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Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

Quarterly Meeting on June 27 (10:00-11:30am)

Please **register** so we know if you'll participate via Zoom or in person at **Potomac Science Center**. Get up-to-date on what's happening regarding trails south of the Occoquan River.

It's Open!

The bike/pedestrian bridge at the Route 234/Brentsville interchange is now open. No need to wait for a ribbon cutting ceremony to be scheduled before you start using it.

*But wait - there's more! The trails in **Semper Fidelis Memorial Park** at the Marine Corps National Museum have re-opened,with a connection to Locust Shade Park. The Memorial Trail **added another half mile** of paved trail for new monuments in the future.*

Report Card on June 24: How Well Is Prince Willam County Actually Implementing the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Plan?

In 2020 Prince William County adopted long-range policies and specific action steps in the **Parks, Recreation, and Tourism chapter** of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Is planning for parks and trails a waste of time, or will elected officials actually pay attention to the plans?

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The League of Women Voters - Prince William/Fauquier Chapter has prepared a report card on that chapter. It measures success, or lack of progress, on implementation of policies and action

strategies after four years.

Join a Zoom session next Monday to explore how the staff and elected supervisors are working the plan after planning the work. Find out what has been achieved, is in progress, is being ignored, or has been put into the “not gonna happen” pile.

You get to decide if the county has earned a passing grade. Get dangerously smart about Prince William County’s approach to park planning on June 24, 7:00-8:00pm. To get the Zoom link, register using **Signup Genius**.

Parks and Trails in Latest Belmont Bay Rezoning

The latest proposal, **REZ2024-00040**, includes a proffer of 105 acres to the county for parkland in three places. Preferred route of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, as identified by Trails and Blueways Council, would pass through former golf course area upstream from Potomac Science Center (*outlined in red, above*).

The **North Woodbridge Small Area Plan**, completed in 2019, includes on p.195:
The former The Osprey’s Golf Course at Belmont Bay site provides potential additional acreage to incorporate into the County’s park system.

The 2024 rezoning proposal references funding in Prince William County's Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and claims on p.43 of the Land Use Impact Analysis Report that no trail construction should be proffered:
Because there are no expenditures planned beyond FY25, there is no basis for calculating a proffer… Therefore, a proffer for the linear parks is not appropriate as residents will be paying for these projects as a pro rata share of their taxes.

Two Potential Trails Next to Tracks Owned by the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA)

Yes, it's possible - because the General Assembly created the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) in 2020, part of the **Transforming Rail in Virginia** initiative to expand passenger rail service across the state.

On June 4, **VPRA announced** that it is negotiating now with Norfolk Southern to purchase the railroad track between Broad Run and Alexandria. That segment has been a dead end spur for Norfolk Southern freight traffic since closure of Potomac Yard in 1982. The VPRA goal is to prioritize passenger rail service, reducing conflicts with the few remaining freight trains going from Manassas to Alexandria.

Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William County are requesting a grant to plan a bike/pedestian trail parallel to that track from Manassas across Bull Run, to connect with the trail network in Fairfax County. Trail planning with VPRA will be easier than with the private railroad company.

Also, VPRA has purchased half of the CSX Transportation right-of-way through Prince William County from the Occoquan River to Chopawamsic Creek. VPRA's **Phase 3** includes plans to build a new railroad bridge across the Occoquan River in the 2030's (*red arrow, above*). The bridge will accommodate a third track dedicated to Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) service.

That Occoquan River bridge could be designed to provide a bike/pedestrian crossing. That would offer access between Belmont Bay and Mason Neck, and creation of a loop trail along both sides of the river up to the Town of Occoquan, perhaps including braids of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail to connect to the Mason Neck waterfront. VPRA has already demonstrated its support for multi-modal transportation by planning and funding a new bike/pedestrian bridge across the Potomac River as part of the **Long Bridge project**.

However, current trail plans by Fairfax County or Prince William County *do not include* this possible connection across the Occoquan River. VPRA might design a bike/pedestrian connection - but only if it is requested by local governments.

Presentations of Potential Interest

1) **VDOT NoVA Bicycle/Pedestrian Network Study Update** (May 28)
See Slides 5 & 6 for data comparing PWC to the other NoVA localities.

2) **Virginia State Trails Plan Update** (May 28)
Slide 8 shows a map of the 1,500 miles of the existing multiuse trails identified across Virginia.

3) **City of Manassas 2024 Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects Update** (May 16)

4) **Video recording of the May 16 Manassas Bike/Ped Project Briefing**
(Thanks, Allen Muchnick)

Trails and Blueways Council (TBC) Meeting Notes

At its May 28 meeting, the TBC discussed volunteer programs for trail maintenance. Within the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition, **Trail Keepers Coalition**, **Prince William Trails and Streams Coalition**, and **Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts** (MORE) are especially engaged with Prince William County in volunteer trail maintenance projects.

Almost 300 people from over 20 organizations participated in **Adopt a Trail** activities in the past year to maintain 55 miles of trail (*see bridge projects above*). Volunteer Prince William provides the website for people to **volunteer as a Trail Monitor.** Monitors walk a section of trail weekly to collect litter and report maintenance problems to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

TBC also discussed trail proposals that were included/missing from five land use applications along Vint Hill Road, and the lack of trail access along Occoquan River in the **Destination Place** rezoning application.

The current **Recreation Mapper** for Prince William County will be replaced this year. New site will include horse trails.

Topics for June meeting include a presentation on standardized and branded signage for trails, plus status report on the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant for gaps in the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. TBC meetings are **open to the public**, in person and online.

Keeping Blueways Clean

Public Works won the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award for the "bandalong" that traps litter on Neabsco Creek. A donation from Micron made it possible. Check out the **video** of the bandalong dedication. Looking to **adopt a stream**? Many **streams are available**.

Forced To Turn Back at Leesylvania State Park: No Room

The June 15 **Sierra Club Potomac River Outings** hike from Neabsco Regional Park across the boardwalk to Powells Creek made it only halfway. Virginia State Park rangers blocked the group from hiking through Leesylvania State Park, because the park was already full at 11:00am on a Saturday morning.

In the most recent **Needs Asesssment** by the Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation, "*waterfront parks*" was the #2 identified need. (*#1 was "walking and biking trails."*) To balance supply and demand, adding new waterfront parkland is an option.

In its **2040 Comprehensive Plan**, Prince William County has planned 1 acre along Quantico Creek on Possum Point as "Parks and Open Space" (POS). A new boat ramp there could provide water access to the Potomac River, relieving pressure on Leesylvania State Park. An additional 255 acres, including a possible site for permanent coal ash storage and 0.75 miles of waterfront on Quantico Creek, is also designated as Parks and Open Space in that 2040 plan.

To date, no funding has been identified for actually acquiring the acreage or building any facilities there for public use.

double-decker bike parking at Haymarket - in Edinburgh, Scotland

In Other News…

- **Bird Hike at the North Section** of Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve on June 22, 8:00am-noon. This section of the preserve is not normally open to the general public.
- NOVA Trails Tour: **Capital Trails Coalition** is leading a casually-paced 17-mile **bike ride** from Benjamin Banneker Park (L'Enfant Plaza) to the Vienna Metrorail Station on June 26, 4:00-6:00m. You can join/depart the ride at the halfway point (Ballston Metro)
- **Never wait in the school car line again. Here's how** (*Washington Post*, June 4) Instead, enjoy a "bike bus" - a convoy of parents and children who ride to school.
- **For public access, being near the water might be more important than on the water** (Chesapeake Bay Program, May 29) In focus groups, "…*many said they wanted to be near, but not on or in, the water. They gravitated towards images of a picnic area where they could gather with family or friends, or a bench where they could sit by the water.*" Hmm, should we locate the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail where there are waterfront views?
- Keynote presentations and workshop slides from the 2024 Land Conservation & Greenways Conference Presentations are now **available online**.
- June is Great Outdoors Month. **Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation** is hosting, among othe activities, International Yoga Day at Neabso Boardwalk on June 21 from 8:00-9:30pm
- Second "**Annual Park Day**" in Manassas is June 24.
- Prince William County is encouraging everyone to **Get Outside During Great Outdoors Month!** in June.
- **The Other Kind of Bike Infrastructure Cities Need** (Bloomberg, June 4) "*If you're building infrastructure, how do you ensure it's being used by as many people and as*

diverse a group of people as possible?"

- The Washington and Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail will **celebrate its 50th anniversary** in September.
- You can read online copies of the **quarterly trails newsletter** from the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC).
- **2024 Bike Day** raffle winners for a new bike were David Delozier – Manassas VRE Station Pitstop, Mark McKay – Tackett's Mill Pitstop, and Lasana Turyman – Woodbridge VRE Pitstop.

The Riverside Museum in Glasgow, Scotland exhibits the
***world's earliest surviving pedal-driven bicycle**. It was made around 1846.*

Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

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The Greater Price William Trails Coalition is a 501(c)(3) organization (EIN: 92-3087298).
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