

**Town of Chevy Chase**  
**Purple Line Mitigation Advisory Group Meeting**  
**December 7, 2010**  
**Minutes by John Burnes**

Attendees: Mary Anne Hoffman (Chair); Pat Burda (Council Liaison); Leslie Hill; Joan Rood; David Saltzman; John Burnes. Absent: Jacob Bardin, Rich Brancato, Andy Hill

**Purple Line Project Update:** Councilmember Burda provided an update on developments concerning the Bethesda Station. She noted that at the Mitigation Advisory Group meeting on November 9, MTA indicated that because the piers in the Air Rights tunnel were not reinforced, it might not be economical to lower the track bed in the tunnel to allow for the trail to pass above the trains through the tunnel. She reported that an MTA engineer subsequently advised her that the cost to lower the train bed in the tunnel could add an additional \$25 million to the project and that there are challenges in circulating air in the trail area above the trains as well. MTA is also considering a trail route that would not traverse the tunnel and instead would cross over the tracks outside of the tunnel to the south side of the right of way where it would lead directly into Elm Street Park. This alternative would also likely require the taking of some private property.

**MTA Noise Study Update:** At the November 9 meeting, MTA agreed to perform another ambient noise study at MAG's request, this time with testing done in residential backyards abutting the trail as part of a reassessment of the noise impact of the proposed Purple Line. MTA indicated that it would contact Councilmember Burda with a list of yards it wanted to access to place noise measuring equipment. Councilmember Burda reported that she had not been contacted by MTA since the November meeting. MAG will make a written request to MTA to provide this information needed to begin the noise study.

**Purple Line Small Group Sessions:** MTA has announced that it will schedule public meetings with working groups to discuss locally-specific design and engineering issues. None of these meeting have been scheduled yet. The following MAG members volunteered (or will be asked) to attend meetings and monitor specific issues:

1. *Bethesda Station* – Joan Rood, Leslie Hill
2. *Connecticut Ave./Chevy Chase Lake Station*—No specific MAG members; MAG will monitor, but not as actively since Long-Range Planning Committee is monitoring
3. *Georgetown Branch/Capital Crescent Trail* – Jacob Bardin, Leslie Hill
4. *Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities* – Andy Hill, Rich Brancato

**Graded, Unpaved Southside Path Between Lynn Drive and Elm Street Park:** At the November 9 meeting MTA shared drawings of a path that could be placed along the south side of the right of way. MTA would attempt to roll in the costs of the path into the

Purple Line construction budget, but the Town would be responsible for the cost of maintaining the path. MTA will proceed with the development of the path if the Town requests it, but there is no specific deadline for the Town to decide. MAG discussed the path idea at length and identified the following *pros and cons*.

Pros:

1. The path could provide a way for Town residents to walk between Lynn Drive and Elm Street Park, replacing, in part, the current pedestrian access and use of the trail that would be curtailed if the Purple Line were constructed.

Cons:

1. The Town would bear the unknown costs of maintaining the path.
2. The path would not allow users to walk to Bethesda through the tunnel as is now possible; users would only be able to go to/from Lynn Drive and the Park.
3. The path would be bounded on both sides by structures, (on the north side closest to trains by a noise wall and screening fence and on the south side by potential fencing, landscaping or other security structures erected by adjoining property owners), making it a confined and potentially dangerous space.
4. Safety issues and the potential for crime in this confined space are a concern
5. Development of the path would require taking some private property.
6. Town's liability for accidents, injuries, etc; costs of maintenance could include liability insurance.
7. The path could bring graffiti, as well as increased costs to adjoining property owners via property damage, privacy concerns, and fencing and added landscaping expenses.
8. It would probably be more beneficial for the Town if the land that would be used for the proposed path be used instead for screening and landscape buffer to reduce visual impacts of the Purple Line.

The consensus of MAG was that the proposed path does not appear to be a beneficial addition to the Purple Line project. Because of the many cons, or negative aspects, of the path, particularly the potential costs to the Town to maintain and supervise the use of the path, MAG decided to recommend to the Town Council at its January meeting that it seek input from Town residents before deciding on how to proceed.

**Purple Line Mitigation Standards** – MAG discussed whether the Town should consider engaging an urban planner with transit experience to help the Town establish standards to give to MTA for landscaping, noise walls, fencing, lighting systems, security and other mitigation measures along the Town's northern border. This was initially suggested by a County employee after the last MAG meeting. MAG decided to ask the Town Council at its January meeting to authorize MAG to research the issue further and to identify candidate urban planners for the job, including cost estimates.

MAG's next meeting will be at 7 pm in the Town Hall on January 4, 2011.