Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

Rail-With-Trail Project Linking Manassas to Fairfax County

Prince William, Manassas, and Manassas Park are partnering again to seek funding for a 3-mile section of a Rail-with-Trail adjacent to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Manassas Line between Downtown Manassas and the Bull Run Trail in Fairfax County.

A previous request for a Federal grant was unsuccessful, so now the three jurisdictions are preparing a **request for funding** by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA). Each jurisdiction is contributing about $90,000 for a study.

As described in the proposal, "*Phase 1 of this multi-jurisdictional Project will span across the Cities and the County and will offer a comprehensive solution by using an existing transportation corridor to create a long-distance, off-road active transportation spine*…"

A bike/pedestrian bridge over Bull Run next to the current railroad bridge is already included in the regional long range transportation plan, **Visualize 2045**, as part of the **National Capital Trail Network**. In the **TransAction** plan of NVTA, the trail (**Project ID 439**) is proposed to go all the way to Alexandria at the old Landmark Plaza.

In Manassas, the 25 companies that are part of the Heavy Construction Contractors Association ***upgraded Cannon Branch Fort****. Included were two new trails.*

Transportation Town Halls: A Step Towards Transparency

The Prince William Transportation Department **town halls** on April 30, May 7, and May 15 were designed with stations discussing safety, planning, funding, and capital projects.

One station with a poster identified planned sidewalk ands bike projects (*see above*). It did not address where trails were planned to improve mobility to create live-work-play walkable

communities; the town hall was offered by the Transportation Department, while trails planning is currently done by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Starting with the FY27 budget, however, the Transportation Department could assume responsibility for building trails along with other county capital projects. The Transportation Departments **Bicycle and Pedestrian** page already includes links to trails information

The **Comprehensive Traffic Safety Action Plan** station included the staff from Kimley-Horm. That contractor also supported bike/pedestrian planning in the City of Manassas Mobility Master Plan, the creation of a **regional trails map** by the NOVA District of VDOT, and the State Trails Office development of a statewide trails map and resource hub.

That action plan will identify where trails/sidewalks could improve safe walkability to schools and other public facilities. Active Prince William has provided **21 recommendations** for the plan.

Though the town halls enhanced transparency of transportation planning, the posters did not identify any specific future projects for which the county anticipates requesting Federal, state, or regional funding in the next few years.

The process for setting priorities for road, bike path, and recreational trail projects remains opaque. On May 13, the Board of County Supervisors approved **six projects** for FY27 **Transportation Alternatives** grants, including 5 sidewalk projects and the North Woodbridge pedestrian bridge across Route 1 to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) station. That decision was made with approval of the Consent Agenda before any public input. You can see Citizen Time comments from the co-chair of Active Prince William at **1:54 in the video**.

The Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) is scheduled to endorse the Northern Virginia Transportation (NVTA) **FY26-31 Six Year Program** by end of July. Unless the traditional decision process is modified, the first time the public will learn the county's priorities will be when the agenda for a BOCS meeting is posted.

Improvements to the Occoquan Greenway

The Prince William Trails and Streams Coalition has **published an update** on upgrading Segment 2 of the trail in the Occoquan Greenway. The many volunteers on May 3 made great progress.

Local Feedback

Below summarizes the collective feedback from Hunden's engagement with local stakeholders:

- There is a desire for a more walkable mixed-use environment in the area and more affordable for-rent multifamily development due to the concentration of higher-priced new for-sale supply existing in the market and in the development pipeline.
- Any new mixed-use development should also include the activation of ample outdoor public gathering space, with walking trails and lush landscaping.

May 22: Fettler Park Market Study Town Hall

Andrea Bailey, supervisor for the Potomac District, will hold a **town hall** on May 22. 6:00-8:00pm to discuss the **Fettler Park Market Study**. The study focused on the potential for new economic development in the area, including hotels, residential units, and data centers. It also highlighted the need for creating a walkable community with more trails.

Neabsco Greenway Update - Good News, For Now…

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) initially proposed to block all passage underneath I-95 at Neabsco Creek, truncating the Neabsco Greenway. The state agency then offered to include a 5' wide walkway (see above).

Prince William County Transportation Department sent a letter to VDOT on May 6 that included "*The County supports a minimum 10' wide trail in the culvert that will fully accommodate two-way greenway traffic for both bicycles and pedestrians in the future.*"

VDOT has responded, saying "*We plan to reevaluate this project to a more traditional bridge design*."

Infrastructure Planning at Innovation Park

At the May 13 Board of County Supervisors meeting, **the briefing** on the Innovation Park Infrastructure Master Plan noted that a road diet on Discovery Boulevard will add a bike lane. In addition, a trail connection is planned between Route 28 and Discovery Boulevard, with a recreational trail around the stormwater pond near Two Silos.

Of the $15.2 million now in the Innovation Park Fund, staff proposes using $9.2 million on Discovery Boulevard and the stormwater pond trail. Cost of the pedestrian bridge over Prince William Parkway proposed in the **Innovation Park Small Area Plan** is estimated at $10 million (*see above for estimated costs*).

Strathmore Rezoning Update

Brookfield Homes has offered to donate 10.5 acres on Broad Run (*see above*) as part of its Strathmore rezoning proposal, **#REZ2023-00023.** The Planning Commission recommended approval on May 7. A future trail on the south side of Broad Run, stretching from Linton Hall Road to Route 28, could cross the 10.5 acres.

Trail Disruption Advisories

- The Shared Use Path along Route 234 at Independent Hill remains disrupted by construction. Bike riders should expect to experience a patch of dirt rather than a paved trail.
- In Manassas Park, some Blooms Park trails will be re-routed in June as Dominion Energy upgrades a transmission line. See the **Blooms Park Trails Advisory** for more details
- The **stream restoration project** on Chinn Branch behind Jenkins Elementary will block use of the trail starting this summer between Trowbridge Drive/Chinn Community Center and Chinn Park (*see above*).

Trails Talk at the Commonwealth Transportation Board

At the May 8 public hearing of the Commonwealth Transportation Board on the FY2026-2031 Six-Year Improvement Program for funding transportation projects, the Chair of the Trails and Blueways Council (Liz Cronauer) highlighted the problem with the design of the I-95 bridge over the Neabsco Greenway.

Allen Muchnick presented **the perspective** of Active Prince William, including:
*Last December, VDOT's NoVA District office released **an analysis** of the roughly 5,000 miles of locally planned but currently unfunded active transportation facilities throughout the District. That non-exhaustive analysis estimated the present-dollar (2022) cost to create those already planned active mobility facilities to total roughly 14 billion dollars.*

At the present rate at which standalone active mobility projects are funded, it would take hundreds of years to complete those already planned active mobility facilities. The NoVA region needs a study to figure out how to more effectively fund active mobility infrastructure.

Many of the Active Prince William comments regarding the failure to invest in bike/pedestrian infrastructure were echoes of the **statement made at the 2023 hearing**.

Walk and Talk signs will be visible on 10 trails in Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William County until June 8

In Other News…

- David Cook, Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner at Virginia Department of Transportation, will present the agency's **vision for enhanced bikeability** across Virginia on May 21, noon-1:00pm in a program sponsored by AARP.
- Northern Virginia Regional Commission's Trail Care Academy will host the first in-person, half-day workshop on Sunday, June 1. 8:30am-12:30pm at the Lansdowne Area of Loudoun

County to guide participants on tools and techniques for key maintenance topics. **Register online**. Fina Trails will be hosting a second workshop on Saturday, July 12. Registration for that training will open in mid-June.

- Virginia Department of Transportation will hold a **Design Public Hearing** on May 29 regarding widening of the I-66 bridge over Broad Run at the Fauquier/Prince William County line from four to six lanes.
- At the **2025 Virginia Land Conservation & Greenways Conference**, speakers from Greater Prince William Trails Coalition, Trails and Blueways Council, and Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation gave a presentation on "How to Kick Start a Trails Program."
- The Town of Dumfries is purchasing the Campbell Salvage Yard for $3.9 million, with 162 acres on Quantico Creek, and has established the Dumfries Waterfront District. Mayor Wood's perspective is in **Dumfries aims to reclaim its historic waterfront** (*Prince William Times*, May 2) "*Wood envisions a waterfront boardwalk, a public park, a dock for kayaks and canoes and perhaps some restaurants and multi-family homes. The hope is to restore Dumfries' maritime roots by restoring public access to Quantico Creek.*" See also **Town Unveils Vision for Dumfries Waterfront District During On-Site Tour** (*Potomac News* with paywall, April 30).
- For Bike Month, check out the **Celebrating the Bicycle** stories from JSTOR Daily.
- **Youngkin vetoes $1.2M in state funding for Occoquan riverwalk expansion** (*InsideNOVA*, May 12) See the town's plan for the **Occoquan Riverwalk**.
- Prince William Libraries now have bike repair kits. They **can be checked out**, like a book, when you're taking a ride.
- On May 13 the Board of County Supervisors initiated a **Comprehensive Plan Amendment** to remove several roads from the long-range plan, including the Route 28 Bypass. The CPA proposed to eliminate completely from the 2040 Mobility Chapter the Flat Branch Trail and the planned trail on Route 234 from Pageland Lane to Route 234.
- "**Pittsburgh's Low-Cost Traffic Calming Is a Model for Every City**" (*Strong Towns*, May 7) "*For these types of 'quick build' projects DOMI [Department of Mobility and Infrastructure] taps into discretionary funds. In doing so, the agency is signaling that making streets safer actually can come cheap. For the price of a paint can and a couple of hours of labor, city workers can dramatically improve pedestrian visibility at an intersection.*"
- **Completion of Old Bridge Road Sidewalk Project Advances Safety and Walkability** (Prince William County, May 9) The new 700 feet of sidewalk cost $1.6 million.
- **Richmond man has run on all 2,200 of the city's streets**, (*The Richmonder*, May 9) "*Kirk is a graduate of the Bike Walk RVA advocacy academy... His journey is in part about exploring discrepancies in access to safe walking and biking infrastructure.*"
- The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) has responded to a request by State Senator Scott Surovell, **saying** "*we will conduct a review of the findings in the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT)* ***Northern Virginia Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Study,*** *published in December 2024. We will bring together stakeholders – including those identified in your letter - to gather input from advocates representing bicycle, pedestrian, transit, smart growth and multimodal transportation perspectives*."

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