



Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail
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September 6, 2023

Mr. Artie Harris
Chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive
14th Floor
Wheaton, MD 20902

Proposed Construction of New Montgomery County Lyttonsville Park

Dear Mr. Harris,

The Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail enthusiastically supports the facility plan for the construction of the proposed new neighborhood park in Lyttonsville. Our overall support for the project must be balanced, however, with one substantive safety concern described in more detail below regarding the placement of the “skate spot” directly adjacent to the Capital Crescent Trail. We are concerned that it could result in an unsafe and hazardous situation for pedestrians and bikers on the trail, as well as for skaters.

We are a local, non-profit community-based group, managed by volunteers, and supported by several thousand members. We were founded over 35 years ago with the aim of persuading authorities in the District of Columbia and Maryland to acquire the abandoned rail line and construct a paved multiuse trail from Georgetown to Silver Spring. A paved section of the Capital Crescent Trail will finally be extended from Bethesda to downtown Silver Spring as part of Purple Line light rail construction, running alongside this proposed new Lyttonsville Park.

The current trail is one of the most popular and well-used trails in the country and it has the highest volume of pedestrian and bicycle traffic of any paved trail in the metropolitan Washington, DC area. Upwards of a million people use the trail annually for recreation and commuting between Georgetown, DC and locations in Montgomery County, with easy access to Arlington, Virginia.

The 2017 Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan recognizes that the community would benefit from the trail’s extension and calls for “trails and open spaces that could be expanded with new greenways and civic greens to benefit more residents”, which promotes and encourages physical activity.

The design of the park will provide more green space for the neighborhood and welcomed rest stop for trail users, including proposed water and bicycle repair stations. The focus on installing native pollinator gardens and other appropriate plant species aligns with the Coalition's "Free the Trees" and other related environmental sustainability efforts. We also appreciate the attention Montgomery County Parks is making towards ensuring the historical aspects of the neighborhood are recognized by incorporating infrastructure from the previous Talbot Avenue Bridge into new significant cultural amenities.

These amenities are very promising and beneficial to the local neighborhood and overall trail users. That said, we are very concerned about the proposed "skate spot" feature due to relevant safety issues. Skateboarding areas normally have a safe buffer zone between the skateboarders and surrounding activities. There is a landscaped buffer between the skate spot and the rest of the park. However, there is no buffer between the skate spot and traffic on the trail. As planned, the skateboarding area has a very small footprint with unobstructed access to the trail. Skateboarders need space to build up speed in order to accelerate onto the skate ramp; they need sufficient space to land after they travel off the ramp. Consequently, skateboarders will have to use trail space to engage in their sport., because there does not appear to be enough space in the park itself. This is likely to create friction and disputes between trail users and skateboarders, as well as lead to collisions between skateboarders and the pedestrians and bikers on the trail. We appreciate the community's interest in the proposed skateboarding amenity and think that skateboarders should have a place to enjoy the sport. However, we don't think that the current location or configuration is safe or appropriate. We believe that closer attention is needed on this particular feature to continue ensuring the safety of all users on the Capital Crescent Trail. We are willing to discuss the skate spot feature further with appropriate staff and community members to ensure these potential safety concerns are addressed at this early stage in the process.

Finally, the Coalition is willing to also fund, install, and manage a display case providing information about the trail, wayfinding, events, and local historical insights. This case would be similar to what we have installed along the trail at Weiner Plaza and the Dalecarlia Reservoir south of Bethesda. We are happy to work with members of the neighborhood and Montgomery County Parks Department to ensure the information is appropriate for the park.

On behalf of the thousands of residents in the metropolitan Washington, DC area who daily use the Capital Crescent Trail, we urge you to approve the plans for the new Montgomery County Lyttonsville Park.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Marra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tony" and last name "Marra" clearly distinguishable.

Tony Marra

Chair of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail