

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

July 2, 2002

MCPB
Item# 11
07/18/02

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeff Zyontz, Chief, County-wide Planning Division
John Hench, PhD, Supervisor, Park Planning and Resource Analysis *JEH*

FROM: Michael Zamore, Natural Resources Specialist *MZ*
Lyn Coleman, Trail Planning Supervisor *LC*

SUBJECT: **Mandatory Referral No. 02901-DPW&T-1**
Replacement/Rehabilitation of Georgetown Branch Trail
Trestle Bridge over Rock Creek

Location: Jones Mill Road at Sta. 0+33.39 and Grubb Road
at Sta. 27+53.71 in Chevy Chase, Maryland

Master Plan Area: Bethesda-Chevy Chase and West Silver Spring
Zoning in area: R-60

Applicant: Montgomery County Department of Public Works and
Transportation

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval with comments.

1. The Project will be subject to the park permitting process requirements for regeneration/revegetation in accordance with the Guidelines/Requirements for Reforestation/Revegetation of Parkland. A plan showing the limits of disturbance and all proposed construction entrances must be provided.
2. Continue community outreach efforts to keep local residents and neighbors informed as to the project timetable and construction scheduling.
3. Redesign Jones Mill Road intersection signals to accommodate trail crossing.
4. Consider upgrading the trail used as community access from the intersection of Terrace Drive and Grubb Road.
5. Consider accelerating the funding needed to construct an alternate route that avoids sending trail users along Brookeville Road.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T), Division of Engineering Services, proposes to construct a timber deck bicycle and pedestrian trail on the existing Georgetown Branch trestle bridge over Rock Creek and Rock Creek Trail, and to construct a crushed stone approach trail at each end of the bridge (see Attachment A).

THE SITE

The site is part of a stream valley greenway that originates south of Route 108, passes through Rockville, and enters the District of Columbia below Chevy Chase. Rock Creek provides links to the North Branch and Cabin John Greenways. Rock Creek Park is one of the most popular bicycling locations in the Washington metropolitan area.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The proposed project is part of a long-term project to construct an "off-road" shared-use trail linking Silver Spring, Maryland, with the District of Columbia (see Attachment B). The Capital Crescent Trail is also listed in the Facility Plan as an integral part of the proposed Georgetown Branch Transitway/Trail project that will run as close as possible to the CSX and WMATA right-of-way. This alignment and its linkages have been adopted by the Planning Board on the basis of numerous documents and previous studies that include the Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment (1990), the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, Georgetown Branch Transitway/Trail Major Investment Study and DEIS (1996), and the North and West Silver Spring Master Plan (2001). There is a planned connecting trail link between the Capital Crescent Trail and the Rock Creek Trail in the Park CIP program. Given last years cut backs, that connection is not programmed for construction funding.

PROPOSED PROJECT

Trail Component

The project includes the construction of a bike path that starts at the sidewalk on the east side of Jones Mill Road and continues eastward for 800 feet along the existing abandoned rail line, to connect with an existing crushed stone trail at Grubb Road. This part of the Capital Crescent Trail will connect existing trails at Jones Mill Road and Grubb Road in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Rehabilitating the bridge over Rock Creek will allow the elimination of the current, approximately 1¼-mile long detour in the Georgetown Branch Trail.

To accomplish the tie-in at Grubb Road, fill material will be placed so as to provide an at-grade connection, and maintain a maximum grade of 5%, which is the recommended maximum grade for a crushed stone bike trail. The existing railroad fill and the ballast surface approach 100 feet height above Rock Creek, with steep side slopes. For that reason, the 10-foot bike trail will be centered on the old railroad alignment and a 4'- 6" high, 3 rail, split rail timber fence will be used to protect trail users in areas of steep slopes. The trail will be paved with crushed stone, rather than asphalt, because this is only an interim trail that may need to be reconstructed when the trolley line is built. Crushed stone will provide a tightly compacted yet pervious surface.

Trestle Bridge Component

An abandoned timber and steel trestle railroad bridge currently spans Rock Creek approximately ¾-mile north of East-West Highway. The trestle was originally constructed in 1928, and parts of the wooden superstructure were replaced with steel in 1958 and again, in 1973. Since abandonment in 1985 the structure has been subjected to several fires and is currently in a state

of disrepair, showing signs of decay and fire damage. A CHC/G&O Bridge Engineering team spent several days in the field evaluating this damage and determined that approximately 45 linear feet of the timber ties have been consumed by fire and that the longitudinal stringers show approximately 40% section loss. The team proposed that parts of the trestle bridge should be rehabilitated while other parts should be replaced, to provide a safe crossing for pedestrians.

The project proposes to completely replace one badly damaged section and to make minor repairs to several others. This can be done without removal of trees or the need for heavy construction equipment below the bridge. No construction work will be performed in Rock Creek itself and the Rock Creek trail, which passes under the trestle bridge, will remain open and accessible to the public during construction work.

The project would install a new superstructure with a timber plank deck, supported by the existing trestle. A new, prefabricated steel truss superstructure and overlook will span directly over the existing bridge and retain most of the existing superstructure units only as architectural elements.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Community meetings were not held for this referral because of the extensive community involvement and public outreach that formed part of the preparation of the Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent and Metropolitan Branch Trails, approved by the Montgomery County Planning Board in January 2001. Facility Plan preparation involved community meetings and liaison with civic and neighborhood groups, trail user groups, as well as Municipal, County and State agencies. Most recently, public comments were received at the Maryland Transportation Administration (MTA) Public Meetings on the Transitway Trail/Purple Line. Community and trail user groups that included the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, Town of Chevy Chase, and the Greater Bethesda Capital Crescent Trail Coalition attended these meetings. The comments received were mostly favorable. For the purposes of this Referral, staff sent copies of the referral packet to the above groups and to members of the Project Advisory Group (PAG) for the Capital Crescent and Metropolitan Branch Trails Facility Plan, and informed them of the Planning Board hearing date.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Relation to Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch Trails.

The Planning Board approved the Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent & Metropolitan Branch trails in January 2001. Together these trails comprise 3½ miles and will be part of the larger 11 mile Capital Crescent Trail Corridor. The Facility Plan identifies trail alignments, trail improvements and a phasing and implementation process for the Capital Crescent and Metropolitan Branch trails (Attachment B). The plan was developed with the assistance of civic and neighborhood groups, trail user groups and representatives from municipal, county and state agencies.

The Facility Plan addresses trail improvements, which should occur once the Rock Creek trestle bridge is open. These improvements are important given the fact that anticipated trail use during peak times is expected to be over 500 persons/hour once the trestle bridge is open to public use.

Although not actually part of the mandatory referral being reviewed by the Board, the following recommendations are critical to assure trail safety and to enhance enjoyment of the trail once the trestle bridge is rehabilitated and open to public use:

- **Redesign Jones Mill Road intersection signals to accommodate a safer trail crossing.**

Trail users must cross Jones Mill Road. Attachment C shows the Facility Plan's recommended improvements to the Jones Mill Road intersection. At present the crosswalk pattern at Jones Mill Road produces many conflicts between pedestrians and turning cars. The signal lights are so long in timing that impatient trail users cross against the light. The recommended crossing shown as Attachment C must be implemented as part of this project to ensure the safety of trail users.

- **Consider upgrading the trail used as community access from the intersection of Terrace Drive and Grubb Road.**

This trail connector should be improved by DPWT from a gravel path to an asphalt trail to enhance access to the Capital Crescent trail from the surrounding neighborhood.

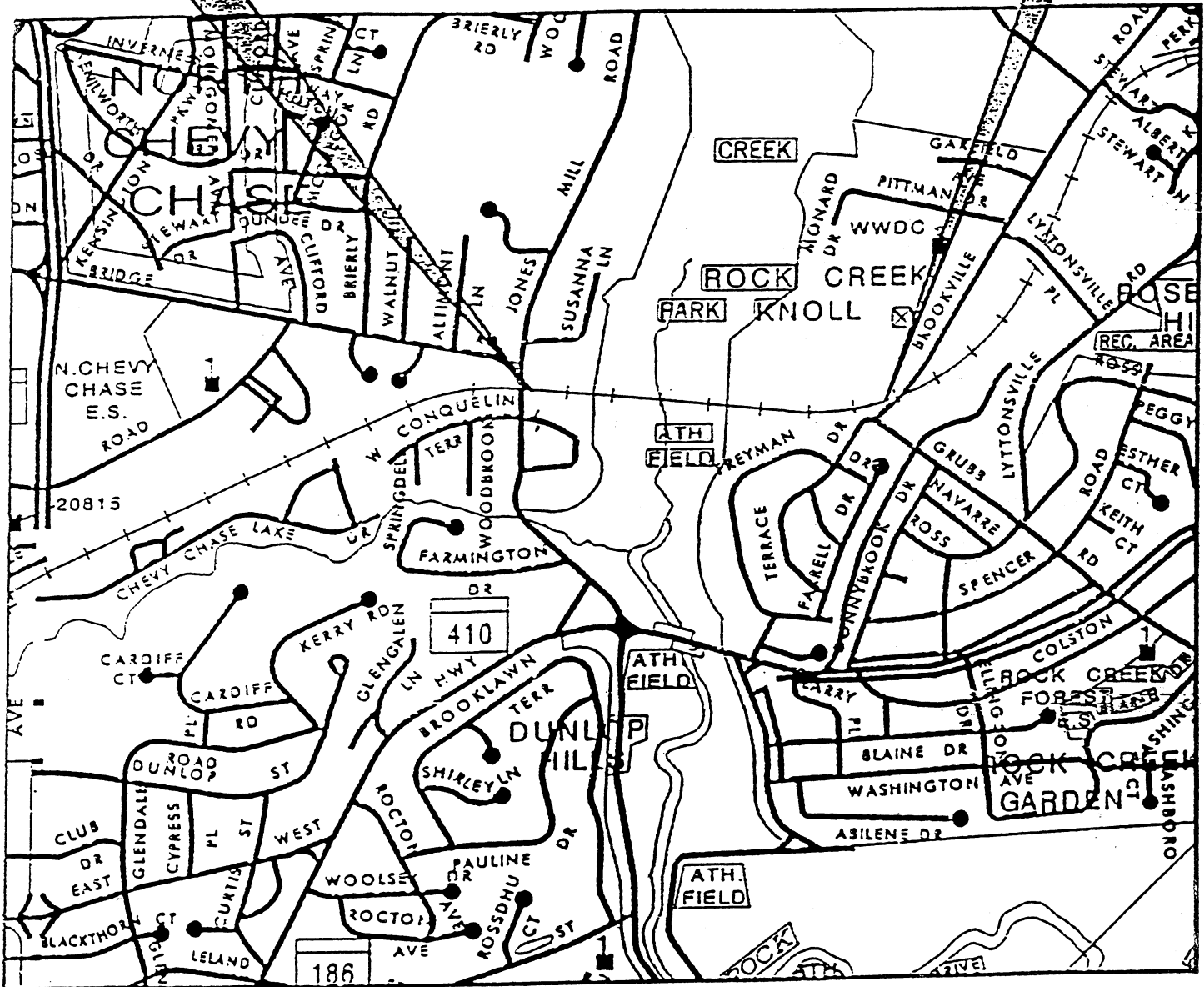
- **Consider accelerating the funding needed to construct an alternate trail route that avoids Brookeville Road.**

The Facility Plan identified two trail routes that were safer than the existing one along Brookeville Road. Either one could be constructed for approximately \$100,000. There is currently no funding in DPW&T's budget to implement these alternate routes (Attachments D and E refer).

ATTACHMENT A

LIMIT OF WORK
STA. 0+33.39

LIMIT OF WORK
STA. 27+53.71



VICINITY MAP
SCALE : 1" = 2000'

2] Rock Creek Park - Lyttonville Place

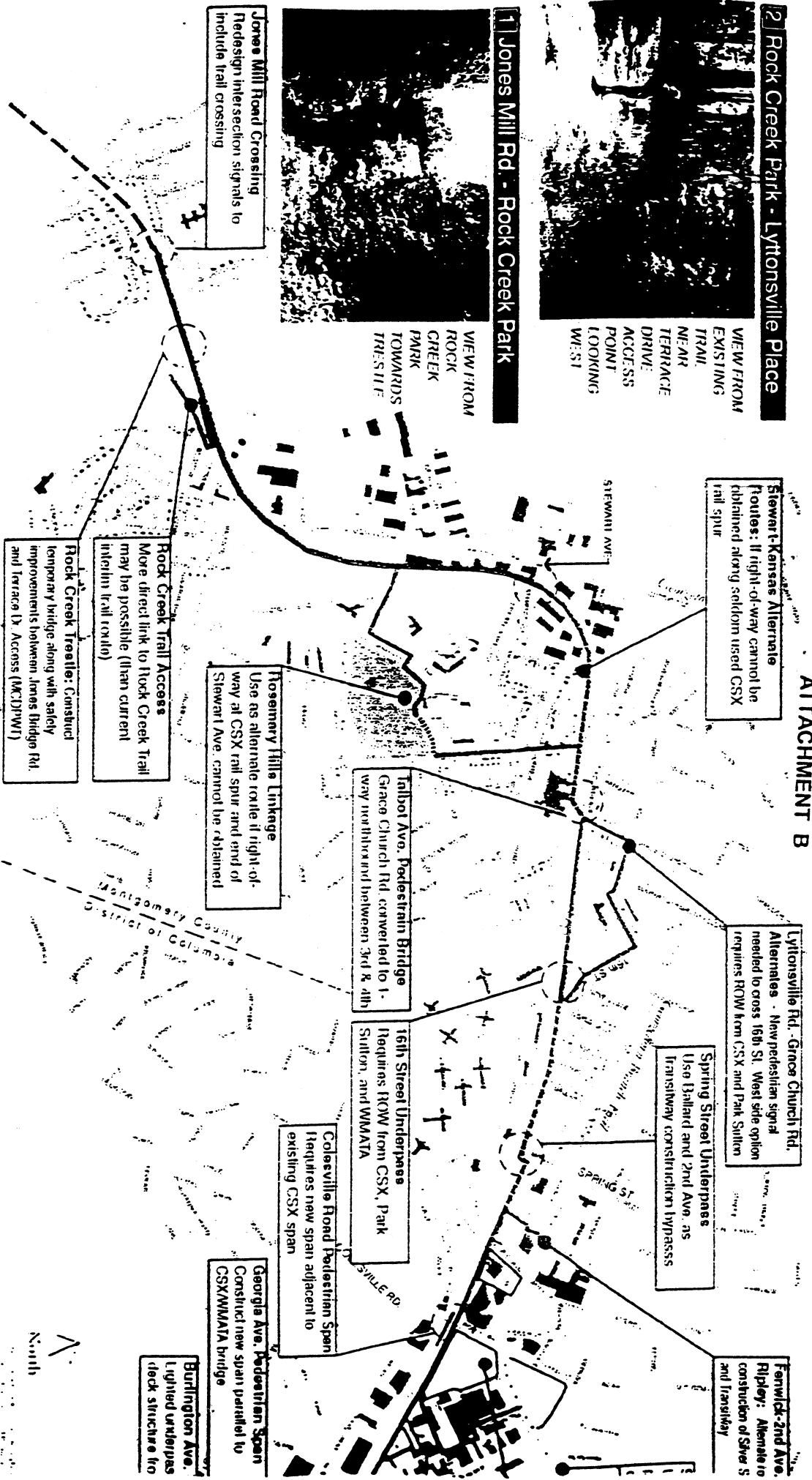


VIEW FROM EXISTING TRAIL NEAR TERRACE DRIVE ACCESS POINT LOOKING WEST

1] Jones Mill Rd - Rock Creek Park



VIEW FROM ROCK CREEK PARK TOWARDS TRISTE



Stewart-Kansas Alternate Routes: If right-of-way cannot be obtained along seldom used CSX trail spur

Lyttonville Rd. - Grace Church Rd.
 Alternates - New pedestrian signal needed to cross 16th St. West side option requires ROW from CSX and Park Sullen

Spring Street Underpass
 Use Ballard and 2nd Ave. as transitway construction bypass

Fairwick-2nd Ave. Ripley: Alternate to construction of Silver St and Transitway

Talbot Ave. Pedestrian Bridge
 Grace Church Rd converted to 1-way northbound between 3rd & 4th

16th Street Underpass
 Requires ROW from CSX, Park Sullen, and WMATA

Collesville Road Pedestrian Span
 Requires new span adjacent to existing CSX span

Georgia Ave. Pedestrian Span
 Construct new span parallel to CSX/WMATA bridge

Burlington Ave.
 Lighted underpass deck structure to

Rosemary Hill Linkage
 Use as alternate route if right-of-way at CSX trail spur and end of Stewart Ave. cannot be obtained

Rock Creek Trail Access
 More direct link to Rock Creek Trail may be possible (than current interlink trail route)

Rock Creek Trestle: Construct temporary bridge along with safety improvements between Jones Bridge Rd and Terrace Dr Access (MC12)PWR)

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
FACILITY PLAN FOR THE CAPITAL CRESCENT AND METROPOLITAN BRANCH TRAILS

The purpose of the Facility Plan is to select a final alignment and prepare preliminary design plans for the final two and one-half mile segment of the Capital Crescent Trail from Jones Mill Road to the Silver Spring Transit Center and an approximately one-mile segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail from the Silver Spring Transit Center to the D.C. line. The long-term goal, as stated in the appropriate master plans, is to construct an "off-road" path as close as possible to the CSX and WMATA right-of-way. The Capital Crescent Trail is also envisioned as an integral part of a proposed transitway project. The solid red line shows the location of the proposed permanent alignment. There are a number of locations where it will be difficult to achieve that alignment in the near-term. Issues of highly constrained right-of-way, neighborhood concerns, and transitway design requirements suggest that alternate locations be considered so that the trail can be built as soon as possible. The location of this interim trail is shown as a green solid line with constrained areas noted. Detailed plans may be reviewed at M-NCPPC.

Legend:

- Major Crossings
- Transit Way/Metropolitan Branch
- Proposed Interim Alignment
- Interim Alignment Constructed a
- Alternate Route (if ROW cannot
- Existing Routes
- Proposed Linkages

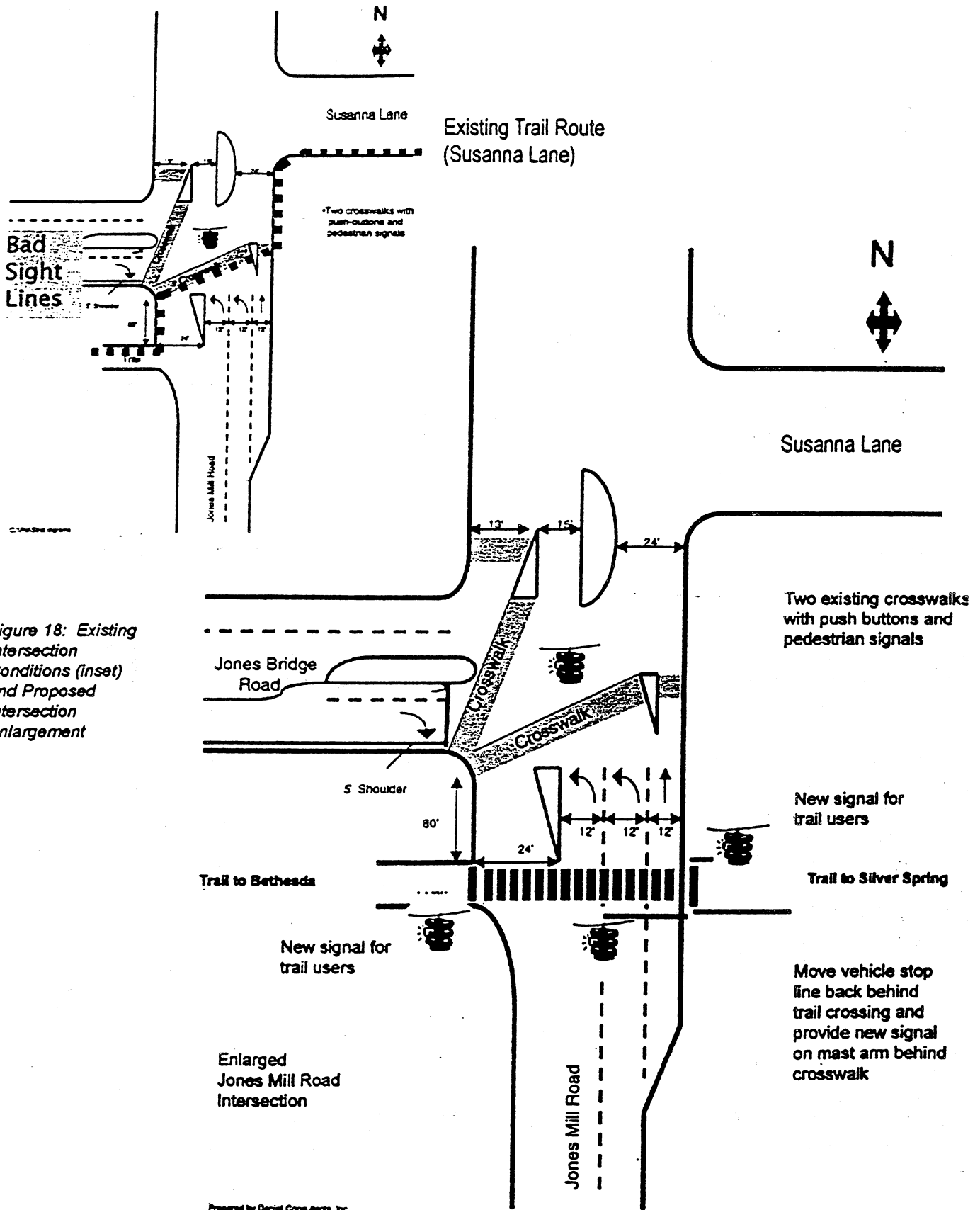


Figure 18: Existing Intersection Conditions (inset) and Proposed Intersection Enlargement

Prepared by Derial Consultants, Inc.



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Office of the Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board

June 6, 2002

Senator Brian E. Frosh
Delegate William A. Bronrott
Delegate Marilyn Goldwater
Delegate Susan C. Lee

16th District Delegation
446 Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Dear Senator Frosh and Delegates Bronrott, Goldwater and Lee:

Thank you for your letter on May 15, 2002 concerning a letter you received from Mr. Wayne Phyllaier regarding the proposed trail routes for the Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail. Mr. Phyllaier is concerned that the current trail along Brookville Road is unsafe and would like to see a new and safer trail route established.

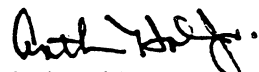
As Mr. Phyllaier mentioned in his letter, the Montgomery County Planning Board approved the *Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent and Metropolitan Branch Trails* in January 2001. In this document, three trail alignments were established that avoid Brookville Road; the CSX Rail Spur linkage, the Stewart Kansas Alternate Route and the Rosemary Hills Linkage (shown on the attached map). The CSX Rail Spur Linkage is a long-term solution that will be established as part of the Georgetown Branch Trolley and Trail project. The Stewart-Kansas Route and the Rosemary Hills Linkage are both good immediate solutions that involve very little construction funds to establish and provide permanent community connections to the Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail.

The MCPB Approved *Facility Plan for the Capital Crescent and Metropolitan Branch Trails* estimated that the construction cost for the Stewart-Kansas Route is approximately \$93,476 and the construction cost for the Rosemary Hills Linkage is approximately \$101,468. The Stewart-Kansas Route locates the trail on an abandoned road right-of-way at the end of Stewart Lane

and then becomes an on-road bike path to Talbot Avenue. The Rosemary Hills Linkage connects the existing Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail to new sidewalks along Lyttonsville Place, to existing trails leading to the Gwendolyn Coffield Community Center/Rosemary Hills Local Park and then to existing sidewalks to Talbot Avenue. The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation is responsible for the construction of these trail linkages as they are along public road right of ways and sidewalks. Unfortunately, the funding for the engineering and construction of these trail linkages is not currently in their budget.

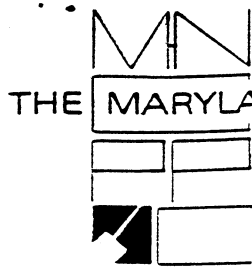
The Montgomery County Planning Board is in full support of the construction of one or both of these trail accesses to avoid Brookville Road. In May 2001, a letter from then Chairman of the Montgomery County Planning Board, William Hussmann, was transmitted to the Director of DPWT, Albert J. Genetti stressing the importance of the immediate implementation of an alternate trail route to avoid Brookville Road (see attachment). Please let me know if there is anything else we can do to help facilitate this project.

Sincerely,



Arthur Holmes, Jr.
Chairman

Attachments (2)



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

(301) 495-4605

Montgomery County Planning Board
Office of the Chairman

May 31, 2001

Mr. Albert J. Genetti
Director, Montgomery County Department
of Public Works and Transportation
101 Monroe Street
10th Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Genetti:

I am pleased to transmit the approved facility plan for the Capital Crescent and Metropolitan Branch Trail. The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission began the facility plan in June 2000. The process involved extensive community outreach and included a project advisory group with members from the trail user groups, civic and neighborhood groups and the municipal, county and state agencies interested in the project. The Montgomery County Planning Board approved the facility plan on January 25, 2001 and the final plan documents, drawings and cost estimates were completed in March 2001.

The purpose of the facility plan was twofold. First, to select a final alignment and prepare preliminary design plans and cost estimates for the Capital Crescent Trail from Jones Mill Road to the Silver Spring Transit Center (2.5 miles) and the Metropolitan Branch Trail from the Silver Spring Transit Center to the DC line (1 mile). Second, to propose an interim trail alignment that could safely and attractively bring trail users into Silver Spring and could be constructed before final plans for the Georgetown Branch Transitway and Trail are completed. The funding for the Georgetown Branch Transitway and Trail could be over six to ten years away. We found that many sections of the interim alignment could be constructed as the final alignment and not interfere with plans for the Georgetown Branch Transitway. As you know, the Department of Public Works and Transportation has been charged with implementing the interim trail.

I would like to strongly recommend that you consider immediate implementation of the segment of the trail that is an alternate route through the Stewart Avenue abandoned road row, over the Talbot Avenue Bridge, along Grace Church Road, and to Second Avenue. This segment would allow trail users to take a safer route to Second Avenue and avoid traveling the existing interim trail along Brookeville Road. The trail user groups support this alternate

trail segment and I've attached a signed petition from the residents in support of making Grace Church Road between Third Avenue and Fourth Avenue a one-way street in order to facilitate a better trail and a safer road.

I was very pleased with the close coordination between our two departments. Your staff bicycle coordinator, Gail Tait-Nouri, attended the many public meetings and staff coordination meetings with the consultant. MNCPPC staff presented the project to Edgar Gonzalez and his engineering staff in February before finalizing the costs and phasing for the project. MNCPPC staff has also been involved with Robert Merryman and his staff to coordinate the design and construction of the trail as it passes through the proposed Silver Spring Transit Center. I am confident that the transit center will include a well designed, state of the art bicycle trail facility, that will be enjoyed by over 1 million trail users each year.

Thank you for your cooperation and support with this project. If you have any questions or need additional information about this project, please contact MNCPPC staff, Rachel Newhouse at 301 650-4388.

Sincerely,



William H. Hussmann
Chairman

WHH:rn

November 12, 2000

Ms. Rachel Newhouse
Maryland National Capitol Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

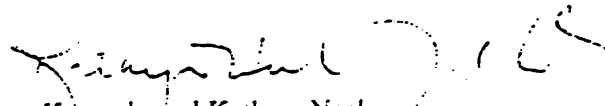
Dear Ms. Newhouse:

As residents of Grace Church Road between Third Avenue and Fourth Avenue, we are writing to express our enthusiastic support for the proposal to make our block an east-bound one-way street. We understand how this "one-way" proposal would not only make for a safer Capitol Crescent Trail, but also a safer street for our families, especially our children.

Since the improvement of the Talbot Avenue bridge and the prohibition against turns onto the bridge from Grace Church Road, our street is for most purposes already one way. Only residents and visitors to our neighborhood would have any reason to drive west-bound on our street – to get to their own homes – since Grace Church Road ends at 4th Avenue. However, we continue to see a steady stream of westbound cars, who are making illegal left turns onto the bridge.

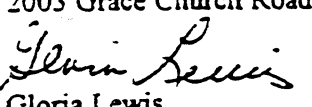
Making the 2000 block of Grace Church Road one way would both increase safety for all users of this street – the families and children who live on our block, plus the cars, bikes and pedestrians that pass through – and discourage illegal left turns onto the bridge.


We look forward to working with you and the supporters of the Capitol Crescent Trail to make this proposal reality.



Tom Kennedy and Kathryn Neel
2000 Grace Church Road

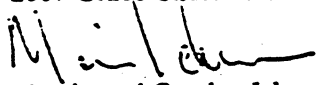

Charlotte Murphy and Alan Brace
2001 Grace Church Road



Joel Klaverkamp
2003 Grace Church Road

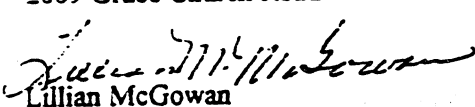

Gloria Lewis
2004 Grace Church Road

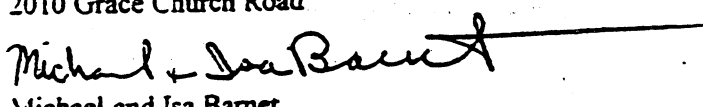

Lauren and Ted Benson
2006 Grace Church Road


Andrea and Rick Weidman
2007 Grace Church Road


Marvin and Carolyn Ickow
2008 Grace Church Road


Laura Mitchell
2009 Grace Church Road


Lillian McGowan
2010 Grace Church Road


Michael and Isa Barnet
2012 Grace Church Road