Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

2024 Recreational Needs Assessment Is Now Public. Guess What Is #1?

Every 5 years, the Department of Parks and Recreation in Prince William County surveys the community to identify what recreational facilties and programs are most desired. According to the 2024 **Recreation Needs Assessment**, "*Second to walking, hiking, and biking trails, were parks restrooms, followed by botanical gardens, natural wildlife habitats, and museums rounding out the top five community priorities*."

Walkability and Bikeability in Manassas

- The two-way bike lanes (cycle track) are open on Dumfries Road between Wellington Road and Hastings Drive.
- Trail closing the **Wellington Road Shared Use Path Gap** across the Norfolk Southern railroad tracks is projected to be completed by the end of 2025.
- A public meeting on the **Rail With Trail project** was held on July 30.

- The parking lot at the train depot has been selected as the preferred location for a **Downtown Mobility Hub**, connecting transit and trails/sidewalks. As described in the city's most recent **newsletter**, "*These hubs aren't just about connecting buses and trains. They're about walkability, cleaner transportation, and making sure people of all ages and abilities can get where they need to go.*"
- More details are available on all of the city's **Trail & Sidewalk Projects**, including the $11.8 million **Godwin Drive North Shared Use Path** between Wellington and Sudley Road and the $2.3 million **Stonewall Park Trail Extension** *(see above)*. That extension, with a pedestrian bridge over the causeway at the Public Works complex, will connect the Point of Woods neighborhoods to the Liberia House historic site. Both trails are scheduled for completion in 2027. The **Nokesville Road Trail** project is not yet in the FY26 **Capital Improvements Program** (CIP).
- The new **Ashberry development** with 247 housing units along Grant Avenue will complete a trail connecting the new Bartow Street to Baldwin Park/Manassas Museum and the city's downtown, and another trail connecting Grant Avenue to Main Street. Dates for opening those trails have not been announced yet, but trail along Grant Avenue is open now.

Rail With Trail Update: Manassas to Fairfax County

The public meeting on July 30 included proposed routes for segments of the trail connecting the Manassas railroad station with the station in Manassas Park, and extending to the Fairfax County side of Bull Run.

Phase 1 includes a bridge across Bull Run. In the distant furure, the concept includes an extension to Alexandria. The current feasibility study will be followed by a request for funding from Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA). Check out the **presentation graphics** and **take the survey**.

Dominion Energy currently is upgrading the powerline along the route that the trail will follow between Manassas Park and Bull Run. The city is exploring whether any of the culverts and grading can be re-utilized for the trail rather than have Dominion restore everything to its former condition.

In the meantime, the trails in Blooms Park remain open for use even though a construction road passes through it. In exchange for use of the park, Dominion will repave some of the former golf cart paths at the end of the project next Spring.

Potomac Heritage Nation Scenic Trail (PHNST) News

National Park Service is planning a virtual September 5 PHNST Roundtable. It will include lightning (3-5 minute) talks from different organizations, plus discussion of specific topics after lunch. Registration has not opened yet.

An October 9 hybrid meeting (with limited in-person space at Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge) will be followed by an October 10 hike at Crows Nest. Hike will provide opportunity to engage with key people in Stafford and King George counties, particularly on route between Prince William County and the **Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail**. An October 15 meeting in Maryland with the Chesapeake Gateways team will focus on ecotourism opportunities, and will review a new off-road route with spurs/braids for PHNST in Maryland.

Notes from the bi-monthly Potomac Heritage Trail Association (PHTA) meeting in August:
- National Park Service plans to start development in October of a Comprehensive Management Plan for the **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail** (PHNST). First public stakeholder meeting will be around January 2026.
- Plan will be completed in a year, assuming it can use new streamlined regulations eliminating requirement for an Environmental Impact Statement. Final plan could be a 30-page document with a Record of Decision. Completion will qualify PHNST for Land and Water Conservation Fund grants to acquire land and rights-of-way.
- National Park Service will adopt the PHNST primary route and braids that are included in the **Trails Master Plan** adopted by Prince William Board of County Supervisors in January 2026. It is not clear if Fairfax County will finish updating its planned PHNST route before National Park Service completes its PHNST Comprehensive Management Plan.

2025 Trail Care Academy

The Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC), with support from Fina Trails LLC, is hosting two in-person, half-day workshops to guide participants on tools and techniques for key maintenance topics.

Mark your calendar for September 12 (on Bull Run-Occoquan Trail) and October 17 (site to be determined), 8:30am-12:30pm. Registration will open for the September 12 event in early September at the site for the **Trail Care Academy**.

You can also see information there about the Trail Management 101 and the Invasive Species Identification and Management workshops held in April, plus the **Trail Maintenance Funding 101** webinar held in July.

Occoquan Greenway Status Report

The new bridge on Segment 2 of the **Occoquan Greenway** is scheduled to open by the end of August. Prince William Department of Parks and Recreation expects to advertise a contract for installing the Segment 6 bridge over Hooes Run in September.

Segment 7 may be closed at Spinnaker Court until the end of Summer 2026. Current trail (*red line, above*) goes through the access route to the busy construction site where Prince William Water is building a replacement sewage pumping station. To date, no temporary bypass route has been identified to keep that portion of Segment 7 open. Route proposed in 2040 Comprehensive Plan would require an expensive bridge.

Construction of Segment 8, leading into the Town of Occoquan, is expected to start in mid-2026. Segment could be open by February 2027.

NVTA: Regional Approach to Funding Northern Virginia's Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) hosted the first Regional Coordination Meeting on July 31 to discuss how to fund the bicycle and pedestrian facilities planned by different jurisdictions in Northern Virginia.

Within the four breakout groups (Counties, Cities & Towns, Regional Agencies, and Advocates) there was robust discussion regarding existing funding sources for building/maintaining trails. Active mobility advocates noted that the current project solicitation, evaluation, and selection criteria used for the state's SMART Scale program, NVTA's Six-Year program, plus Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) grants, significantly limit the funding of active transportation projects.

A second virtual meeting on August 27 will discuss possible new funding sources. The Prince William Transportation Department has information online for those interested in **Bike and Pedestrian projects**.

And at the Federal level, the US Department of Transportation has issued a Request for Information on **Advancing a Surface Transportation Proposal That Focuses on America's Most Fundamental Infrastructure Needs**. Comments are invited to address the Transportation Alternatives program, Safe Streets and Roads for All, and other legislation supporting bike and pedestrian improvements.

Powells Creek Crossing

Further design of the Powell's Creek Crossing will continue; the latest contracting hurdles have been leapt. The bridge/boardwalk connecting Leesylvania State Park to Potomac Shores is funded by $9 million authorized by county voters in a 2019 bond issue.

The **2019 Master Plan** for Leesylvania State Park includes a trailhead with a comfort station and space for 30 cars.

In Other News…

- **Divided Fairfax City Council breathes new life into Pickett Road Connector Trail** (*FFX NOW*, July 29). The 1,200-foot trail with two bridges and boardwalks over sensitive wetlands is estimated to cost $6 million.
- **Prince William Forest Park: An Urban Oasis Where Nature and History Meet** explains why the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) team that maintains trails in the national park are called "Spooky Beavers."
- **Most popular trail at Stafford's Crow's Nest preserve extended more than a mile** (*InsideNOVA*, August 5) The extension to the Boykin's Landing Trail was completed with assistance from the Virginia Outdoors Foundation staff from **Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve**.
- **Enhancing Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists at Roundabouts** (Crossroads, July 23) Researchers discovered that "*80% of drivers yielded for pedestrians and bicyclists crossing at roundabout entries while only 40% yielded at the roundabout exits.*"
- **Loudoun County cracks down on e-bikes, scooters** (NBC4, August 13, 2025)

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