



MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Martin O'Malley, Governor • Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor  
James T. Smith, Jr., Secretary • Robert L. Smith, Administrator

August 12, 2013

The Honorable Patricia Burda  
Mayor, Town of Chevy Chase  
4301 Willow Lane  
Chevy Chase MD 20815

Ref: Capital Crescent Trail Pedestrian Connection

Dear Mayor Burda:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat".

Thank you for your correspondence regarding a proposed pedestrian trail connection from Lynn Drive to the Capital Crescent Trail. The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) appreciates your continued involvement in the Chevy Chase portion of the Purple Line project.

We recognize that the Town is concerned about the two trail connection underpass options MTA proposed to the Town of Chevy Chase's Mitigation Advisory Group (MAG). In your letter, you asked MTA to reconsider an at-grade pedestrian crossing, including a reduction in speed if necessary.

In meetings with MAG, MTA and the MAG have always agreed that safety is a key issue and we made it clear that we would not propose a pedestrian crossing if it was not safe. In developing the underpass connections, we discussed the need to balance having higher retaining walls along this portion of the alignment with a safe crossing to the Capital Crescent Trail from Chevy Chase. Also, we emphasized that the higher walls would be required in order to raise the trail's profile so that a more visible underpass connection could be provided; an option MTA feels is optimal for safety.

As you may remember we discussed in our meeting with the Town's MAG on January 23, 2013 and again on March 18 why MTA would no longer consider an at grade pedestrian crossing at this location. As we discussed at the two meetings, MTA determined that the risk associated with an at-grade crossing at this location was not acceptable. Among these reasons are:

- **Provides pedestrians access to a restricted alignment.** Pedestrians would have access to the trackway from the at-grade crossing. The presence of pedestrians in an exclusive operating environment would be counter to the rail operator's expectations and would present a safety risk.
- **Poor visibility for both the light rail operator and pedestrian.** The curve in the alignment reduces the sightlines and the reaction time of both the pedestrian and the light rail operators if someone were on the tracks when a train approached.
- **Risk of pedestrians ignoring safety devices.** While MTA can post warning signs or other safety devices, it is not possible to guarantee that the safety devices will be obeyed.

Slowing the trains along this section of the Purple Line alignment, as the Town of Chevy Chase has proposed on several occasions, would not address all of these risk concerns. Safety concerns would continue to exist, and therefore, MTA would not allow an at-grade connection to the trail from Lynn Drive.

The University of Maryland, cited in your letter, is not a comparable situation for several reasons. Throughout the corridor, the light rail train speed would be governed by the posted speed limits when operating in a street. Along Campus Drive at the University of Maryland, the posted speed limit is 20 mph. In addition, there are various roadway intersections with traffic control that would cause the train to stop or run slower. The train is stopping at a station along Campus Drive. The fact that light rail trains were already being slowed by the above factors enabled the MTA to agree to an upper speed limit of 15 mph in sections of the campus as part of the means to address electromagnetic emissions that could interfere with sensitive research equipment. The slight reduction of 5 mph in speed was not for pedestrian safety. In addition, the levels of pedestrian activity are not comparable with the Lynn Drive crossing. Campus Drive is a heavily used pedestrian environment with multiple crosswalks, traffic signals and stop signs. On Campus Drive there are over 25,000 daily pedestrian crossings, more than 100 times the number at Lynn Drive.

The estimated 230 people who would cross at Lynn Drive on a daily basis would still have the option of crossing the Purple Line alignment at East West Highway, from Elm Street Park, and at the proposed Sleaford underpass. These include ADA compliant trail connections, with the East West Highway connection a detour of approximately 2000 feet from the proposed Lynn Drive crossing, not a significant distance, particularly for the majority of the users who are students.

I am sorry you feel that the Town's participation in the MAG process over the past four years has not been fruitful. From our perspective, it has been a valuable collaboration, and our inclusion of walls along the residential areas of Chevy Chase and Bethesda is due solely to our work together.

The MTA is willing to continue discussion of grade-separated options at Lynn Drive. We appreciate the collaboration and look forward to coming to a solution that is acceptable for the MTA and the Town of Chevy Chase. We would be happy to meet with MAG to continue the dialogue and resolve this and other outstanding issues. If you are agreeable, our Public Outreach staff can work with you or Mary Anne Hoffman to arrange a meeting and can be contacted via email at [outreach@purplelinemd.com](mailto:outreach@purplelinemd.com), or by phone at 443-451-3706.

Sincerely,



Michael D. Madden  
Purple Line Planning Manager  
Transit Development and Delivery

cc: Mr. Henry Kay, Executive Director, Transit Development and Delivery, MTA  
Mr. James T. Smith, Jr., Administrator, MTA