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Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

First Day Hike on January 1, noon-2:00pm

Start the New Year with healthy outdoor exercise, and discover new places. We'll walk from Silver Lake Regional Park along the Catharpin Greenway to Route 15, where we will see the "you can not get safely across the highway" challenge. It's a four-mile round trip, and mostly a flat walk through the woods.

Please **register online** for the details, and in case weather forces a postponement (as happened twice to our Second Sunday hike in December…).

Second Sunday Hike on January 14

Our monthly Second Sunday hike was rained out twice in December, on the second and then the third Sunday. Ugh.

We have rescheduled our expedition to **Sinclair Mill** to see the new trail network, which the Preserve at Long Branch development proffered for Doves Landing Regional Park. Maybe the third time, we'll be lucky with the weather.

Join us on Sunday, January 14, 1:00-3:00pm. Please **register**, so we can notify you in case weather forces another cancellation.

Mark Your Calendar: GPWTC Quarterly Meeting on January 25

Our next schmooze-and-learn-together Quarterly Meeting will be 10:00-11:30am on Thursday, January 25 at the George Mason University **Potomac Science Center**.

Get updated on what's happening regarding trails being planned, funded, and even built south of the Occoquan River. Get to know other people engaged in trails development, including people from the health, safety, economic development/tourism, sustainability, and mobility communities.

Coming in person? We have coffee, donuts, and time for co-alishing. **Sign up** to let us know you are coming - *gotta order enough from Dunkin'*

Join via Zoom:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81213420809?pwd=akhUaXZiQ0JlcmhuSGVlZXl6Q0hWZz09
Meeting ID: 812 1342 0809
Passcode: 062383

New 2024 Officers for Greater Prince William Trails Coalition

Chair: **Eileen Sheridan**
Vice-Chair: **Celia Miner**
Secretary: **Neil Nelson**
Treasurer: **Mike Freeland**

Is an E-Bike a Viable Alternative for *Some* Trips?

Data is for Prince William County, November 2023. Source: ***Bureau of Transportation Statistics***

A majority of trips in Manassas, Manassas Park, and Prince William County are not long-distance commutes to work. Most trips are for less than one mile. Nationwide, **less than 50%** of vehicle trips are longer than three miles.

More use of transit and vanpools on long commutes to work can reduce greenhouse gas emissions - but there is also an opportunity to cut traffic congestion and emissions from short trips.

Local roads are congested during the day as people in single occupancy vehicles run errands. When the weather is good, e-bikes are a viable alternative for short trips. Many days, a 3-mile trip on an e-bike could take no more time than waiting in traffic… assuming there were safe routes for biking in our area.
Also, in 1969 48% of children 5 to 14 years of age usually **walked or bicycled to school**. By 2009, those short trips had dropped to 13%.
NOTE: Arlington County just received a **$7.1 million grant** to encourage people to plan more trips without their cars. See also **E-Bikes In The Fast Lane: How Buyers In 19 States Are Getting Big Rebates** (*Forbes*, October 4) and **280 million e-bikes**

are slashing oil demand far more than electric vehicles (*ArsTechnica*, November 18).

Bike/Pedestrian Projects Impacted in Smart Scale Revision

The Commonwealth Transportation Board has altered the priorities for funding transportation projects. Larger highway projects will get higher Smart Scale rankings. Because land use will no longer be considered, projects to create walkable/bikeable communities in already-developed areas will get lower rankings.

The Virgnia Secretary of Transportation was opposed to funding protected bike lanes, and preferred road projects intended to reduce traffic congestion. Bike/pedestrian deaths in Virginia exceeded 1,000 in 2022 for the first time. The Secretary's perspective was "*The deaths that are happening in Virginia are not tied to engineering, they're tied to behavior*."
For more, see **Virginia Approved Big Changes To Transportation Funding. Advocates Worry It'll Hurt Transit And Bike Project**s (*DCist*, December 5)

State Funding for Trails

The House Appropriations and the Senate Finance and Appropriations committees of the Virginia General Assembly will hold virtual regional public hearings on the Governor's Proposed 2024-2026 Biennial State Budget, on January 3, 2024 beginning at 10:00am.

The Virginia Trails Alliance has **three specific recommendations**.

Registration is first come, first served and will occur **on Jan. 2 ONLY**. The hearings will be **livestreamed** January 3 on the Virginia General Assembly website.

Climate Action Plan in Manassas

Manassas' draft **Climate Action Plan** was released in December. It is intended to implement a specific action strategy in the city's Comprehensive Plan:
5(c): Promote compact block and street networks and a built environment that facilitates walking, biking,and bus riding to provide alternatives to the use of single occupancy vehicles and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
Manassas, like other jurisdictions in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, has committed to cut greenhouse gas emissions to 50% of the 2005 level by 2030. The numbers:
2005 emissions: 632,203 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO2eq)
2030 target: 316,812 MTCO2eq
2030 Climate Action Plan projection: 309,477 MTCO2eq
2030 emissions if nothing changed ("business as usual"): 511,812 MTCO2eq
The city's draft Climate Action Plan has identified14 air quality and emission targets and approximately 30 specific actions. One strategy is "*Increase travel by walking, biking, and public transit; encourage public transportation, with a goal of vehicle miles travel reduction of 2% per year for both freight and passenger vehicles.*"

Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by 16% by 2030 includes an action step to "*evaluate plans to increase bike lanes, paths, and sidewalks to commercial areas; and improve lighting on trails and bus stops with solar lighting.*"

For comparison, the **Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan** (CESMP) adopted by the Prince William Board of County Supervisors last October included a strategy for a "*5% reduction in passenger vehicle travel by reducing the amount of VMT or shifting to active or public transport.*"

Strategy #4 of the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Transportation Technology Strategic Plan includes reducing reliance on single occupancy vehicles with the goal of decreasing oil consumption.

Also, Federal Highway Administration has just published **Trails as Resilient Infrastructure**. It includes "*As communities and regions increasingly invest in trails, they will play an expanded role in both climate mitigation and adaptation*."

Route 28 Yorkshire Multimodal Corridor Planning Study

The Transportation Planning Board started funding **Transportation Land Use Connections (TLC) studies** in 2007 to create promote creating more walkable and vibrant communities.

The Yorkshire Multimodal Corridor Planning Study was funded as a FY24 project. It is intended to identify how to transform Route 28 into a walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented corridor. Safety was identified in the first kickoff meeting on November 17 as a high priority, in part due to the lack of sidewalks and bicycle/pedestrian facilities.

The chair of the Prince William County **Trails and Blueways Council** has now been added to the team. The team's second meeting will be February 5, and the TLC study will be completed in May.

Comments Can Make a Difference

Active Prince William made comments on the proposed **Parkridge Center rezoning** to make bike/pedestrian access to Route 234 safer. The proposal, **approved** by the Board of County Supervisors on December 19, was updated to include a Shared Use Path along Bulloch Road (*see above*) or to repurpose one lane of that road into a dedicated bike lane.

The **Mobility Chapter** in Prince William County's long-range Comprehensive Plan includes a planned trail along Route 234, passing underneath I-66 and by the Parkridge Center site all the way to Route 15. That planned trail would finally provide bike/pedestrian access to Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) and Manassas National Battlefield Park, which have been isolated ever since I-66 was constructed.

December 19 Trails and Blueways Council (TBC) Meeting

- Accessible for **All Ages and Abilities**
- Off-Street Multi-Use Paths:
  - 10'+ wide for new construction.
  - 8' minimum for existing facilities
  - Narrower in short segments if design constrains
  - Paved, or firm surface such as crushed limestone
- On-street:
  - Protected from moving traffic (e. parked cars, curb, flexposts)
  - Short unprotected connections where necessary
- Designed for non-motorized use
- Connectivity
  - Directly connected to the regional network
  - Suitable for both transportation and recreation
- Existing or Planned Facilities are acceptable
  - Planned facilities must be in an approved plan

- 2024 **National Capital Trails Network** update will include only trails that are essentially suitable for a child to use (see criteria, above), not the entire set of trails within a jurisdiction. **East Coast Greenway** and **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail** (PHNST) may qualify, but Bike Route 1 - as currently **planned in Prince William County** - may not.
- Contractor for Powells Creek crossing (boardwalk/bridge) will start interviewing multiple stakeholder groups in early 2024.
- Priority projects for Department of Parks and Recreation include providing accessible parking for Neabsco Boardwalk ($250,000 total), adding a kayak launch at Neabsco Boardwalk ($250,000 total), extending Neabsco Boardwalk south to Leesylvania State Park ($4-5 million total), replacing Lake Ridge Marina public dock ($2 million total), and making Sharron Baucom Dale City Recreation Park more accessible ($1.8 million total). The already-funded Lake Ridge Park trail, separate from the entrance road, is also a priority. Some projects are partially funded, and **Heavy Construction Contractors Association** is also contributing generous in-kind assistance.
- PHNST subcommittee met with Stafford County to determine how to connect across county lines. Next PHNST subcommittee meeting will be January 24.
- TBC elected officers for 2024, and Liz Cronauer will serve another year as chair. All members identified their priorities for 2024.
- Volunteer program in Department of Parks and Recreation has launched. Initial project constructed a new one-mile long mountain bike trail at Andrew Leitch Park. A similar two-mile trail project has been identified at Long Park.
- Holiday Lights at Neabsco Boardwalk attracted 2,000-4,000 people per night.
- Prince William Digital Gateway rezoning included 10 miles of proffered trails. (TBC takes no position on endorsing or opposing rezoning applications.)
- First public FY25 budget discussion by Prince William Board of County Supervisors will be January 16, 2024. All bond funding will be exhausted by 2027, and to date there have been no allocations in General Fund for trails.

Hedges Run Bridge Dedicated

The weather on December 7 was clear and crisp for **dedication** of the 110' long bridge over Hedges Run , completing **Segment 3** of the Occoquan Greenway. (And check out the **time lapse movie** of the bridge installation.)

*Early Bird rate to **register for the 2024 National Bike Summit** ends on January 3.*

In Other News…

- Prince William County **Office of Historic Preservation** has updated three interpretive signs along the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail in Belmont Bay, next to the river.
- You can now **subscribe** to the Northern Virginia Regional Commission's new "Regional Trail News & Updates," being published on a quarterly basis.
- In December 19, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) **authorized a public hearing** to approve a conservation easement at **Doves Landing Regional Park**. The easement will limit new development, but trails identified in the Master Plan - including a bridge over Lake Jackson - may be constructed.
- At the same meeting, the BOCS approved **$22.5 million** in end-of-FY23 spending. No funding was allocated for constructing any trail segments in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- **Pedestrian-involved accidents in Prince William reached a 13-year high in 2023** (*Prince William Times*, December 19) "*Prince William has had 91 crashes involving pedestrians in 2023, resulting in an unprecedented 118 injuries and six deaths… Pedestrian deaths hit an all-time high in Prince William in 2022 with 11 deaths.*"
- **RVA Connects looks to embrace 'tactical urbanism' for local traffic safety** (Virginia Public Media, December 4) *Typically, when there's a safety issue, we have been solving this either by a study or some long-term solution…With the action plan, we really wanted to identify projects that could be addressed right away…*
- **Applications are open** until January 11 for the 2024 Cohort of the **Virginia Walkability Action Institute**. It is a project of the Virginia Department of Health that provides training and support to professionals, students, volunteers and advocates working to improve walking, biking, public transit and micro-mobility in their communities, and across the Commonwealth.

- The Centers for Disease Control has an **Active People, Healthy Nation** initiative to help 27 million Americans become more physically active. One of the **tools for action** notes "*People who have more access to green environments, such as parks and trails, tend to walk and be more physically active than those with limited access.*"
- **New pilot program could bring lower speeds, more space for pedestrians and cyclists to three sidewalk-less streets** (*ARLNow*, December 6). "Shared streets" give cyclists and pedestrians more space through signs, barriers and other features, rather than building a sidewalk.
- **This Cheap Street Fix Saves Lives. Why Don't More Cities Do It?** (*Bloomberg*, November 28) "*Daylighting is a proven safety measure that expands sightlines at intersections…*" (Follow the link to learn about daylighting.)
- **Narrowing Travel Lanes as an Opportunity to Promote Biking and Pedestrian Facilities Within the Existing Roadway Infrastructure** (Johns Hopkins University, November 2023) "*The most immediate candidates for lane width reduction projects are street sections with lane widths of 11 feet, 12 feet, or 13 feet in urban street in the class of 20-25 mph and 30-35 mph that do not serve a transit or freight corridor.*"
- The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has a new website - sign up for the **Active Transportation newsletter**, and check out the **Safe Routes to School program**.
- **Why Are So Many American Pedestrians Dying at Night?** (*New York Times*, December 11) "*Sometime around 2009, American roads started to become deadlier for pedestrians, particularly at night. Fatalities have risen ever since, reversing the effects of decades of safety improvements… We literally taught generations of engineers to design conditions for daylight and not to consider nighttime.*"
- On **December 11**, the Prince William County Parks Foundation announced more details regarding the **planned bicycle pump track** at Rollins Ford Park. By pumping the body up and down rather than peddling, riders will propel themselves over humps and around bends. Funding the pump track is the #1 priority of the foundation.
- Two grants have been awarded to Virginia communities under the Federal Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program. **Over $25 million** was provide to improve the Virginia Beach Trail, including a pedestrian bridge over a 10-lane road, and to to address safety issues at 13 different corridors in Richmond. About 40% of the killed or seriously injured traffic incidents in Richmond occur on 3% of the city's street network.
- **Fairfax residents, conservation groups urge changes to the George Snyder Trail extension** (*Fairfax Times*, November 3)

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The **Greater Price William Trails Coalition** is a 501(c)(3) organization (EIN: 92-3087298).
Our mailing address is P.O. Box 1674, Woodbridge, VA 22195
To subscribe/unsubscribe, contact us at **info@gpwtrails.org**

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