

REMARKS FOR SECRETARY SWAIM-STALEY
13th Annual Maryland Bicycle Symposium
Wednesday, February 3, 2010
9:00 a.m.

INTRO / OVERVIEW OF TRAILS PLAN

- Thank you, Carol. [Carol Silldorff, M.P.A., Executive Director of One Less Car, will introduce you.]
- It's good to be here to discuss Maryland's first Statewide Transportation Trails Plan.
- Transportation trails provide commuters and students an alternative way to get to work and school by linking neighborhoods to business communities and schools or to transit.
- Maryland Trails: A Greener Way To Go is a strategic plan for integrated trail development statewide.
- It also is a website with an interactive map complete with Geographic Information System layers that allow you to search for trail attributes, demographics and topography.
- The Statewide Trails Plan is a great example of Governor O'Malley's Smart, Green & Growing initiative to help Maryland achieve a more sustainable future by linking:
 - community revitalization,
 - transportation improvements,
 - economic development,
 - smart growth AND
 - environmentally friendly travel options.

- Our recently completed trail plan follows more than a year of the Maryland Department of Transportation working with an advisory committee made up of a large number of partner agencies, including:
 - Department of Business and Economic Development,
 - Department of Health and Mental Hygiene,
 - Department of Natural Resources,
 - Department of Planning,
 - Maryland Association of Counties,
 - Maryland Municipal League,
 - Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee,
 - State Highway Administration, AND
 - Maryland Transit Administration.

- Many thanks to this Trails Advisory committee for their hard work for over one and a half years and a special thank you to MDOT's Sylvia Ramsey who is the project manager.

PURPOSE OF TRAIL PLAN

- Maryland Trails: A Greener Way to Go will help achieve our ultimate goal of linking more than 800 miles of existing transportation trails in Maryland.

- The goal is to provide trails without borders, by filling in the missing links regardless of city, county or State lines.

- Above and beyond offering transportation alternatives, our trails also:

- support expanded economic opportunity;
 - provide access to a healthy, more active lifestyle, AND
 - encourage all of our citizens to make that vital connection to our natural environment.
- These hiker-biker trails provide low cost and low environmental-impact connections to where we work, live, learn and play.
 - Trails also provide a positive example of how Maryland is Smart, Green and Growing.
 - Maryland has more than five trails of national significance that travel through the State, including:
 - Great Allegheny Passage;
 - East Coast Greenway;
 - American Discovery Trail;
 - Grand History Loop; AND
 - Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.
 - We also have a wonderful opportunity to market what Maryland trails have to offer which could attract even more users from many other states.

GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE

- A good example of the economic impact of trails is the recently completed Great Allegheny Passage, known as the GAP.
- This 418-mile trail connects Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Georgetown in Washington, D.C., with 21 miles located in Western Maryland.
 - The GAP has received national recognition and is very popular.

- The GAP includes the C&O Canal Towpath, a 184-mile linear park managed and owned by the National Park Service.
- There is a washed out area on the Towpath that has created an unsafe 3-mile detour in Western Maryland.
- MDOT and the Department of Natural Resources agreed some years ago to make the repair of the Towpath a priority.
- Just recently the National Park Service received \$12 million in federal stimulus funding for the reconstruction of this critical missing link in Maryland's trail network.
- MDOT was able to provide \$4.4 million of Transportation Enhancement funds to assist the National Park Service in meeting their \$16 million budget requirement to repair the Towpath at Big Slackwater in Washington County.
- We are very supportive of this project because of the economic impact it will have on the area.
 - A study during 2007 and 2008 found that the economic impact of the Great Allegheny Passage totaled:
 - more than \$40 million in annual direct spending AND
 - another \$7.5 million in wages.
- In today's world, jobs are critically important and trails have definitely created jobs with the increased demand for overnight accommodations, eateries and bike shops.

INTERACTIVE TRAIL MAP

- To achieve other construction goals we have created a one-stop shop website for planners, trail users and advocates that provide access to:
 - Statewide GIS map and database of trails we consider an alternative transportation option.
 - More than 100 small and large gaps in the present system have been identified and this data is now available on our website.
- The State Highway Administration is actively reviewing the list of the gaps to identify planned highway projects that could incorporate on and off road connections to existing trails.
- The goal is to connect our trails to schools, universities, communities and transit stations.
 - Currently a quarter of Maryland residents live within one-half mile of a trail.
 - Half of Maryland's rail transit stations are within one-half mile of a trail.
- We want to improve these connections and the next step is to work with our trail planning partners.
- Our new website provides planners with the following tools:
 - GIS layers of existing trails, gaps in the system, demographics which give population-density information;
 - a list of potential funding resources;

- a venue to coordinate trail planning and inform Maryland residents and visitors about local and regional trails; AND
- a comprehensive library of Maryland Trail maps.

CONCLUSION

- As we move forward, we will be sharing all of our trail data with DNR & DBED with links to their existing websites.
- With your help and guidance, we can move this ambitious plan forward and make Maryland an even better place to live, work, learn and play.
- On behalf of Governor O'Malley, I am proud to say that this plan truly works hard to support his *Smart, Green and Growing Initiative*.
- Even in these challenging times, this Statewide trails plan brings us one step closer to implementing a balanced and sustainable transportation vision for the State.
- I encourage all of you to visit our website and test out the new interactive trails map. Also, Sylvia Ramsey will be previewing the interactive trails map today at 2:00 PM.
- Thank you.

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