Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

Trails and Blueways Council Meetings on November 18 & 19

The next monthly Trails and Blueways Council (TBC) meeting is on November 18 (a week early due to Thanksgiving) at 6:30-9:00pm. **The agenda** includes:

- **Hoadly Road STARS study** update. **US Bicycle Route 1** was realigned to follow Hoadly Road more than a decade ago, but it has not been retrofitted with continuous bike lanes.
- update on **Trails Master Plan**, following public meeting on November 5.

TBC meetings are streamed online. To watch, **follow the link** at the top of the TBC's home page.

The **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail** (PHNST) subcommittee will meet at 2:00pm on November 19 at George Hellwig Memorial Park Administration Building, 14420 Bristow Road, Manassas, VA, 20112. That subcommittee meeting is not streamed online.

The Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) study for closing three gaps in PHNST is **now completed**. The county has successfully researched its legal right-of-way for the short segment from Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge to the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) train station at Rippon.

Trails Master Plan Meeting Held on November 5

Prince William County Department of Parks and Recreation held a public meeting on **Trails Master Plan** to gather input on trail priorities and potential sites for boat ramps that would increase access to blueways (see **slides**). By the time of the November 5 meeting, 480 comments had already been received.

Those in attendance were divided by magisterial district and invited to prioritize Recreational Trails and Active Mobility Trails, using a list of already-identified projects. Previous public input indicated that a two-mile boat trip was considered most comfortable, and boaters returned to the launch site rather than arranged a car shuttle. A map showed public land where new ramps could be built, and staff asked for input on other possible places.

Cost of projects was intentionally not included in the scoring criteria for prioritizing trail segments (*see below)*, so preferences would not be constrained by feasibility concerns. For Active Mobility trails, an additional criterion of “safety” was added.

Got trail-related pictures? Department of Parks and Recreation requested images to include in the final version of the Trails Master Plan. Send pictures to **trails@pwcgov.org**

At This Rate, It Will Take 100 Years… But Can We Do It in 20?

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has completed the **FY2025 Bicycle Facilities Metric Report**. In the Northern Virginia District, 31 miles of new shared use paths, bike lanes, and shared lane markings were completed.

In NOVA, less than 1% of the 4,981 lane miles of planned-but-unfunded active transportation facilities **identified by VDOT** in 2024 were completed in FY2025. If the current pace of completion is maintained, the planned network should be finished… in a century.

See map for the 6 miles in Prince William County and nearly 3 miles (in distance) in Manassas that were completed. The statewide sidewalk and crosswalk inventory should be available by next April.

The **Trails Master Plan** now being developed by the Department of Parks and Recreation includes almost 300 miles of new "Active Mobility" trails. To complete that part of the the trails network in 20 years would require building 15 miles of trail annually. To complete the planned 125 miles of "Recreational" trails in 20 years would require building an additional 6-7 miles annually.

The Trails Master Plan will identify the projected costs to build all of the trail segments in Prince William County. Funding over 20 miles of trail each year is expected to require more $$$ than are available from the General Fund, though many miles of natural surface trails ("low-hanging fruit" projects) could be built with $5 million/year.

For the more-expensive projects involving land acquisition and bridges, trail advocates are proposing a $300 million bond issue in November 2026 so voters can indicate their support. Without new funding, only a tiny percentage of the planned trails network will ever be built.

To provide context for funding requirements, the Invitation to Bid for the **Featherstone segment** of the PHNST proposed constructing a new 1-mile trail consisting of natural surface trails, 1,100 linear feet of wetland boardwalk, and two prefabricated bridge structures.

The county received **two bids** for that project. **Current cost estimate** for that 1-mile segment, after recent modifications, is $2.15 million.

$240 million in Federal funds will be used to rebuild 17 miles of the Virginia Creeper Trail in Southwest Virginia that were damaged by Hurricane Helene in 2024. That unique trail repair project within the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests will cost $14 million per mile.

The Graham Park Road sidewalk (see below) will cost almost $15 million per mile. Bike/pedestrian infrastructure is rarely cheap…

Graham Park Road Sidewalk Cost: $15 Million Per Mile

Virginia Department of Transportation is completing the historical and archeological assessment required before building a new sidewalk on Graham Park Road.

The $4.6 million project is already funded (see p.394) in the Prince William County **Capital Improvements Program** (CIP):
This project includes $2.3M in federal funding, $625K in local funding, and $1.7M in Northern Virginia Transportation Authority funding and involves design and construction of 1,624 feet of five foot-wide concrete sidewalk to bridge a missing sidewalk gap on Graham Park Road between Jillian Lane and the current terminus west of Gayle Court in front of Graham Park Middle School. The construction schedule is yet to be determined.

Cost of the sidewalk will be over $2,800 per linear foot, roughly $15 million per mile.

Vision for Trails, Parks and Green Spaces

The November 20 Lake Ridge-Occoquan-Coles Civic Association's (LOCCA's) Planning, Environment, Land-Use & Transportation (PELT) Committee meeting will include discussion by Occoquan Supervisor Kenny Boddye and Department of Parks and Recreation staff on:
- Prince William County's vision for trails, parks and green spaces
- status of the Charlie Boone Memorial Park Foundation efforts to develop a **bike and skate park**
- proposed indoor sports complex

The **Cotton Mill Drive** trail segment at Lake Ridge Park and Marina is now under construction (see above).

Zoom meeting starts at 7:30pm:
ID - 858 1775 7962
Passcode - 783104

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

Notes from the October 28 meeting:

- Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is planning to hire a consultant to determine how to add boathouse capacity at Lake Ridge Park and Marina.
- The Center for Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety webinar on November 19, 3:00-4:00pm will feature the Complete Streets Leadership Academy (CSLA) at Smart Growth America. **Program** will focus on quick-build demonstrations that show how safer street designs can work in practice.
- Next step after Sudley Road Urban Land Institute **study** is for Board of County Supervisors to initiate a Small Area Plan. Ashton Avenue was proposed in study to become a multi-mobile corridor, and road diets were proposed on Rosemary and Lomond Drive.
- Department of Parks and Recreation is replacing entry signs at about 20 parks. Design for new trail signs, maps, kiosks and even the color palette for blazes on trees are part of a "signage family" across the park system, using specifications already developed by National Park Service and Virginia State Parks. All-metal signs providing greater durability (with QR codes for greater flexibility in messages) will be installed first at Neabsco Boardwalk.
- Existing trails along Occoquan River at Doves Landing Regional Park are being re-routed away from Lake Jackson Civic Association property and onto drier land.
- **Four bridges** over Neabsco Creek at Andrew Leitch Park are still awaiting approval in the county's permitting process.
- County staff will explore if Lake Manassas could be used to mitigate flooding that washes out Broad Run bridges.

Separate Design Standards for Trails

The first project to be funded with the $1 million added to the annual county budget for trail construction, approved in the FY25 budget starting July 1, 2024, will be the Jefferson Park Connector. Residents adjacent to the county-owned land on which the trail will be built have been sent a letter.

FY26 funding will be used to close a sidewalk gap along Prince William Parkway over I-95.

(Existing trail shown above in black.)

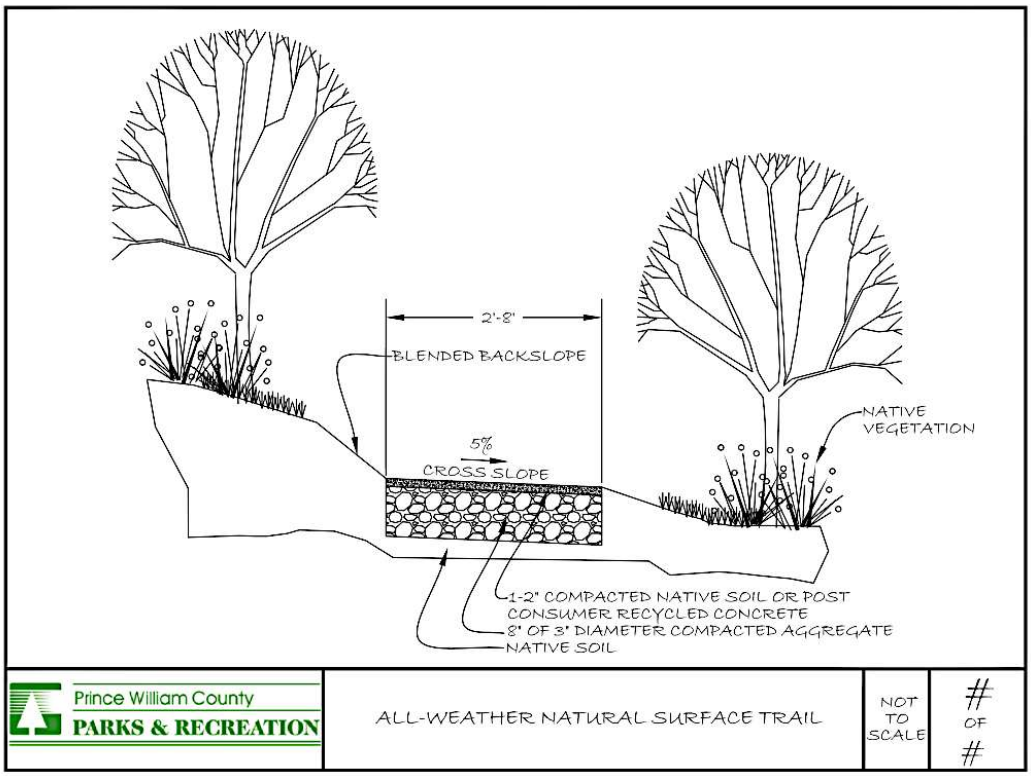
The Prince William Transportation Department is building the Jefferson Park Connector trail according to the Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM) **650.37 standard**.

Current design is for a stone dust trail that will be 8 feet wide, plus 2 feet of compacted shoulders on either side for a total width of 12 feet. In spots, the trail could narrow to 10 feet wide to minimize tree removal.

The recommended width for a shared-use path on the **East Coast Greenway** is 12 feet. A 2-foot shoulder is considered the minimum. For the **National Capital Trail Network**, "*Facilities in the network are required to be continuously connected, separated from traffic wherever possible, paved or firm surface, and at least 8' wide for existing trails or 10' for new construction.*"

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has different **trail standards**. It's light-on-the-land natural surface trails could be as narrow as 2 feet. In the DCSM standards that are typically cited when proffers are made for new developments, minimum trail width is 9 feet wide (including shoulders).

The County Executive has proposed that, starting July 1, 2026, the Transportation Department will be expanded to include all major capital projects and will become responsible for building new trails according to DCSM standards. The DPR standards may be incorporated into the DCSM by July 1, to provide greater flexibility in design.



Strathmore Rezoning

The Prince William Board of County Supervisors has scheduled a public hearing on November 18 for the Strathmore rezoning proposal, **REZ2023-00023**. The rezoning would authorize 168 new single family homes on 56 acres along Vint Hill Road.

Proffers (see p.32) include paved, 10-foot-wide shared use paths along Vint Hill Road, from the road to the northern boundary of the property in anticipation of a future extension by others to the Broad Run Linear Park, and to connect to the adjoining property to the west. Planning Office is coordinating proffers on other parcels north of Vint Hill Road to create a connected network of trails, as was done on rezonings south of the road..

The Strathmore proposal also includes donating a 10-acre parcel (currently assessed at $27,500) for Broad Run Linear Park. That parcel (*above*) is across the stream from the Broad Run Trail and west of the Saybrooke community. A natural gas line runs through it.

Flat Branch Trail and Route 28 Bypass

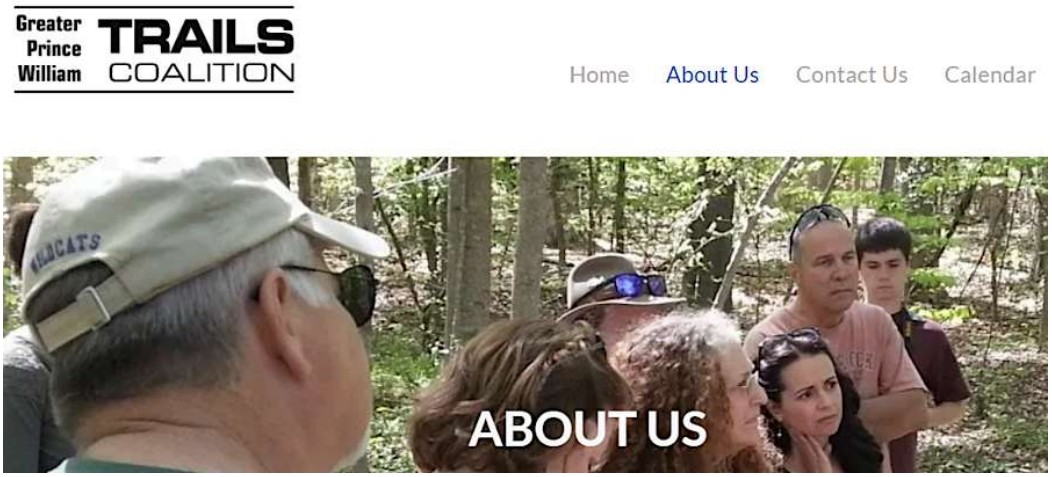
On November 19, the Prince William County Planning Commission will consider a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (**CPA2025-00007**) to remove the Route 28 Bypass and its shared use path from the **2040 Comprehensive Plan**.

The Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) also proposes to delete the Flat Branch Trail, as a stand-alone project, from the text (**p.81**) of the **Mobility Chapter** of the plan. However, the **Countywide Trails Map** would retain that recreational trail, slightly modified at the northern end.

The Planning Commission will have to decide what action to recommend regarding the Flat Branch Trail to the Board of County Supervisors.

Also as drafted, the Comprehensive Plan Amendment on the November 19 agenda would not change the land use underneath the Flat Branch Trail. The Route 28 Bypass was planned to pass through a slice of land designated as Public Land (PL). The new road would have been surrounded on both sides by Ben Lomond Regional Park, with that parkland designated as Parks and Open Space (POS).

The CPA addresses only changes in the Mobility Chapter. Unless the Planning Commission amends the action proposed by the Planning Office, a change in the Land Use Chapter for all the land at Ben Lomond Regional Park to be “POS” would require processing a separate CPA.



Website in Transition

We’re moving the **website** for the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition to a new platform. Temporarily, messages sent to info@gpwtrails.org will bounce back or disappear into the ether.

Rest assured - in the immortal words of Arnold Schwarzenegger, “I’ll be back…”

In Other News…

- The opportunity for public comment on the **FY 2026-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** for the Northern Virginia region is open until November 21.
- The **ribbon cutting** for the **pump track** at **Rollins Ford Park** was November 15. **Prince William Parks Foundation** raised over $175,000 for the new track. Nearest public pump track in Virginia is next to Richmond.
- NoVA Families for Safe Streets held a Northern Virginia **World Day of Remembrance (WDoR) for Road Traffic Victims event** on November 16, 10:00-11:00am to honor the lives of the 24 pedestrians killed by people driving in Northern Virginia in 2024 and the 9 pedestrian fatalities so far in 2025.
- November 17 is **National Take a Hike Day**. Check out **places to go** in Prince William County.
- **Avula re-ups Vision Zero pledge for safer Richmond streets**, (*The Richmonder*, October 31) "*Vision Zero is meant to be a long-term goal, focusing on a variety of city initiatives like traffic calming measures, bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure, speed enforcement and education and outreach efforts on road safety... Vision Zero comes down to 'the three e's' of education, enforcement and engineering."*
- Rails to Trails Conservancy has produced a fact sheet on **railbanking**, which ensures unused railroad routes remain available for rails-to-trails projects. (The **Rail With Trail project** now being led by City of Manassas, possibly creating a trail linking to Alexandria, proposes to keep the tracks active with passenger/freight trains.)
- **George Snyder Trail Bids $4.6M Higher Than Expected; Council Mulls Options** (*Fairfax City Patch*, October 31) Preferred option is to obtain additional funding from concessionaire that built the Transform 66 Outside the Beltway Project.
- **Nature walks are good for you, but can a city stroll be just as good?** (Associated Press, November 1) *"Walking in nature has been shown to boost physical and mental health, lowering stress and restoring attention. But researchers are finding plenty of mental-health benefits to walking in urban areas, too."*
- **Potomac High School celebrates installation of new crosswalks, other pedestrian safety measures** (*InsideNOVA*, November 10) "*The pedestrian safety project was three years in the making…*"
- **Dumfries Planners Advance Small Area Plans, Prep for Route 1 Widening Update** (*Potomac News*, November 11). Utility relocation for widening Route 1 to 6 lanes east of downtown Dumfries begins in 2026, and construction should be completed in 2031. "*Plans call for a 10-foot multi-use path on the west side of Route 1 and a 5-foot sidewalk on the east side, with east-west trail links at Graham Park and Possum Point."*
- **Hikers Who Smoke Weed on Federal Public Lands to Face Prosecution Again** (*Backpack*, November 15) US attorneys have been instructed to "*begin charging people for possession of marijuana in national parks and other federal lands*" such as Manassa National Battlefield Park, Prince William Forest Park, and Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

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