

Analysis of North-South Alignment Visual Impacts
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1. Which alignment will make it more difficult to mitigate visual impacts on the Town?

The section of the proposed Purple Line between the Wisconsin Avenue tunnel and the East-West Highway bridge is to have the trains running on the south side of the right of way and the newly constructed trail on the north side of the right of way 3 to 4 feet above the track beds. The south side of the right of way, which borders the Town of Chevy Chase, is made up completely of residential properties while the north side of the right of way is a mix of commercial space, parking lots, small businesses, the parking garage for a condominium building and the back side of a fitness club. There are no detached residential properties on the north side of the right of way between East-West Highway and the Wisconsin Avenue tunnel.

Construction of the Purple Line with the trains on the south side of the ROW and the Trail 3 to 4 feet above the track beds on the North side of the ROW will have a greater visual impact on the Town of Chevy Chase and therefore requires additional mitigation.

2. Describe these impacts

- More extensive and larger retaining walls between private residences and the trains will be necessary to support the weight of the transit way if located on the south side of the ROW.
- More trees and plants located on private property will have to be removed
- More over-hanging wires and track hardware closer to private residences
- Larger retaining walls and possibly steel tracks could intrude on private property, especially closer to the Lynn Drive crossing where the ROW is not a level 66 feet and retaining walls and other structures will be needed to support the trains
- Homes that border the ROW will have a more direct line of sight of the trains
- Homes that border the ROW will suffer greater light intrusion at night

3. Unanswered questions/What the Town should ask for in regard to these impacts

- Will the state essentially have to build bridges on the south side of the ROW to accommodate the trains in places where the south side of the ROW down slopes significantly, or will the train tracks be on the level part of the current trail?
- What style retaining/noise prevention walls will border the right of way on the south side?
- How high will these walls end up being – 3 to 4 feet is not nearly sufficient?
- How will trees that straddle the ROW be handled? Will they be trimmed or completely removed?

- Does the state plan on rebuilding fences that will be removed during construction with a new and/or like kind fence?
- Will the state replant trees and shrubs in order to create a natural line of sight buffer between homes and the trains?
- Can the trains be lowered and additional amount in order to reduce the visual impact?
- If the trail were on the south side and raised 3' to 4' feet above the track bed this would create a natural buffer between the homes and the trains and would have much less visual impact to the surrounding homes. However, for the homes on Elm Street, an elevated trail on the south side would mean either a large wall or pillars supporting the trail right up against their property lines.
- Recommend that the State should complete preliminary engineering on both the north and the south trail alignment through Chevy Chase to allow a more thorough analysis of potential impacts and cost benefits.