
Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION



Second Sunday Hike on March 9: Flat Branch

This month we will gather at Ben Lomond Regional/Splashdown Park and walk down to Lomond Drive and back. We will see where a trail could be provided on the route of the now-cancelled Route 28 Bypass.

The hike will be about 2 & 1/4 miles. For some added interest and distance, we will also walk up to Bull Run and look at the confluence with Flat Branch. That's a potential boat launch site, and has been used as a ford for vehicles when the water level is low.

Please register to get details, including the location of where to park. Registration will allow us to notify you if the hike is postponed or cancelled because of weather conditions.



Closing Gaps in the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail

On February 20 the contractor for the Prince William County Department of Parks and Recreation, ATCS, provided a report on recommendations for closing Gap 2 (Town of Dumfries - *see above*) & Gap 3 (Joplin Road/Marine Corps Museum) on the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST). The reports were funded by a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant.

Three alternative alignments were evaluated for each gap area, with recommended choices for 10' wide shared use path suitable for bikers as well as walkers.

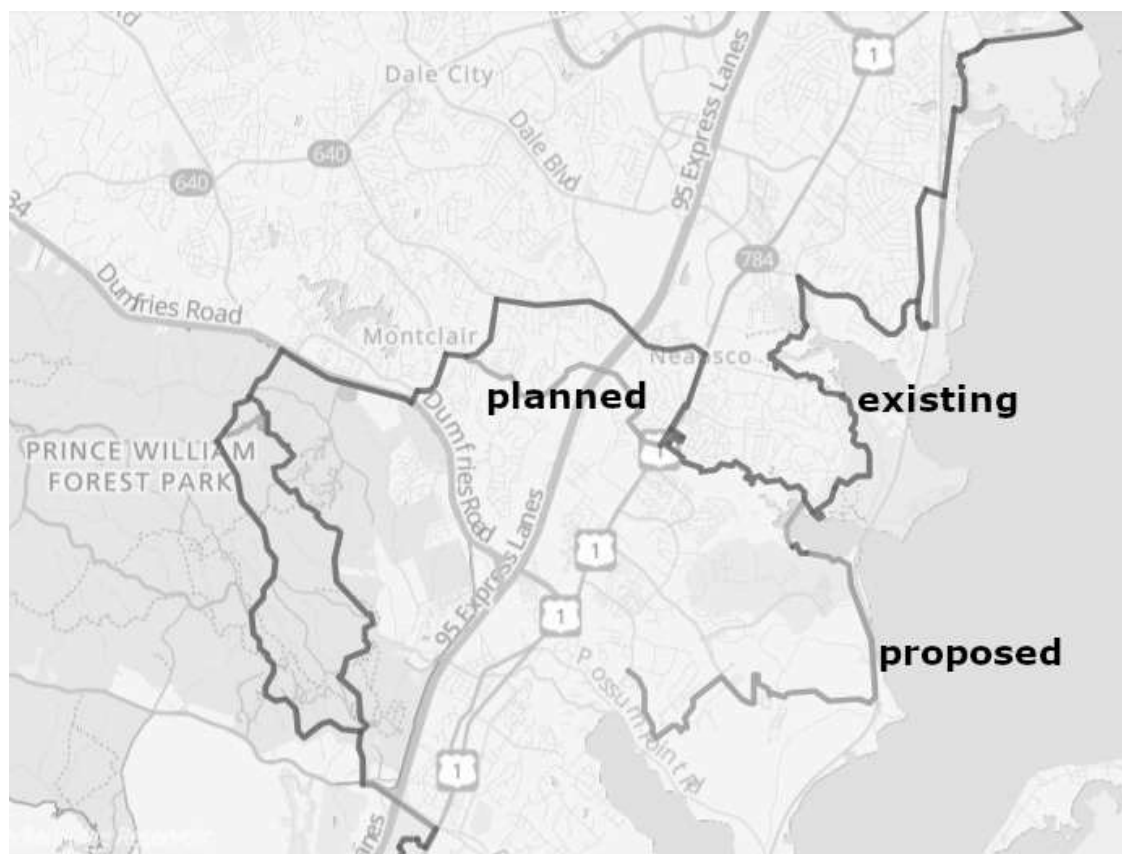
A report on Gap 1 (Occoquan) was provided on February 26. The preferred alternative would go from Belmont Bay upstream along the Occoquan River, underneath the CSX and Route 1 bridges, but would not go underneath I-95. To minimize right-of-way problems for a 10' wide paved trail, the PHNST would cross I-95 on the Gordon Boulevard/Route 123 bridge. Cost estimate for preferred option was less than \$5 million, about half the cost of locating a 10' wide path underneath I-95 and into Town of Occoquan.

The preferred option for Gap 2, connecting Main Street in Dumfries to Prince William Forest Park (*above*), includes a new bridge over Quantico Creek parallel to and would cost \$3.1 million.

The preferred option for Gap 3 includes a trail tunnel underneath two I-95 ramps at the Joplin Road interchange. Tunnel would be wide enough for bikers to feel comfortable on the trail, similar to one underneath I-81. Total trail construction to close Gap 3 would cost \$5 million.

The FLAP grant report and maps will be **posted online**. Public feedback will be accepted (send to dkroeger@pwcgov.org) until March 13. The Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation will wrap up the FLAP grant contract at the end of March.

NOTE: one remaining gap to be addressed, in coordination with Town of Dumfries, is how to route the PHNST from Potomac Shore into the town.



Potomac Heritage Trail Association February 21 Meeting

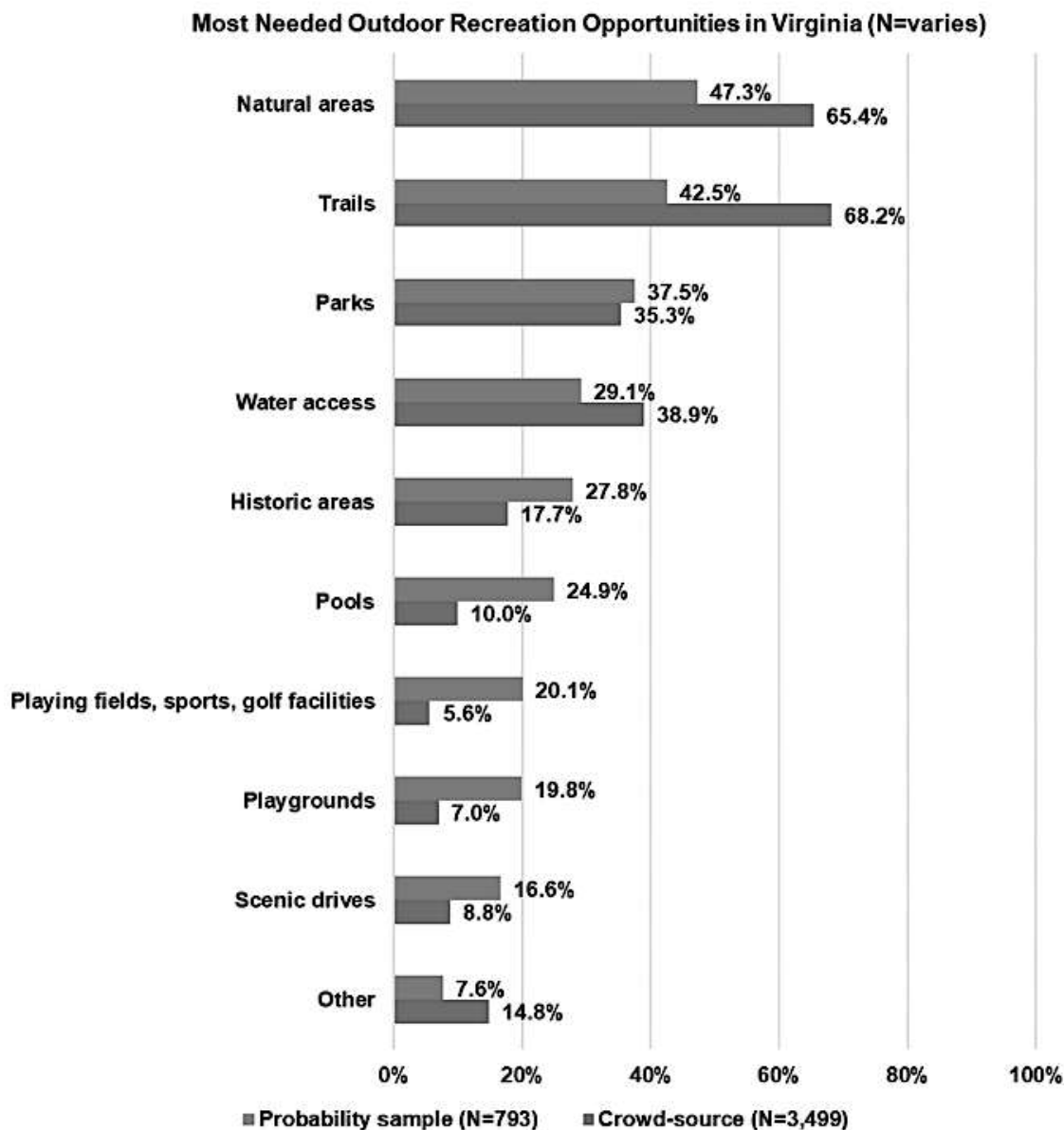
The **Potomac Heritage Trail Association** (PHTA) meets every other month. Each meeting includes a review of the status of trail projects stretching from Harpers Ferry to Caledon State Park, and in Southern Maryland.

Some takeaways from the February 21 meeting:

- Loudoun County **feasibility study** has defined two alternative routes for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) that are long-term concepts, due to limited rights-of-way options. PHTA has **proposed** a third "Waterford" route as an interim choice, where development could be completed in several years.
- Annual PHNST conferences ended after 2017 when the superintendent left, but a 2025 conference is being arranged for October 9-10 at Lancaster County Regional Library. Topics of discussion will include creating a "friends" group for the entire trail.
- A recent request by members of the US Congress helped get the PHNST Comprehensive Management Plan funded, but recent changes in the National Park Service have stopped action on the plan for the moment. The plan, due originally in 1987, must be completed before the trail will get Land and Water Conservation Fund \$\$\$ (NOTE: PHNST **county implementation plans** were completed in 2002, and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and National Park Service prepared a **Development and Management Plan** in 2006. **Corridor Analysis reports** were completed in 2011 and 2015.)
- Current National Park Service **map of PHNST** in Prince William County (see above) is not final. Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation anticipates approval of Trails Master Plan by the Board of County Supervisors in January, 2026. That plan might define the final PHNST route.
- Fairfax County is seeking a Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RCTA) grant to plan

how to close two gaps in the PHNST. The next parks bond, perhaps in 2026, will include trails projects.

- The **Bull Run-Occoquan Trail** of NOVAParks currently ends at Sandy Run Regional Park. Discussions continue on extending trail to Occoquan, crossing through property of Fairfax Water.
- PHTA is participating for the first time in the annual **Hike the Hill** lobbying day on Capitol Hill.



Virginia Outdoors Plan

Virginia updates the state outdoors plan in part to remain eligible for grants from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The state has received **over \$125 million** in such Federal grants since 1965.

Section 2.3, **Building Trail Networks Across Virginia**, specifically mentions the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and East Coast Greenway. The **benefits of greenways** are also highlighted. A reference in the **Virginia Outdoors Plan** makes it easier to win future grants.

The plan identifies how trails are connected to four specific health-related initiatives:

- **Virginia PATHS** (Prioritizing Active Transportation, Health and Safety)
- **Virginia Walkability Action Institute**
- **Health Impact Assessment Toolkit**
- **Walk with Ease Program**

Got Ideas? Two GPWTC Work Sessions on Trails Planning in Prince William County

In February, a contractor provided final input on options for closing three gaps in the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. In 2025, Prince William County is creating a Trails Master Plan, refining the Countywide Trails Plan that was adopted in 2022 as part of the 2040 Mobility Chapter.

Want to submit your ideas for trails planning? Greater Prince William Trails Coalition (GPWTC) is hosting two work sessions to review the 2022 Countywide Trails Plan and learn how to contribute constructive suggestions to the county's Department of Parks and Recreation.

You can register to **join us March 31** for a virtual session, 7:00-9:00pm or on **April 12** at Chinn Library for an in-person session. Look at maps, get your ideas sorted out, and prepare for being helpful at the public input meetings which the county will be holding later.

In addition, **Active Prince William** will collect input during **Bike to Work Day** on May 15.

Parks & Recreation referendum projects

(Amounts in millions)	Total	Current	Remaining	FY26	Project Phase
Project	Debt	Approp.	Total	Approp.	During FY26
Fuller Heights Park	\$6.0	\$0.6	\$5.4	\$5.4	Design/Construction
Neabsco District Park	6.0	0.8	5.2	-	Design
Neabsco Greenway	3.5	1.0	2.5	2.5	Design/Construction
Occoquan Greenway *	5.0	5.0	0.0	-	Design/Construction
Open Space	2.0	2.0	0.0	-	Land Acquisition
Powells Creek Crossing	9.5	9.5	0.0	-	Design
Total	\$32.0	\$18.9	\$13.1	\$7.9	
* Includes Ellicott Street Sidewalk (Occoquan Greenway Connection)					

Trails Highlighted in the Prince William County Strategic Plan; But Will They End Up in FY26 Budget?

Budget and staffing priorities for Prince William County are established in the Strategic Plan, adopted every four years after the elections for Board of County Supervisors.

The **2025-2028 Strategic Plan** was finalized on February 25. In the Environment section is the objective to *“Enhance and expand public parks, trails, and green spaces to improve accessibility”* and the strategy to *“Improve walkability and bikeability around public amenities and parks.”*

In the **draft FY26 budget**, “improving existing park facilities” was identified as a priority and the County Executive proposed an additional \$700,000 and 6 FTE for park maintenance, as well as extension of funding increases approved in FY25 budget last year. The draft includes a \$300,000 increase for the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to **attract more visitors** to local parks and trails, plus 3 FTE for maintenance and ranger services on Occoquan Greenway as it opens.

As proposed, DPR will have over \$5 million in FY27 for improving/maintaining active recreation facilities to address “sustaining” and “enhancing” projects (but not “visionary” items) in park master plans. To put that number into context, depreciation of current facilities in existing parks is \$10 million/year. There is no funding identified yet for a dedicated staffer to manage volunteer projects.

The FY26 draft proposes to consolidate capital construction projects in the Transportation Department, to be led by a Director of Transportation and Capital Construction (**see slide 37**). If implemented in FY27, projects to construct new trails would not be managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

The proposed \$1 billion **Capital Improvements Program** (CIP) currently includes no new General Fund \$\$ for trail construction. The draft FY26 budget does identify how the remaining 2019 parks bond funding would be allocated. As described in a **Prince William Times article**, *“\$2.5 million would be used to replace three wooden bridges and add a new bridge and a connection between Andrew Leitch Park and the Sharron Baucom Recreation Center.”*

Now it is up to the county supervisors to determine if more than a token amount of the **Countywide Trails Plan** will be funded. Proffers from new developments and state/Federal grants will produce only a few of the segments required to increase walkability and bikeability significantly. In October, 2024 the Trails and Blueways Council has already identified **priority trail projects in each of the 7 magisterial districts**.

Trail advocates have suggested adding \$5 million a year to start building the roughly 300 miles of planned recreational trails and 200 miles of roadway trails in the 2040 Mobility Chapter, to start balancing the \$1 billion already planned for road construction. Anyone wanting to share their perspective on FY26 funding for new trails construction can contact all the supervisors by e-mail sent to **bocs@pwcgov.org**



Dumfries Designates Waterfront District

The Dumfries Town Council has unanimously **designated** the former Campbell Junkyard Site located at 17999 Possum Point Road as the Waterfront District. Goal is to enhance access to Quantico Creek, and make the town a “place to drive to” rather than a “place to drive through.”



February 26 Trails and Blueways Council Meeting

The Trails and Blueways Council (TBC) met on February 25, with another **busy agenda**. Items discussed included:

- PW Transportation Department has sent a letter to VDOT about I-95 bridge maintenance project planning to block Neabsco Creek Greenway. VDOT apparently is reconsidering design now.
- To use the \$1 million in FY25 funding for trails construction, PW Transportation Department and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) are now looking at a stone dust trail connecting Marumsco Acre Lake Park north to Marumsco Creek

- At Flat Branch, DPR recognizes that acquiring VDOT property between Lomond Drive and Sudley Road would facilitate trail construction. Topography would allow building a 12' wide asphalt trail, creating a full mobility corridor rather than just a natural surface trail.
- on Occoquan Greenway, Segment 4 bridge should be completed by start of Summer
- DPR has received the final report from contractor for Powells Creek Crossing location
- next Doves Landing public meeting will be May 19
- Planning Office will start the Vint Hill Corridor study after completing Sudley Road corridor study. DPR has identified multiple opportunities for building a connected network of trails open for public use, if new subdivisions along Vint Hill Road are approved.
- Planning Office has hired a new planner, Jonathan Rodriguez, with a strong background in active transportation
- Countywide Trails Master Plan being developed in 2025 will incorporate "roadway trails" which Prince William Transportation Department will build. There were 133.5 miles of trails proposed in county's original 1993 trails plan. There are 319 miles of recreational trails in 2040 Mobility Chapter, plus about 200 more miles of roadway trails.
- For new trails plan, DPR will receive feedback via GoogleDocs with screenshots from commenters. Final plan in January 26 will identify cost estimates that can be used in FY27 budget and potentially for November 2026 bond issue



Connecting the Manassas Park Train Station to Blooms Park

Dominion Energy is upgrading the electricity transmission line between Clifton and Broad Run. Construction within the right-of-way could create the bed needed for a trail linking the Manassas Park Virginia Railway Express (VRE) station to **Blooms Park**. That trail connection is in the city's **Active Transportation Plan**.

Dominion will build a temporary bridge across Russia Branch (above). However, the bridge must be removed - the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) permit requires returning the site to its original condition.

To date, no local jurisdiction has been able to get engaged early enough so “temporary” Dominion Energy improvements can be designed and authorized for future use as a trail. A similar challenge exists regarding **stream restoration projects** done by Prince William Department of Public Works.



Coming to the Prince William Board of County Supervisors

The March 4 agenda for the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) includes on the Consent Agenda (before time for any public comment) for **four applications** for the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's Fiscal Year 2026 Transportation/Land-Use Connections Program.

One of the four, the Dumfries-Fairground Trail Connection Project, would help design new pedestrian/bicycle facilities linking the Brentsville Road Interchange with Manassas' existing bike network, including a connection to Manassas Airport.

Also on the consent agenda are **three grant applications** for the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's FY26 Regional Roadway Safety Program - studies for High School Pedestrian Safety Improvements, Port Potomac Neighborhood Traffic Calming Project, and a Hedges Run Drive and Cotton Mill Drive Roundabout.

The BOCS will also facilitate **acquisition of 39 acres** to link existing segments of Broad Run Linear Park and Broad Run Greenway (see above). Stack Infrastructure is proposing to donate land on both sides of Broad Run to Prince William County, with easements reserved for utility lines.

Building the Broad Run Greenway would be facilitated, though some right-of-way remains to be acquired - and, of course, there is currently very little funding in the county budget for design and construction.



Virginia Trail Builders of the Year - 2024

Rich Wilson and Jason Williams first learned of each other on Strava over 7 years ago in a virtual battle over King of the Mountain (KOM). When they finally met each other in person, they realized they both not only loved mountain biking but also shared a dream of improving Andrew Leitch Park by expanding its trail system. Since 2021, Rich and Jason have been advocating for improved trail in ALP. In the past two years, they have built over 3 miles of new trail, organized group work days (one removed over a ton of waste), and led sMORE's rides. Together, they have helped culminate Andrew Leitch into a neighborhood gem all the while building community.

On February 22, they received the **Virginia Trail Builders of the Year award** for their 2024 work. This was the third year in a row that a Prince William County project won the award from Mid Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts (MORE). Long Park was honored in 2023 and Locust Shade in 2022.

At the General Assembly...

The 2025 session of the Virginia General Assembly session is over. No funding was identified for trails in Northern Virginia. Among other things:

SB1416 passed. If signed by Governor Youngkin, it would make it a Class 1 misdemeanor if a driver fails to stop and causes serious bodily injury or death of a vulnerable road user who was

lawfully crossing a highway. This would create an option other than a reckless driving charge, possibly resulting in more action by local prosecutors.

SB1007 failed. It proposed a study to identify a way to fund the **December 2024 Northern Virginia Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Study**.

In Other News...

- Department of Parks and Recreation has scheduled a **Springtime Nature Hike** (March 8, 10:00am-noon) at Silver Lake Regional Park, an **Active Adults Hike** (March 10, 9:00-10:00am at Ben Lomond Regional Park), and a **Twilight Trek** (March 15, 6:30-8:30pm).
- The **2025 National Bike Summit** will take place in-person in Washington, D.C., from Tuesday, March 11, through Thursday, March 13, 2025.
- **Lessons Learned from Removing 1,000 Bumps**: Friends of Mount Vernon Trail presented an American Trails webinar on how they removed bumps and root heaves from asphalt on the Mount Vernon Trail. The National Park Service provides significant equipment and support to that volunteer group for maintenance projects.
- VDOT is asking for feedback on the **Headly Road (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) study**, which could recommend bicycle/pedestrian improvements. You can **fill out the survey** before March 4.
- Eugene Lowe, who managed volunteers for the Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation, has **taken a new job** as Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director in Stafford County. The vacancy announcement for a new Assistant Director of Maintenance and Operations is **now advertised**.
- Northern Virginia Regional Commission **advertised for a contractor** for two PHNST studies, "Wayfinding and Amenities Needs Assessment" and "Climate Resiliency Assessment (Phase One)."
- VDOT is planning innovative intersection improvements based on the **Route 28 STARS** (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) study. New **crosswalks and sidewalks** were proposed at the February 26 hearing, closing existing gaps along Route 28. State Senator Danica Roem is exploring future enhancement of bike/pedestrian access across Bull Run on Route 28 bridge. Current bridge has sidewalks, but there is no way for walkers/bikers to get to the bridge from the end of the sidewalks in Prince William County.
- Department of Parks and Recreation **submitted comments** on February 17 regarding the Townes at Occoquan (formerly known as Destination Place) rezoning proposal.
- Prince William Transportation Department received at least one other potential bid for the **Prince William Parkway/Sudley Manor Road interchange**. Staff is not ready yet to initiate a formal public input process regarding bike/pedestrian connections.

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