

A Resolution by the Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

That,

Whereas

- The National Park Service (NPS) is seeking public comment and input on the Proposed Extension of the Western Maryland Rail Trail from Pearre Station to Paw Paw as part of the C & O Canal National Historic Park.
- The project will be a major enhancement to Maryland's trail system and provide users with scenic views and historic opportunities that are presently unavailable to Park visitors
- The project will provide access to persons with disabilities and to road cyclists for whom the towpath is not suited.
- The project will promote tourism within Maryland and West Virginia.

Therefore,

The Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee strongly endorses this project and recommends that the Transportation Secretary send NPS a letter similar to the following prior to the end of the public comment period on December 23, 2010:

DRAFT

December ?, 2010

National Park Service
Denver Service Center – Transportation Division
CHOH WMRT EA Planning Team
12795 West Alameda Parkway
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-0287

Re: Proposed Extension of the Western Maryland Rail Trail (WMRT)

At its December 10, 2010, meeting, the Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (MBPAC) voted its strong endorsement to this project. The members of MBPAC believe that this project, which will extend the WMRT 15 miles from its present western terminus at Pearre Station to Paw Paw, will be a major enhancement to Maryland's trail system and should be constructed as rapidly as possible.

With its six Potomac River bridges and three tunnels, this project will provide users with scenic views and historic opportunities that are presently unavailable to C&O Canal National Historic Park visitors. It will also provide access to persons with disabilities and to road cyclists for whom the towpath is not suited. This trail would also offer cross-state cyclists an easier, but longer, alternative to the present route, and would likely generate some measure of economic benefit to the communities along this route.

Because the project is located in both Maryland and West Virginia, and because of its proximity to the C&O Canal NHP, MPBAC believes that the NPS is well suited to administer it, both during initial construction and for future maintenance.

MBPAC has comments on the Topic Questions as follows:

Question 1: Are there any additional alternatives that you would like to see included in the analysis?

Answer: No.

Question 2: What specific natural and/or cultural (historic) resources are of concern for you with this project?

Answer: The Indigo Tunnel bypass using the towpath should be as seamless as possible for road cyclists.

Question 3: What type of trail surface would you like to have?

Answer: Accommodating road bikes is a major concern. A bituminous surface as used on the first 23 miles of the WMRT, unless cost prohibitive, is the first choice. A tightly packed crushed stone surface such as is used on the Great Allegheny Passage is next. This would be a suitable surface for the portion of the towpath which will be used for the Indigo Tunnel bypass. It should be remembered that the towpath presently accommodates hybrid and mountain bikes very well.

Question 4: What type of visitor services and interpretive information would you like to see along the trail?

Answer: Due to the remote location of the project, Hancock, Little Orleans and Paw Paw, WV, provide the only present sources of food. Signage to make the public aware of these locations, as well as water availability, should be prominent. Portapots should be provided at easily serviceable locations. Interpretive information should be placed as the NPS deems appropriate.

Question 5: Are there additional access points to be considered?

Answer: No.

Question 6: What do you consider to be the most important feature of this project?

Answer: It makes a scenic and historic area available to persons with disabilities and road cyclists.

The Maryland Department of Transportation strongly endorses this project. It will greatly increase opportunities for persons with liabilities and other users to experience a scenic and historical experience that they presently do not have available.

Sincerely,

Beverley K. Swaim-Staley
Transportation Secretary

c: Kevin Brandt, Superintendent
C&O Canal NHP Headquarters
1850 Dual Highway, Suite 100
Hagerstown, MD 21740-6620.