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Thanks to rail plan, the trail exists today

Feb. 6, 2003

Supporters of the Capital Crescent Trail who cite preservation of the trail in arguing against a rail link between Bethesda and Silver Spring aren't playing fair. Were it not for the rail proposal, the trail between Georgetown and Silver Spring likely would not exist.

On Dec. 8, 1988, the County Council voted for a \$10 million emergency appropriation for the acquisition of the Georgetown Branch right-of-way. I argued that the purchase was justified for recreational purposes whether or not we ever build a rail line, but a number of my colleagues disagreed. I seriously doubt there was a majority willing to vote to buy the land in the absence of the rail proposal.

Six years later, rail supporters and opponents on the council were deadlocked on the issue of allowing an interim trail on the portion of the right-of-way east of Bethesda. Pro-rail advocates lobbied me ferociously to oppose the interim trail. They argued that once the right-of-way became a trail only, even one labeled interim, it would not be possible to gain approval of the planned rail-trail combination. I felt strongly that we should not deny public use of this resource while waiting for a final decision on the rail. I said at the time that public officials should have the courage and confidence to do the right thing in the mid-1990s by allowing an interim trail and again later when it came time to vote for the rail-trail plan.

No good deed goes unpunished. Just as pro-rail advocates predicted, the opponents now point to the trail as the reason to vote against the rail line. On Saturday, rail opponents rallied under the "Save the Trail" slogan and presented County Executive Douglas Duncan with 10,000 signatures urging protection of the trail.

Public officials have the opportunity to show real courage by voting in the face of this disinformation campaign for the much needed Inner Purple Line.

The Capital Crescent Trail is a regional jewel, but it would not exist today had the council not voted in 1988 to purchase the right-of-way for the rail line. Of course the rail won't destroy the trail. From the very beginning, the plan has been to have the rail and trail side-by-side between Bethesda and Silver Spring. For trail supporters to attempt to block the rail line by arguing that it will destroy the trail is just not playing fair.

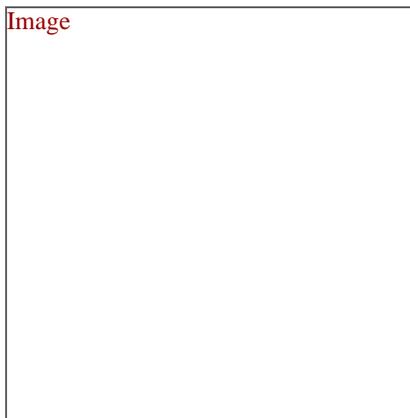
Bruce Adams, Bethesda

The writer is a former member of the Montgomery County Council.

Pam Browning supports a Purple Line route that would result in destruction of six times as many acres of floodplain and almost 10 times as many acres of forest land than the Inner Purple Line (letter, "Duncan's Purple Line is a better plan," Jan. 29).

Browning has no problem sending the noise from elevated heavy rail Metro cars onto hikers on Rock Creek Trail and into her neighbors' yards adjacent to County Executive Douglas Duncan's Beltway route.

Browning stands in the company of other opponents of the Inner Purple Line, like the Columbia Country Club, which sued the county all the way to the Supreme Court to prevent any public use of the Georgetown Branch right-



raua nersesian, takoma park

Regarding the proposal to abandon the Georgetown Branch rail right-of-way and build the Purple Line elsewhere, I have a thought: If the millionaire NIMBYs in Chevy Chase want to spend \$200 million that we don't have on such an alignment, I propose a special tax district be created so they can pay for it themselves.

J. Daniel Malouff, Boulder, Colo.

The writer, from Gaithersburg, is a student of urban planning at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

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