
BARRY GLASSMAN
HARFORD COUNTY EXECUTIVE



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Missing Link Secured to Unite Harford's Popular Ma & Pa Heritage Trail

BEL AIR, Md., (Nov. 14, 2016) - For nearly two decades, Harford County officials and trail enthusiasts in the region have strived to unite the two sections that make up the Ma & Pa Heritage Trail. On Thursday, County Executive Barry Glassman announced that his administration, in partnership with the Town of Bel Air, had secured the last piece of property needed to make the connection. Once completed, the nearly eight-mile trail will be one of the finest rail-trails in Maryland, taking travelers between Fallston and Forest Hill through the vibrant Bel Air business district. The scenic Ma & Pa Trail attracts thousands of visitors each year and is Harford County government's most popular parks and recreation facility.

County Executive Glassman made the timely announcement on November 10 at the trail entrance on Williams Street in Bel Air: "Today, and especially after Tuesday's election, I'm happy to bring a unifying message. The Ma & Pa Trail will finally be connected."

The news was met with cheers from trail advocates and officials gathered for the occasion.

Specifically, County Executive Glassman said that his administration had negotiated the purchase of an easement on approximately 13,500 square feet of private property in Bel Air near the route of the trail's namesake, the historic Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad. The easement connects with two miles of county-owned property stretching from Forest Hill to Bel Air, acquired over the years in hopes of uniting the trail. The existing Forest Hill section is

approximately 1.7 miles long between Friends Park and Blake's Venture Park. The existing Fallston-to-Bel Air section is about 3.3 miles between Edgeley Grove/Annie's Playground and Bel Air's Williams Street.

The Harford County Board of Estimates approved the easement purchase for \$100,000 on Tuesday, allowing the county to begin working on the connection. The Town of Bel Air also acquired an easement to provide enhancements on the trail within the town limits. The property is owned by the family of the late state Sen. J. Robert Hooper, a friend and mentor to County Executive Glassman throughout their service together in the state legislature.

Noting the opportunity that the trail represents to spark economic growth, jobs, and healthy lifestyles, County Executive Glassman, an avid runner, said on Thursday that engineering work would soon begin on the two-mile connector. He plans to recommend construction funding for the project in the county budgets for FY 18 and FY19 with the goal of breaking ground in two years, he said.

Also at Thursday's event, Bel Air Mayor Susan Burdette spoke of the trail's importance to the vitality of the town and thanked her predecessors for their advocacy over the years.

County Executive Glassman publicly thanked Director of Administration Billy Boniface and his team, Town of Bel Air Administrator Jesse Bane, the Town Commissioners, and the nonprofit Ma & Pa Heritage Trail Foundation, which volunteers and advocates for the trail. Offering thanks for a quest fulfilled, the foundation's President Phil Hosmer also looked forward: "Harford County will soon be home to one of the finest rail-trails in Maryland, which will further enrich the quality of life here, boost property values, and attract tourism and spur economic development along the trail."

Fittingly, the event concluded with a musical rendition of the Dale Evans and Roy Rogers classic, "Happy Trails."

For more information about the Ma & Pa Trail and related amenities, please visit the county website www.harfordcountymd.gov.



Pictured from left: Bel Air Mayor Susan Burdette; Harford County Executive Barry Glassman; Cindy Hooper Hushon; David Hooper; Ma & Pa Heritage Trail Foundation officials Philip Hosmer, president, and Rod Bourn, past president; Harford County Director of Parks & Recreation Kathy Burley

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