

RAIL RIGHT

Homeowners ask line land

By KEVIN DRAWBAUGH
Staff Writer

Two rotten bridges and a rusty track are all that's left in the city today of the old Baltimore & Annapolis Short Line Railroad.

Some city residents hope to keep it that way.

Homeowners whose property borders the 66-foot-wide, 3,000-foot-long B&A right of way through West Annapolis and Wardour may soon be able to buy pieces of it.

In an unusual arrangement, a group of residents of the affluent Wardour community has gained ownership of the right of way and the structures on it.

They hope either to subdivide and sell off the 5-acre strip or make it a community park, said retired Rear Adm. Norbert Frankenberger, president of the Wardour Improvements Association.

The long-abandoned B&A trestle that stretches halfway across the Severn River came with the property. The association voted last month to ask the state Department of Natural Resources to demolish the trestle, Frankenberger said.

The closed Kent Road bridge also was included with the property. The association hopes the city will either replace or repair the aging span, he said.

The B&A Railway Co. gave the title for the abandoned property and improvements to the association in 1983, said Ken Pippin, company spokesman.

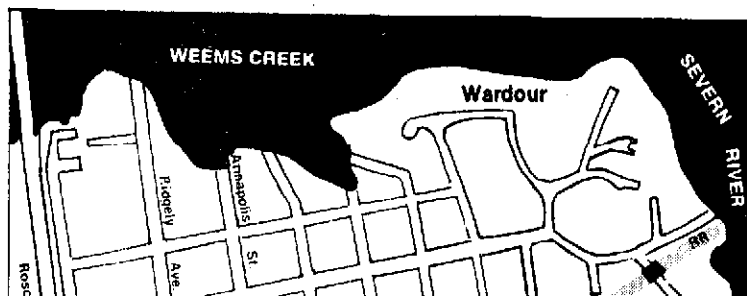
"They had said they wanted to preserve it for fishing and crabbing and things like that. We just kind of agreed that that was a good thing to do," Pippin said.

The property — worth between \$20,000 and \$40,000 — stretches from Annapolis Street to the end of the abandoned, arson-damaged



Photo by Bob Gilbert

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The property — worth between \$20,000 and \$40,000 — stretches from Annapolis Street to the end of the abandoned, arson-damaged trestle. The track lies at the bottom of a weed-choked culvert now criss-crossed by childrens' bicycle paths.

The track once bore electrified trolleys between the Bladen Street station in Annapolis and Camden Station in Baltimore.

The Short Line ran from 1887 to 1950, carrying as many as 1.7 million passengers annually before the age of the automobile ended its heyday.

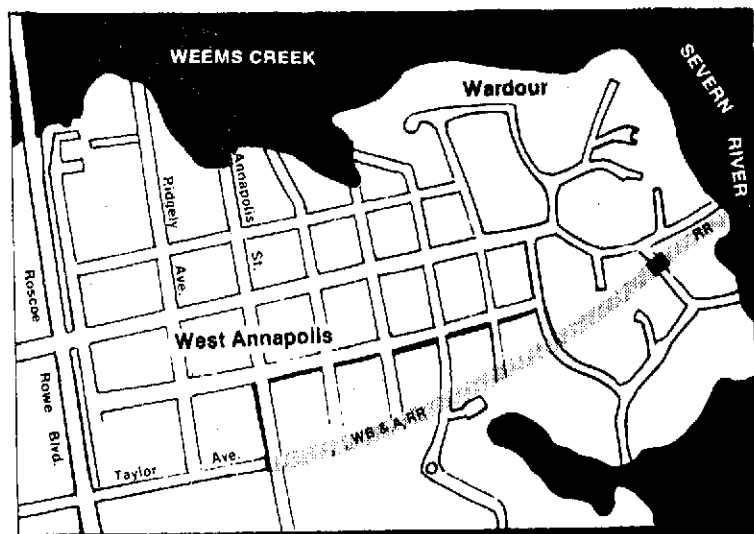
The age of the traffic jam has since prompted various public officials and private entrepreneurs to investigate re-establishing the rail line.

A portion of the railroad east of the Severn River was purchased last year by Anne Arundel County. One reason for the purchase was to preserve the Broadneck



Photo by Bob Gilbert

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— Capital map by M. Monica Williams

SHADED AREA shows the abandoned rail line that some West Annapolis and Wardour homeowners may be able to purchase. **Box** shows site of the closed Kent Road bridge pictured above.

Peninsula right of way in case money is available someday for a new rail line, county officials said.

Little other progress has been made on the issue. The rail line is still viewed as "not a realistic alternative" by the Maryland Department of Transportation, said

Kathleen Kujawa, department spokesman.

But if a line were to be re-established, acquiring the right of way for it through Annapolis would be greatly complicated by the recent transaction between B&A and the Wardour association, she said.