View this email in your browser

Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

Recreational Trails Summit - October 24

Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) and partner organizations are pleased to host the second annual **Northern Virginia Recreational Trails Summit** on October 24, 2023 from 1-4 pm with a networking happy hour at Caboose Commons following the event.

All interested jurisdictions, trail advocates and users, and other community members are encouraged to attend to discuss new and ongoing trail efforts, including data and mapping activities, trail stewardship, funding, and other priority topics for the region.

NVRC and its partners look forward to hosting new and returning participants at this year's summit and hearing diverse voices to help advance the planning and development of the region's trails.

Individuals can **register to attend the summit**. Please note that space is limited, so early registration is encouraged!

CESMP Moves Forward

Prince William County held a Town Hall on September 14 to discuss the **draft Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan** (CESMP). Public comment period closed on September 15. The Board of County Supervisors may hold a hearing and potentially adopt the CESMP by the end of 2023.

Many comments on the draft CESMP recommended creating a bike/pedestrian network robust enough to offer a safe alternative to using a car for short trips for shopping and for access to parks, libraries and schools.

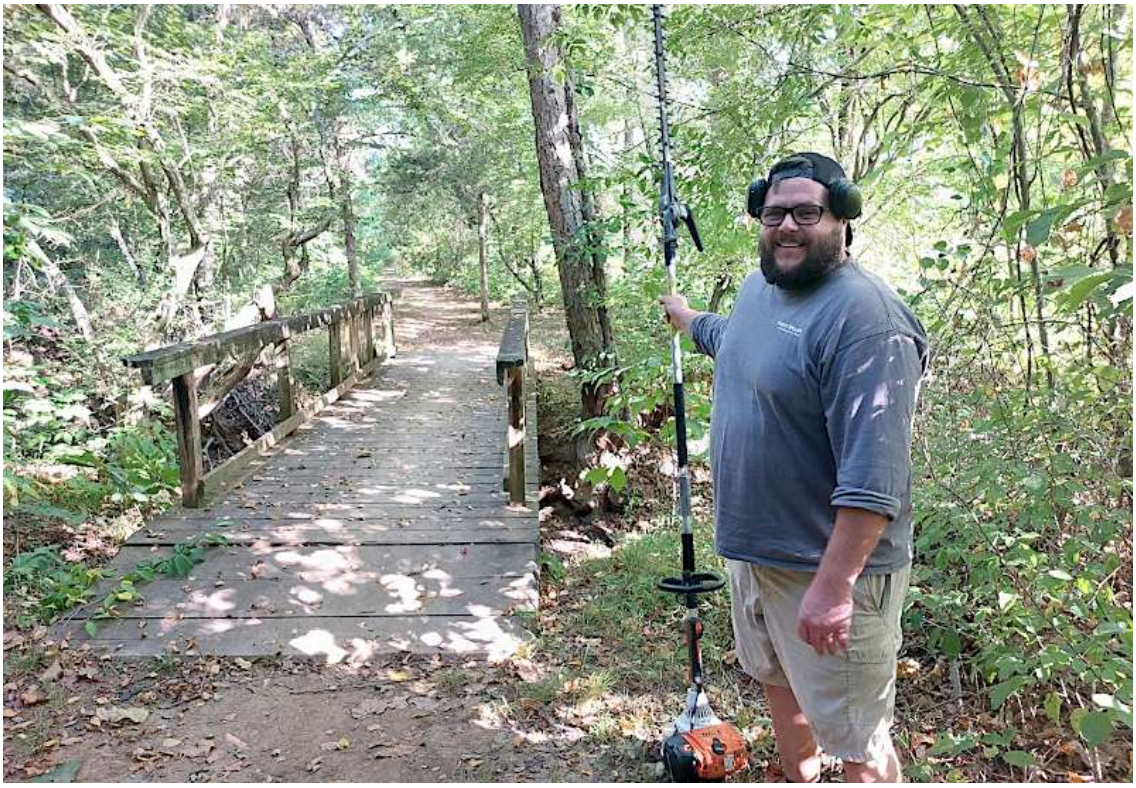
The transportation sector is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Virginia. A “mode shift” to transit and bike/pedestrian trips offers a great opportunity to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled and thus tailpipe emissions, as several speakers noted during the Town Hall.

Contractor Chosen, $500,000 in Funding Approved to Design Powells Creek Crossing

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (DPRT) has selected INFORM Studios from Northville, Michigan for for planning,design, and engineering services for the project. The Prince WIlliam Board of County Supervisors **approved funding** for the design work on September 12.

The connection between Leesylvania State Park and Potomac Shores will close on gap in the 40 miles of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in the county. Voters appoved $9.5 million for the project in the 2019 bond issue.

In addition, the **Quarterly Project Report** to the Prince William Board of County Supervisors indicates:
- construction bid target date for bridge replacement across Rocky Branch on Broad Run Greenway is Spring of 2024; project is still in permitting phase
- Virginia Department of Transportation is reviewing bid documents for construction of one mile long Featherstone segment of Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail; expect bid to be issued before the end of 2023
- construction target date for Neabsco Boardwalk Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) parking on edge of Blackburn Road is Spring of 2024
- design is 50% complete for 3 bridge replacements on Neabsco Greenway
- design is 100% complete for Hooes Run Crossing on Occoquan Greenway; in permitting phase now



Streamlining Approval of Volunteer Agreements

There are only two people in Prince William County's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (DPRT) dedicated to maintaining 60+ miles of trails. (*You can see half of the team, above, working on the Broad Run Trail upsteam of Sudley Manor Road.)*

On September 12, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) **delegated authority** to the Director of DPRT to execute volunteer stewardship agreements with partner organizations. Previously, the BOCS itself had to approve each individual agreement.

County staff worked for months to clarify how volunteer agreements would be approved, includin legal review.

The authorization is limited. Volunteer projects for building new trails or new park amenities, which affect operations and maintenance costs, still require BOCS approval.

Crowdsourcing Unsafe Intersections and Trail Gaps

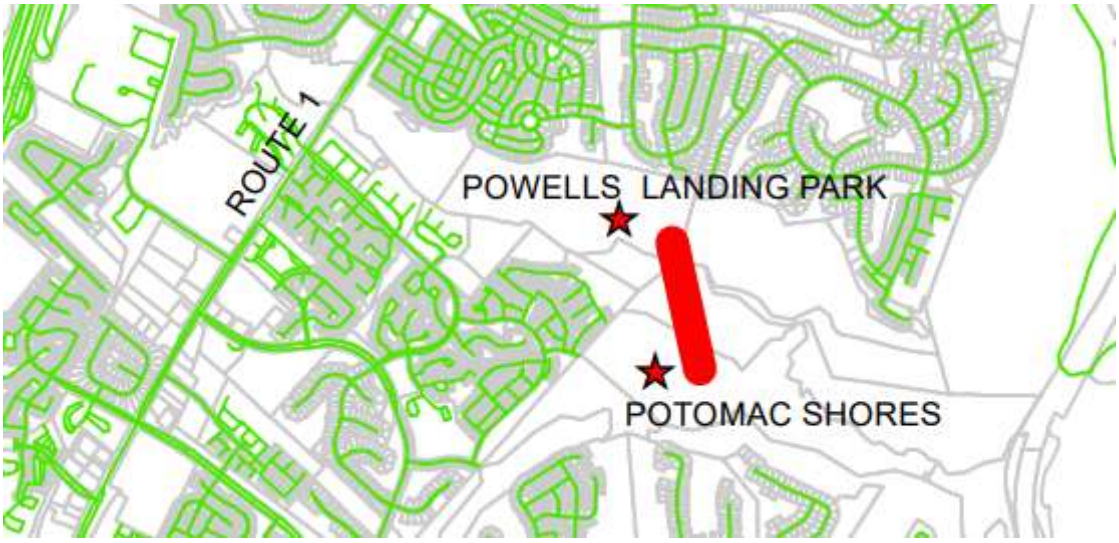
Yes, it's challenging to stay on top of all the plans underway at the state, regional, and local level - but for trails advocates, some plans are especially worth attention.

The high number of close calls, serious injuries, and fatalities involving bikers and pedestrians triggered a **successful $992,000 grant** to create a Comprehensive Traffic Safety Action Plan involving Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William County. When completed in May 2025, the plan should prioritize projects for improving safety on bike/pedestrian routes. The regional **Street Smart Program** suggests what might be included.

Sidewalks allow travel within some large communities such as Lake Ridge and Dale City, but many neighborhoods lack a dedicated path for biking/walking to nearby destinations. Parents are reluctant to allow walking/biking to school because of trail gaps and unsafe intersections.

At the request of the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition, Prince William County is now developing a smartphone app for volunteers to document what safety improvements - and accessibility improvements for the disabled - are needed near schools, libraries, and parks. That crowdsourced information will be incorporated in the Comprehensive Traffic Safety Action Plan.

Ready to volunteer? Watch this space to know when the app is ready.



Funding Priorities Determined for Mobility Projects

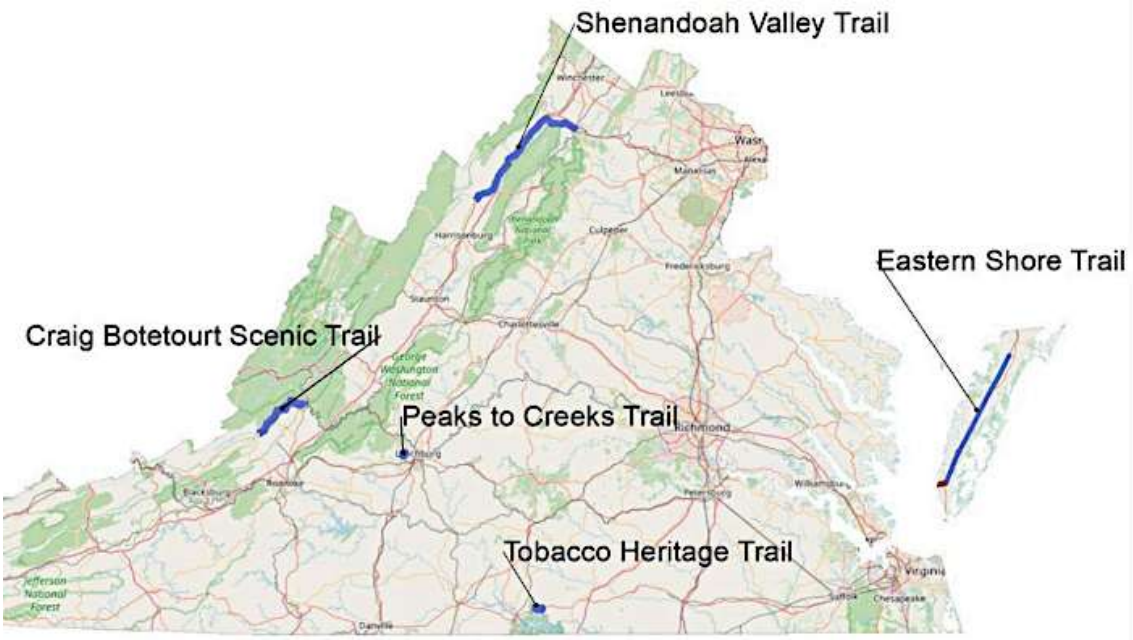
As usual the Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) used the Consent Agenda before Citizen Time at its September 12 meeting, without a public hearing, to determine what projects would be chosen for three different grant applications to the US Department of Transportation and to the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA).

The BOCS decided that the Prince William Parkway/Minnieville Road Interchange was the county's priority for the **Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant**. For the **Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT)** grant, the BOCS prioritized a Flooded Roadways Mitigation Study and an Evacuation Operationalization Plan in case of a catastrophic emergency

For NVTA's **Fiscal Year 2024-2029 Six-Year Program**, $12,000,000 was requested for a pedestrian/bicycle facility on Route 234 over I-95. $35 million was requested for two transit projects, and $140 million was requested for road projects.

The BOCS used the same Consent Agenda process to redirect $75,000 to the **Potomac Historic National Scenic Trail Gap Study**.

In a separate part of the agenda, the "T" in the Prince William Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism (DPRT) was moved. In a **restructuring of county government** on September 12, the BOCS transferred the Tourism Office from the DPR~~T~~ to the newly-renamed Department of Economic Development and Tourism.



General Assembly Allocates State Trails Funding

The **final amendments** to the state budget funded the State Trails Office and specific projects:
Shenandoah Vallley Rail Trail - $35.0 million
Craig Valley Trail - $12.5 million
Peaks to Creeks Trail - $1.25 million
Tobacco Heritage Trail - $1.25 million
Eastern Shore Rail Trail - $4.0 million
To put these numbers into context, $260 million was directed to widen I-64 east of Richmond.

If there is additional funding, there was specific mention in the budget of the **Fall Line Trail** and new regional muli-use trails. *However, no Northern Virginia trail - such as the **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail** or the **National Capital Trail Network** - were identified in the budget language.*

Ground breaking for the Fall Line Trail starts next monrh. The 43-mile trail, estimated to cost about $300 million,will connect Ashland to Petersburg. A **Henrico County official said** “It’s basically an alternative transportation corridor for non-motorized vehicles that will connect to a lot of things… Nobody wants the Fall Line Trail to take 20 years. I think at a regional level, everybody understands the value that these trails bring to the residents of the region and to tourism, to economic development.”

In Other News…

- September 30 (10:00am-noon) - **Leesylvania State Park** Trails Clean Up, organized by Climate Action VA. Meet at the visitor center. Trash bags and limited trash grabbers and gloves will be available for volunteers. Volunteers get free entry into the park, so make sure you are **signed up**.
- Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) **annual awards ceremony** will be at Penn Quarter Sports Tavern in DC on October 5.
- October is Walk-tober, so **Step It Up**. Walkinar I: National and State Perspectives for Walktober will be October 5, 10:30am-noon. Leaders of America Walks and AARP will provide a national view of walkability trends and public support for safe streets, walking, and walkability; **register online**.
- Join **Phoenix Bikes** October 14-15 for their fourth, fun-filled treasure hunt: the newly expanded **NOVA Treasure Hunt** in Arlington/Alexandria.

- 2024 **National Bike Summit** will be March 19-21 at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, DC. Next deadline for a jurisdiction to apply for **Bicycle Friendly Community** designation is August 8, 2024.
- A report on improvements to promote **pedestrian, bike, and micro-mobility access** around the new commuter garage at Potomac Town Center could be the first step in getting a sidewalk/shared use path on Dale Boulevard over I-95 after all these years...
- **New website** is now live for the Community Healthcare Coalition Greater Prince William (CHCGPW).

One day, the Neabsco Greenway will be constructed underneath I-95…

Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

Copyright (C) 2023 Greater Prince William Trails Coalition. All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

unsubscribe

INTUIT mailchimp