



WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Division of Highways

1900 Kanawha Boulevard East • Building Five • Room 110
Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0430 • 304/558-3505

Joe Manchin III
Governor

July 23, 2009

Mr. Bill Austin, AICP
Executive Director
Morgantown-Monongalia County
Transportation Planning Organization
180 Hart Field Road
Morgantown, West Virginia 26505

Dear Mr. Austin:

Thank you for your letter, dated June 23, 2009, on behalf of the Greater Morgantown Metropolitan Planning Organization (GMMPO) regarding the Morgantown Utility Board's (MUB) plans to upgrade the water and sewer lines in the vicinity of the Caperton Trail. The West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) is well aware of the importance of this trail system and has funded much of its purchase and construction through our Transportation Enhancement Program. The Caperton Trail, like most of our Rails-to-Trails, consists of "rail-banked" railroad right-of-way with the deed to the property held by the State Rail Authority, leaving the trail sponsor(s) full responsibility for its operation and maintenance. As such, the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) has no financial or other responsibility for the trail or its upkeep.

It is our understanding that the eminent closure will require bicycle and pedestrian traffic that currently uses the Caperton Trail to be redirected onto Don Knotts Boulevard, University Avenue, Beechurst Avenue, and Monongahela Boulevard. It is further understood that Morgantown's Bicycle Board has made recommendations to the Morgantown Traffic Commission that placement of "Share the Road" assemblies and the construction of a northbound bicycle lane along Monongahela Boulevard and Evansdale Drive would be desirable to mitigate the impact of the Trail's closure.

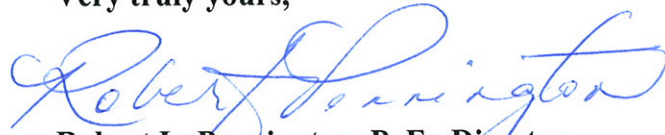
The WVDOT is concerned with many of the potential safety issues based on these recommendations and requests that the sponsors submit more detailed plans for our review. If plans for the proposed trail closure mitigation can be approved, we will work with the sponsors to issue or obtain the necessary permits for work done within our right-of-way, at the trail sponsors' expense.

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We encourage your agency, through the leadership of its new director, to steer issues like this through the GMMPO's advisory processes to ensure that sufficient notice, review, and discussion can occur prior to board action in support of proposals such as this. The WVDOT remains committed to working with the GMMPO in any way that we are able to benefit the traveling public.

Again, thank you for writing. Please let me know if my staff or I can be of further assistance.

Very truly yours,



Robert L. Pennington, P. E., Director
Program Planning and Administration Division

RLP:c