

## WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

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### WABA Calls for Dialog Over New Trail Speed Limits

In a letter today to Mary Bradford, the Director of Parks for the Maryland National Capital Planning Commission (MNCPPC), the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), has called for a public discussion over the recent decision to erect new speed limit signs on the popular Capital Crescent Trail in Montgomery County. While the speed limit signs are just one part of a broader plan to help address concerns over trail safety, they have proven to be the most contentious. Other organizations such as the League of American Bicyclists and Montgomery Bicycle Advocates (MoBike) have signed on in support.

"We are disappointed that the cycling community was not brought into the discussion and the focus of the efforts is on cyclists," said Eric Gilliland, WABA's executive director. "WABA makes great effort to educate cyclists on responsible riding behavior, but trail safety is everyone's responsibility." WABA, a local bike safety and education organization, represents over 7,000 area cyclists and played a key role in the initial planning and construction of the Capital Crescent Trail.

Among the association's other concerns about the safety plan are:

- A 15 mph speed limit implies that 15 mph is always a safe speed, though in more heavily congested sections of the trail 15 mph may be too fast.
- The behavior of other trail users such as runners, walkers and those with dogs is unaddressed.
- The safety plan includes no educational efforts to help address problems of trail etiquette.
- Widening the trail in order to separate user types was not considered.

While demand for more trails and safer roads for cyclists increases as gas prices continue to rise, and as other area jurisdictions such as the District of Columbia and Arlington County are making great strides towards promoting cycling, Montgomery County continues to lag behind. According to Gilliland progress on the County's Functional Bikeways Master Plan is lethargic, key trail projects that would help relieve pressure on the Crescent Trail are being postponed, and bike and pedestrian friendly provisions in the revisions to the County's Road Code are facing a strong challenge.

"It seems a lot easier for Montgomery County to install speed limit signs on a trail rather than bike route signs on local roads," Gilliland said.

For more information, and for a copy of the letter, please contact Eric Gilliland at the Washington Area Bicyclist Association by calling 202-518-0524 or emailing gill@waba.org.