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Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

Construction Starts on Boat Launch at Neabsco Boardwalk

The new launch site is just downstream from the boardwalk, where boats visiting Rippon Lodge once docked.

Boaters will need to cart kayaks/canoes from the parking lot of Neabsco Regional Park about 1/4 mile to the shoreline. The launch site was contracted for slightly over $150,000

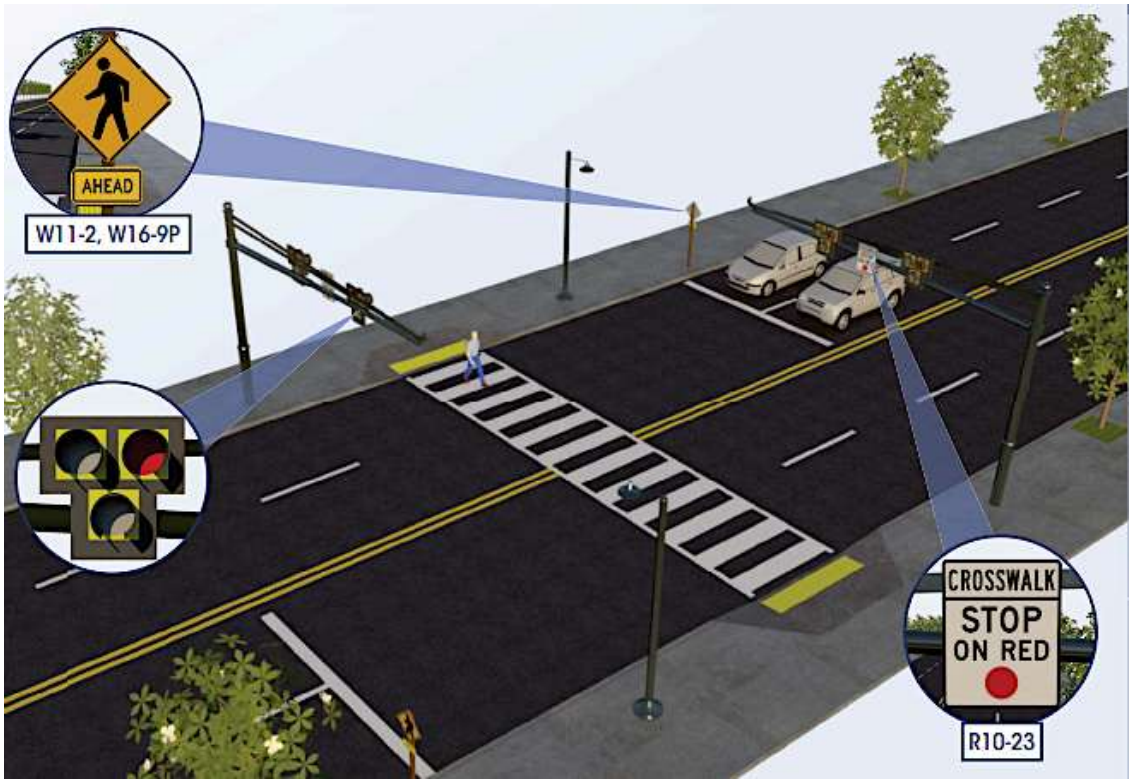
In addition, new parking on Blackburn Road will provide more accessible access to the boardwalk. That project will cost slightly over $250,000. Completion date of both projects is the end of 2024.

Want More Bike Paths/Trails In Manassas?

City of Manassas purchased the Marsteller School in July to create a community center and park. That opens up the opportunity to establish trails connecting the park to nearby neighborhoods and Haydon Elementary School.

Active Prince William has submitted suggestions to the city already, including the proposed trail on the Upper Occoquan Service Authority (UOSA) easement that would connect Park Central in Manassas Park with SplashDown Waterpark in western Prince William County.

The city invites people to share their thoughts via an **online survey**.



Safe Streets For All Update

Question: Why doesn't Hoadly Road have a bike lane painted on the edge of the pavement, at least on the segment marked as Bike Route 1?
Answer: Because VDOT desires a physical barrier, separating bike lanes from vehicle traffic, on roads with speed limits 40mph and higher. The STARS Study for Hoadly Road will look at possible solutions, including narrowing the lanes and reducing the speed limit.

Another issue is VDOT's demand that local governments - rather than the state agency - pay the operations costs of pedestrian safety features. That complicates installation of a **pedestrian hybrid beacon** or a **HAWK** (high-intensity activated crosswalk beacon) on Prince William County roads. (Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park have local control over most of their roads.)

The contractor for the Manassas Park portion of the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) plan, Kimley Horn, held a public meeting on October 30 in that city to get input on problem areas. Kimley Horn will hold a similar public meeting for Prince William County later. (City of Manassas is not part of the Safe Streets for All plan now underway.)

Safe Streets For All recommendations in the county's Comprehensive Traffic Safety Action Plan will be finalized in March, 2025. Trails and Blueways Council is a stakeholder to be consulted when draft plan is prepared for initial review. Look for funding requests a year from now, in FY27 budget, to implement specific proposals. Priorities will be projects that increase safety and qualify for grants on bike/pedestrian segments identified by the Trails and Blueways Council.

*The **Dale City Chapter** of the Grand Lodge of Virginia Masons gave their Community Builders of the Year award to Rich Wilson and Jason Williams on November 15. They were nominated by Neabsco District Supervisor Victor Angry and honored for their trail development and training sessions at Andrew Leitch Park and work with **MORE** and the **Trails and Blueways Council**.*

At the Latest Trails and Blueways Council (TBC) Meeting…

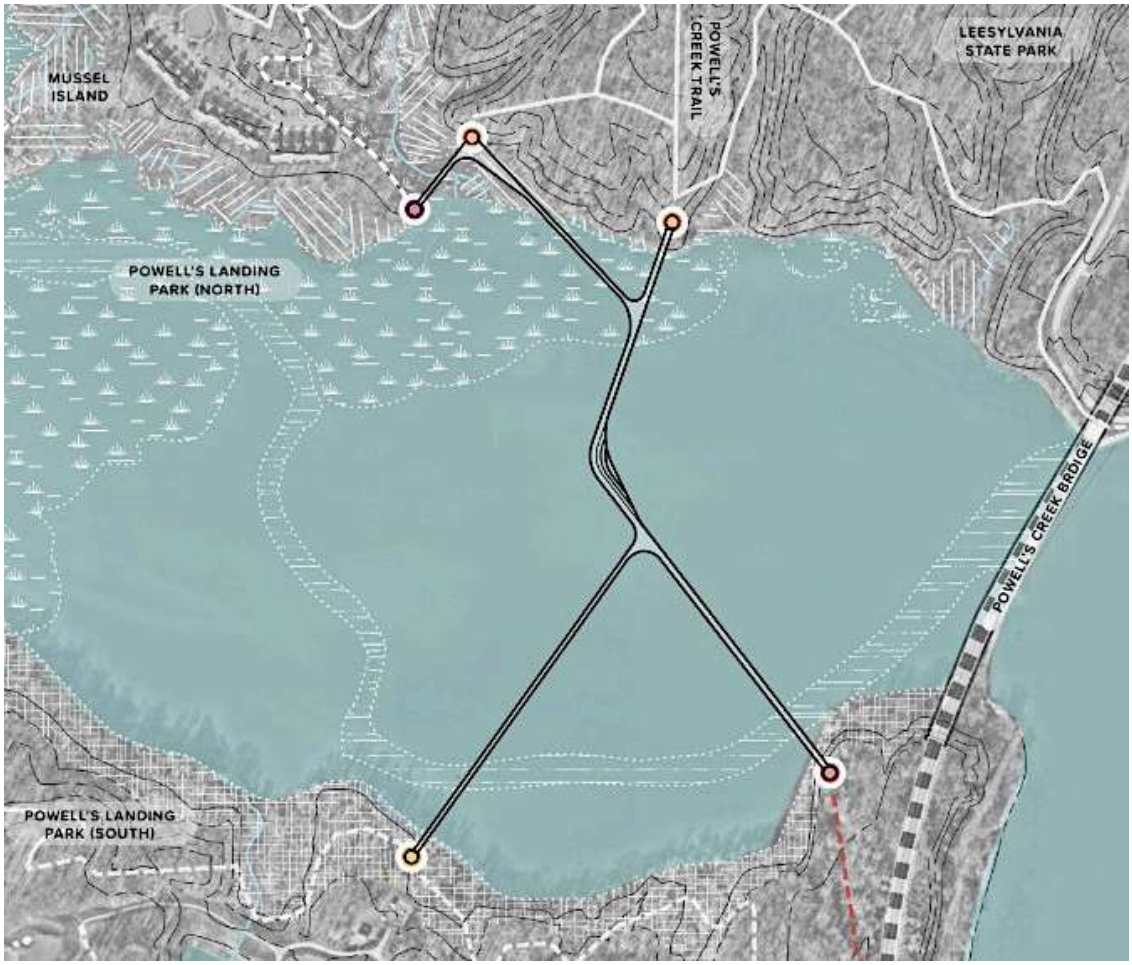
At its **October meeting** the TBC identified 30 high priority trails and blueways projects, with at least four projects in each magisterial district. Five segments of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail made the list.

A formal resolution requested the Prince William Board of County Supervisors identify funding for trail projects across all magisterial districts in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) section of the FY26 budget. Another TBC resolution, seeking clarification of proffer contributions for trails during rezonings, was added to Prince William County's legislative agenda on November 19 (*see 3:57 of **video recording***)

Highlights from the November 19 meeting:

- Study funded by Federal Lands Access to Parks (FLAP) grant, to identify routes to close three gaps of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, will be completed by end of February.
- Department of Parks and Recreation met with three HOA's around Doves Landing to get input before implementing new facilities in Master Plan, including a ramp into Lake Jackson for launching non-motorized boats. Public web page on Master Plan will be launched in January, and meeting for general public will be on January 8. Trail segment at Preserve at Long Branch has not been transferred to county yet.
- "Bike Month" is May, and planning for **2025 Bike To Work Day** is already underway. Public libraries will add bike repair kits as an item that can be checked out, like a book. Bike safety training courses, and perhaps a bike rodeo, are being planned.

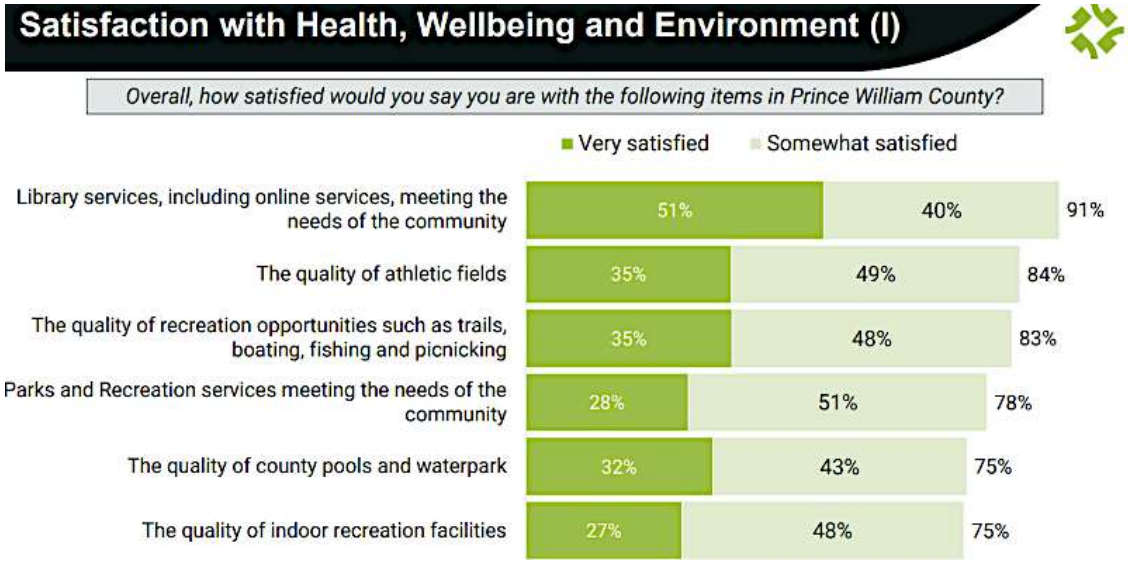
- Catherine O'Connor on TBC will take the lead in getting public input on bike/pedestrian safety improvements, to be identified using a smart phone app linked to the "Schools, Libraries and Parks Accessibility Study" of the Prince William Transportation Department. VDOT recently updated guidelines to increase the number of intersections where **high-visibility crosswalks** will be painted.
- MORE is close to meeting $15,000 fundraising goal to build new trail at Long Park
- The upcoming study of the Vint Hill corridor is an opportunity to ensure that rezonings include trail connections from Vint Hill Road to Broad Run Greenway.
- There is now a bike rack at the Hellwig Park building that serves as the headquarters for Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation.



Powells Creek Crossing

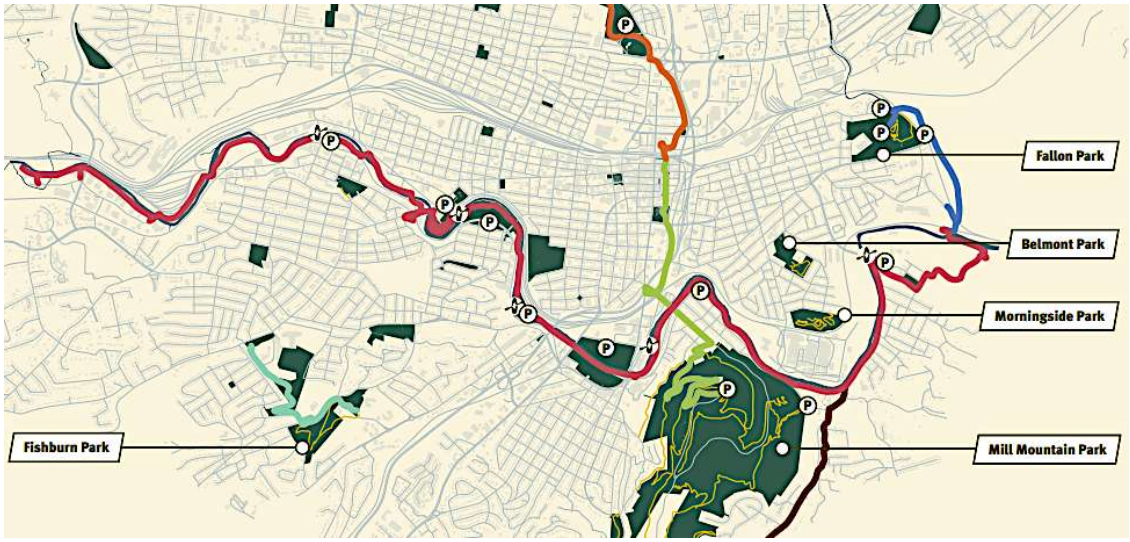
Department of Parks and Recreation has chosen the location of the Powells Creek Crossing. From **6 choices**, Option C2, with both bridge and boardwalk components totaling 3,833', was selected.

The 2019 bond issue provided $9 million for the project. The constractor is now starting 10% design and initial cost estimating. Public involvement is planned in 2025.



2024 Community Survey Results

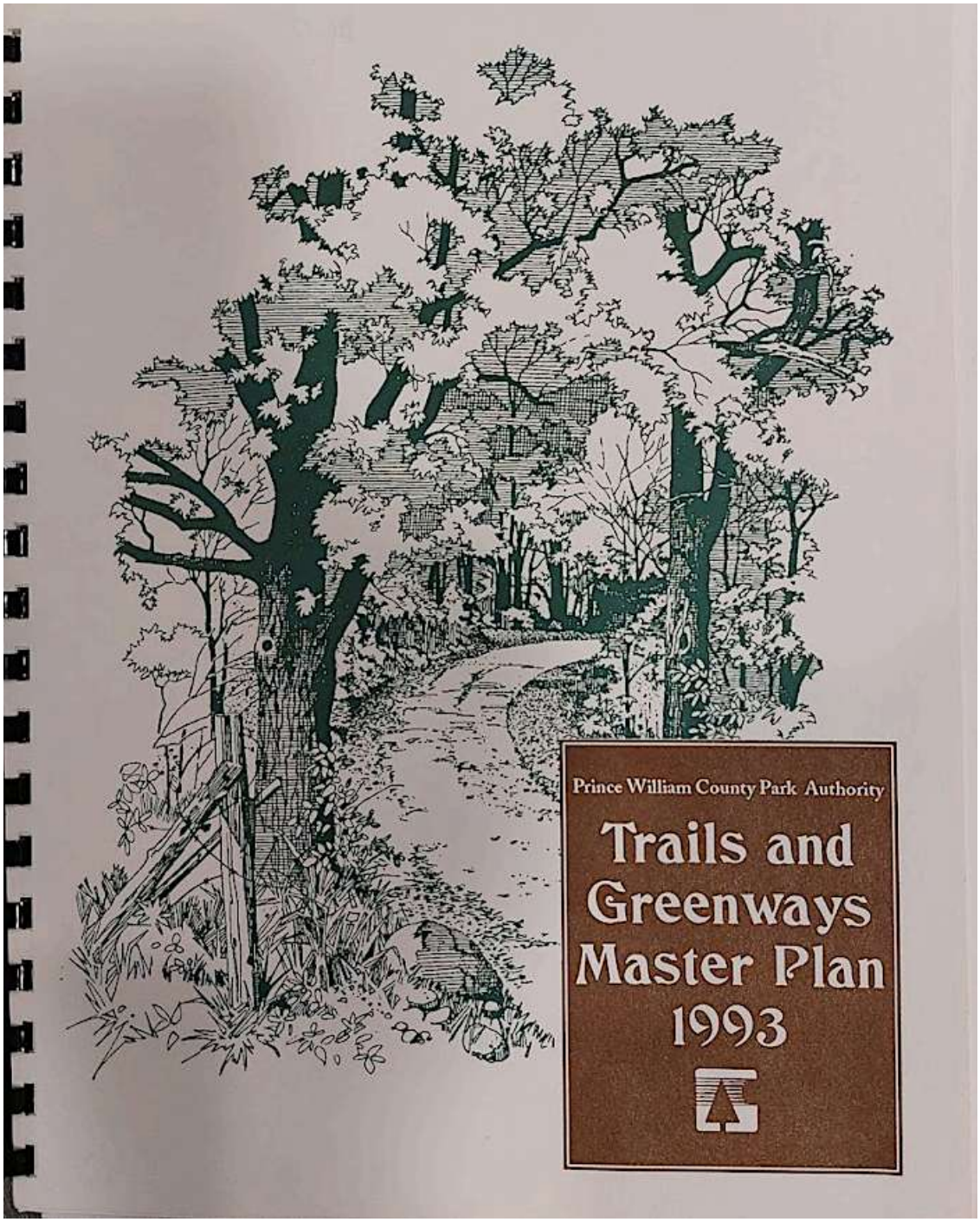
Results of the most recent Community Survey in Prince William County **were presented** to the Board of County Supervisors on November 19. Just 59% of responders said they were Very+Somewhat Satisified with the transportation network adequately supporting the community. 83% were Very+Somewhat Satisified with the quality of recreational opportunities, including trails.



Think Building a Trail Network Is Hard and Slow? Look at the Roanoke River Greenway…

The first Prince William County "Trails and Greenways Master Plan" was published in 1993. Cardinal News just published a series of articles on the **Roanoke River Greenway**, where planning started in 1995, *(Think getting underneath interstates and railroads is hard? One segment will be constructed within a tunnel under the Blue Ridge Parkway.)*

- **30 years after it was first envisioned, the Roanoke River Greenway is the centerpiece of a still-growing network of trails**"Behind the scenes, elected, hired and volunteer officials work year-round to obtain funding, plan and build these community connectors. These trail systems take years, and millions of dollars, to plan and construct…"
- **Behind the scenes of building a greenway network** Construction began in 2023 on the 0.6 mile segment known as the West Roanoke River Greenway Phase 1. That segment included building a retaining wall along a highway and cofferdams for construction at the water's edge. *"The project will cost more than $12 million, with federal and state funding coming from the Highway Safety Improvement Program, the Regional Surface Transportation Program and the Smart Scale Program."*
- '**Critical' portion of the Roanoke River Greenway remains in the planning phase. Here's why it's been so challenging**. In a community survey for a proposed route, "*About half of respondents said they would like a greenway within walking distance, but no closer than a quarter-mile from their own property. Among the concerns they listed: increased trash, drugs and violence, safety in secluded portions and a right to privacy.*"


Prince William County Park Authority
Trails and Greenways Master Plan 1993

ActiveFairfax Comments Are Due by 12/20

Recordings of the November 2024 community involvement meetings for ActiveFairfax plan can be **viewed online**. The **presentation** includes descriptions of different trail types (see Bike Facility Types above). You can also use the **Bike Fairfax Interactive Map** as a reference.

The ActiveFairfax plan was started in 2020 and should be completed at the end of 2025. December 20 is deadline for public feedback - and there's an **online map for comment**.where everyone can recommend Prince William connections.

Fairfax County guesstimates that costs for constructing new sidewalks and trails, including land acquisition, will be about the same. Current ballpark estimate is $1,800-2,800 per foot, or $10-$15 million per mile.

*Preparations are underway for the **Holiday Walk of Lights** on Neabsco Boardwalk, December 6-27.*

In Other News…

- Marshall "Major" Taylor was born November 26, 1878. Each year **Major Taylor Clubs** host rides in their community through out this nation on weekends around Thanksgiving to celebrate this day. The 2024 ride was on Sunday, November 16 **from Vienna to Fair Oaks** and back.
- Mark your calendar - **Second Sunday Hike** on December 8 will be 1:00-3:00pm in Belmont Bay/Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge area.
- The Wild Women Trampers of the **Potomac Appalachian Trail Club** (PATC) is offering a hike at Sky Meadows State Park on November 23. "*The Wild Women Trampers is a group of women outdoor enthusiast who love to come together for fun, learning and outdoor adventure on and off the trail. We are the daughters of women pioneers and in us all lives that wild adventurous spirit!*" Hike starts at 10:00am **Register online**.
- "**Bikes have long been a feminist symbol. So why don't more women bike**?" (*Washington Post*, October 31)
- Check out **What is walkability? What does the government spend on it?**"(USA Facts, June 18, 2024) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) **National Walkability Index**.

- Check out the Rails to Trails Conservancy's **Working with Railroads toolbox.**
- Litter-free streams are more fun for boating. The **Bull Run Watershed Partners** just tackled a tributary behind Costco west of Manassas. In the past, each cleanup removed 1,000 pounds of trash. On November 9, only 460 pounds were found by the 68 volunteers.
- Need to chill out? Take a break and watch the three-minute **Occoquan Greenway Bridge Fall Tour** video.
- **Opinion: The truth about bike lanes: They're not about the bikes** (*Washington Post*, November 20) "*They are often installed not to satisfy the barely measurable trickle of residents who pedal to work but mainly to make car traffic worse enough that people will be discouraged from driving.*"
- You can read online the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail **monthly newsletters**. The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail follows it **in Westmoreland County**.
- **Woodbridge man charged after woman is struck, killed while walking her dog** (*Prince William Times*, November 15). A woman was walking her dog on the sidewalk at 6:30am on October 17 when a car going 20mph over the speed limit left the roadway on Mapledale Drive near Miles Court.
- **How a Washington, DC, Suburb Became the Safest Place in America** (Bloomberg, November 18) "*Arlington County, Virginia, was not always such a safety standout. That came only after the transformation of parts of the county into dense, walkable urban neighborhoods…*"

Leadership Prince William class at Neabsco Boardwalk on November 21

Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

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Our mailing address is P.O. Box 1674, Woodbridge, VA 22195
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