase I
Page 6

Thank you for your cooperation and we await ongoing consultation with all the involved parties to complete our review of this undertaking. If you have questions or require additional information, please call Tim Tamburrino (for historic built environment) at ttamburrino@mdp.state.md.us / 410-514-7637, Beth Cole (for archeology) at bcole@mdp.state.md.us / 410-514-7631 or Amy Skinner (for easements) at askinner@mdp.state.md.us / 410-514-7632. We appreciate this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



J. Rodney Little
Director / State Historic Preservation Officer
Maryland Historical Trust

JRL/EJC/TJT/AS
201300226

cc: Edgar Gonzalez, Montgomery County DOT
Wayne Christiansen, Montgomery County DOT
James A. Guinther, Whitman, Requardt and Associates
Lorraine Pearsall, Montgomery Preservation, Inc.
Scott Whipple, Montgomery County HPC





Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor

David R. Craig, Secretary
Wend W. Peters, Deputy Secretary

Maryland Department of Planning
Maryland Historical Trust

August 20, 2015

Mr. Bruce Johnston, P.E.
Chief, Division of Transportation Engineering
Montgomery County Department of Transportation
100 Edison Park Drive, 4th Floor
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Re: Metropolitan Branch Trail
From the Silver Spring Transit Center to Selim Road
Montgomery County, Maryland

Dear Mr. Johnston:

Thank you for providing the Maryland Historical Trust (Trust) with revised plans for the Metropolitan Branch Trail through downtown Silver Spring, Maryland. We are writing to offer our ongoing comments on the undertaking's effects on historic properties, particularly the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station, pursuant to the Maryland Historical Trust Act of 1985, State Finance and Procurement Article §§ 5A-325 and 5A-326 of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

As discussed in our previous correspondence, the Trust has multiple review responsibilities that involve the undertaking and its planned improvements to Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property. In addition to the review of the project in accordance with state preservation law, the Trust also has a role in the review of the proposed undertaking as the owner of a perpetual historic preservation easement on the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. While each role has defined legal responsibilities and parameters, the shared focus of our involvement is to ensure the appropriate treatment of Maryland's significant historic properties during project planning and implementation.

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments to assist in the development of detailed project plans that minimize impacts to historic properties and ultimately allow the Trust to approve the alteration of the easement property. We are pleased to offer the following assessment of effects to historic properties and additional comments on the revised trail plan.

Preliminary Assessment of Effects: The two historic properties within the undertaking's area of potential effects include the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad and the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station. The Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad is currently utilized by the CSXT and WMATA. Historic elements of the railroad within the project area include the track alignment and a through truss bridge, concrete retaining walls, staircases and metal railings for the crossing of Georgia Avenue. The B&O Railroad is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register).

The Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station is a Colonial Revival-style depot constructed in 1945. The station building has been beautifully restored and the integrity of setting within the historic property boundary remains intact. Historic elements include the station building, canopy, platform area, pedestrian underpass and vehicular parking area. The railroad station is listed in the National Register.

9

Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, April 25, 2016

Mr. Bruce Johnston, P.E.
Metropolitan Branch Trail
Page 2

Current project plans show a proposed 10' wide trail traveling north adjacent to the existing CSXT/WMATA railroad alignment then crossing Georgia Avenue on a new pedestrian bridge before entering the south end of the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property. The proposed trail then loops around the front of the railroad station through the existing paved parking lot before rejoining the CSXT/WMATA alignment and continuing north to the Silver Spring Transit Center.

The revised trail alignment continues to impact the historic railroad and station. Proposed project activities with the potential to affect historic properties include: the construction of a new trail bridge over Georgia Avenue in close proximity to the existing railroad bridge; installation of the trail through the station property; loss of parking areas; and the relocation of two pedestrian staircases associated with the B&O Railroad crossing of Georgia Avenue.

The proposed trail would change the use of the historic property and alter physical features that contribute to the significance of the historic property. The function of property in front of the station will change as a result of the trail. Traditionally, this space was utilized for passenger and parcel loading zones and parking. According to the plans, once the trail is constructed, these functions will be removed. Loss of proximate parking and loading areas may jeopardize the long-term viability of the property. The trail also introduces physical elements that obscure and intrude into the property's historic setting. The new trail bridge will also obstruct the historic railroad bridge from the view of southbound travelers on Georgia Avenue. For these reasons, the revised trail alignment will have an **adverse effect** on the historic Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad and Silver Spring Railroad Station.

Possible Minimization Efforts: Although the revised project will have an adverse effect on historic properties, we appreciate that the County has developed a proposed trail alignment that avoids traveling through the station's canopied platform. The platform area provides indispensable museum programming space and is critical for interpreting the historic function of the building. The platform area will remain an intact and productive feature of the property.

One of the best ways to ensure the preservation of a historic structure is to maintain its usefulness and vitality. In order to continue minimizing, and ultimately mitigating, the impact of the project, we offer the following suggestions and comments for the County's consideration in refining the plans for the project:

- **Maximize distance between trail and station building:** Increase the length of trail that extends immediately adjacent to the Georgia Avenue retaining wall. Explore the possibility of eliminating the Georgian Avenue pedestrian staircases from the plan and move the bridge abutment closer to Georgia Avenue. Also, explore ways to tighten radius of curve when the trail exits the pedestrian bridge. This could increase length of trail that runs parallel to Georgia Avenue;
- **Bridge Design:** Pursue a design exemption to eliminate the chain-link overhead cage from the bridge. We would also prefer a metal picket, clear acrylic glass or other alternative material;
- **Parking:** Add parking spaces on south side of the station building and provide dedicated parking spaces adjacent to the station;
- **Landscaping:** Once all parking options have been maximized, look for opportunities to remove some non-functional areas of pavement adjacent to the station. Also, please retain the segment of rail tracks within the existing parking area;
- **Appurtenances:** Original examples of fencing and lighting for the station property exist. Explore options for introducing original or reproduction fencing and fixtures to the property. Explore option of replacing the

Attachment E: Memo from Scott Whipple, Historic Preservation Supervisor, April 25, 2016

Mr. Bruce Johnston, P.E.
Metropolitan Branch Trail
Page 3

existing chain-link fence along the CSX right-of-way and under the station canopy with a metal picket style fence;

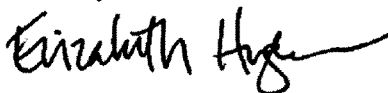
- **Signage and Wayfinding:** Add directional wayfinding signs within the region and interpretive signage to the property. Explore option to reconstruct the original B&O railroad sign and signal light;
- **Compensation for use of property:** The Trust would like to ensure that the property owners are compensated for any long-term operational encumbrances or hardship endured by the location of the trail within the station property. Such an agreement would be codified in a separate agreement between the County and the property owners.

The Trust sincerely hopes that the project team will take our comments and suggestions into consideration to minimize and mitigate the project's impacts on the historic properties. We look forward to working with the County and the project's consulting parties to develop an alternative that achieves the goal of providing an improved trail facility while respecting the Trust's legal mandate to preserve the Silver Spring B&O Railroad Station property. We are confident that we will be able to collaboratively design an alternative that benefits all of Maryland's citizens.

As project planning progresses, we will gladly review the next version of refined project plans that takes our suggestions into consideration. We will then work with all involved parties to develop a memorandum of agreement to resolve the project's adverse effects. Please note that these comments do not represent the Trust's review and approval of work on the easement property.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have questions or require additional information, please call Tim Tamburrino (for historic built environment) at tim.tamburrino@maryland.gov / 410-514-7637, Beth Cole (for archeology) at beth.cole@maryland.gov / 410-514-7631 or Amy Skinner (for easements) at amy.skinner@maryland.gov / 410-514-7632. We appreciate this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hughes
Acting Director / State Historic Preservation Officer
Maryland Historical Trust

EHE/JC/TJT
201500947

cc: Ms. Sogand Seirafi, Montgomery County DOT
Mr. Ken Kendall, Montgomery County DOT
Ms. Valerie Kowalski, Whitman, Requardt and Associates
Mr. James A. Guinther, Whitman, Requardt and Associates
Ms. Eileen McGuckian, Montgomery Preservation, Inc.
Ms. Judy Christensen, Montgomery Preservation, Inc.
Ms. Michele Rosenfeld, Law Office of Michele Rosenfeld LLC
Mr. Scott Whipple, Montgomery County HPC
Ms. Amy Skinner, MHT
Mr. Steven Foster, SHA
Dr. Julie Schablitsky, SHA

