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Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

September 2026 Newsletter

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Stop By and Chat in Person on September 12.. and Come Hike on September 13

On September 12, in advance of **National Public Lands Day** on September 26, the **Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route** will host several shared tables at **REI in Stonebridge Center** (Woodbridge) to showcase trails available in the local area.

Greater Prince William Trails Coalition will be there from 10:00am-1:30pm. The **Wood and Dale Wanderers** in Woodbridge will be there until 5:00pm.

Yes, you can drive to trails in Shenandoah National Park - but there are local trails just as attractive and far more convenient. Looking for new places to go? Interested in how Prince William County is planning to add over **400 miles of new trails** to the local bike/pedestrian network, and which trails might be near you?

Stop by and get savvy. You can even learn how the French army **hiked through Woodbridge** on the way to Yorktown in 1781... and again on the way back in 1782.

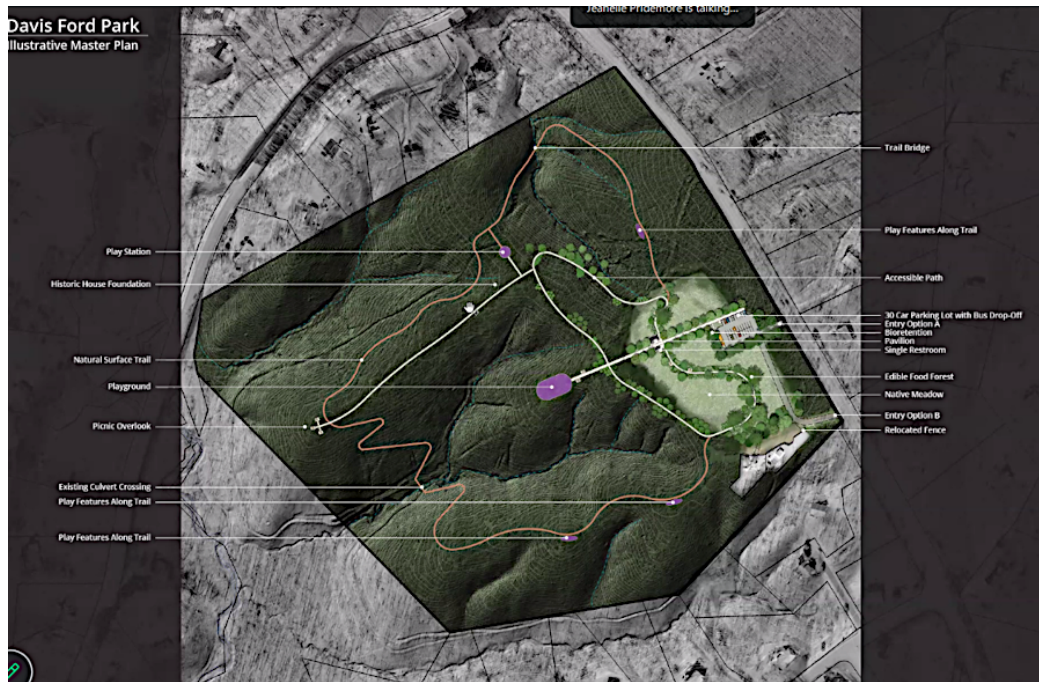
The Second Sunday hike on September 13, 1:00-3:00pm will explore Blooms Park in Manassas Park. We'll go on the new trail component created by Dominion Power after enhancing its electricity transmission line. Please **register** to get details, and to be notified if weather forces a cancellation.



From the August 25 Meeting of the Trails and Blueways Council

- **Rocky Branch bridge ribbon cutting** will be September 10, 10:00-10:45am.
- "low hanging fruit" projects have been identified for each magisterial district. For details, see GPWTC blog post **We Know Where the "Low Hanging Fruit" Projects Are Now**
- a jonboat will be based at Sinclair Mill, plus potentially a larger police boat on the Doves Landing side of Lake Jackson
- on the Neabsco Greenway, the Delaney Road crossing site will be determined by Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) based on safety considerations. VDOT has abandoned plans to build a culvert for Neabsco Creek underneath I-95 that would block any trail/wildlife crossing; project is being redesigned.
- at Potomac Shores, how the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) will connect to the overlook north of the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) station will remain unclear until the developer proposes a plan for the commercial property next to the station
- Featherstone segment of PHNST will be completed September 30, and another month will be needed to improve the trail where it crosses Featherstone Road
- Phase 1 of Neabsco Boardwalk extension starting this Fall will add 700' to connect to the southern shoreline and into Metz Wetland. Phase 2 contract is going through procurement to complete trail through wetland to Leesylvania Park entrance in 2027
- Powells Creek Crossing public meeting is planned for October, to include latest design after receiving geotechnical report on installing pilings in creek bottom
- PHNST Gap 3 options of route through museum property may be affected by Marine Corps museum plans to develop property, support for segment alongside Route 1 remains solid
- Prince William County is unable to acquire land required to get underneath Route 15 at Catharpin Creek, now looking at extending Shared Use Path on both sides of Route 15 up to the stoplight at entrance to Long Park; VDOT would maintain a shared use path only if it was within the right-of-way

- September 22 is **car free day**.
- Prince William Department of Transportation and Capital Construction (DTCC) and City of Manassas will be offering **road cycling basics class** on September 19 in Manassas, with a tour of the city on different types of bike paths
- After finishing its long range comprehensive plan, Destination Dumfries 2044, the town has launched **three small area plans** that could impact the PHNST location
- Destination Place (**REZ2024-00033**) resubmission includes new proposal for location of PHNST and responsibility for the county to construct a bridge before trail could open to the general public.



Trails in the Davis Ford Park Master Plan

The **Master Plan** for Davis Ford Park will be completed soon. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) made a **detailed presentation** to the August meeting of the Mid-County Civic Association of Prince William (MIDCO).

The final plan will expand the planned length of accessible trail. There will be benches and picnic tables with overhead covers.

The existing entrance will be used to access a 30-car parking lot and bus dropoff area with small pavilion. There will be a bio-retention area for the parking lot and an "edible forest" interpretive trail. A 1.1 mile natural surface trail will wind through the wooded area (*see above*). No bike/pedestrian trail connection is planned to River Forest Drive at this time.

The Department of Transportation and Capital Construction (DTCC) will finalize design and construct the improvements.

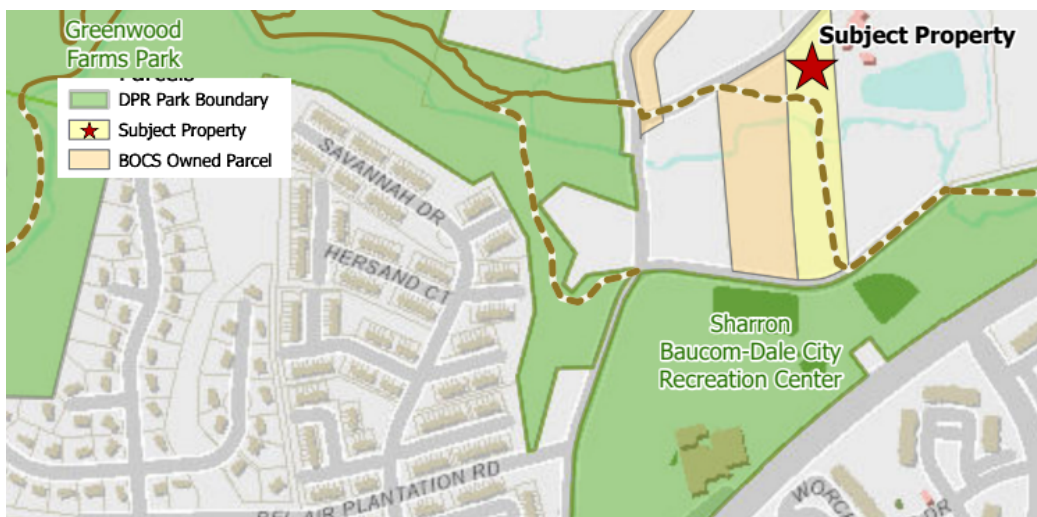
No funding is currently available to implement the plan, and the natural surface trail network is not on the list of **low hanging fruit projects** identified by the DPR staff.

September 18 Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) Roundtable

On September 18, the National Park Service is hosting a virtual State of the Trail Roundtable from 9:30am-2:30pm ([register online](#)). The Roundtable is designed for partners to share updates, spotlight local successes, and exchange ideas.

The agenda includes lightning talks from trail partners, updates on trail development and volunteer efforts, and engaging sessions covering resiliency resources, federal grant programs, and signage tips and tricks.

Need more details? Contact Jennifer Wampler, Potomac Heritage Trail Partnership Coordinator, at jennifer_wampler@partner.nps.gov



Funding Parks and Trails

On September 1, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) **approved** \$85,000 to purchase 5 acres at 14435 Delaney Road for the Neabsco Greenway (*see above*).

Public hearings (Items **8A** and **8B**) were scheduled to authorize easements for utility lines through Tree Conservation Areas designated on Broad Run Linear Park. Plans for granting such easements were included in the 2025 land acquisition.

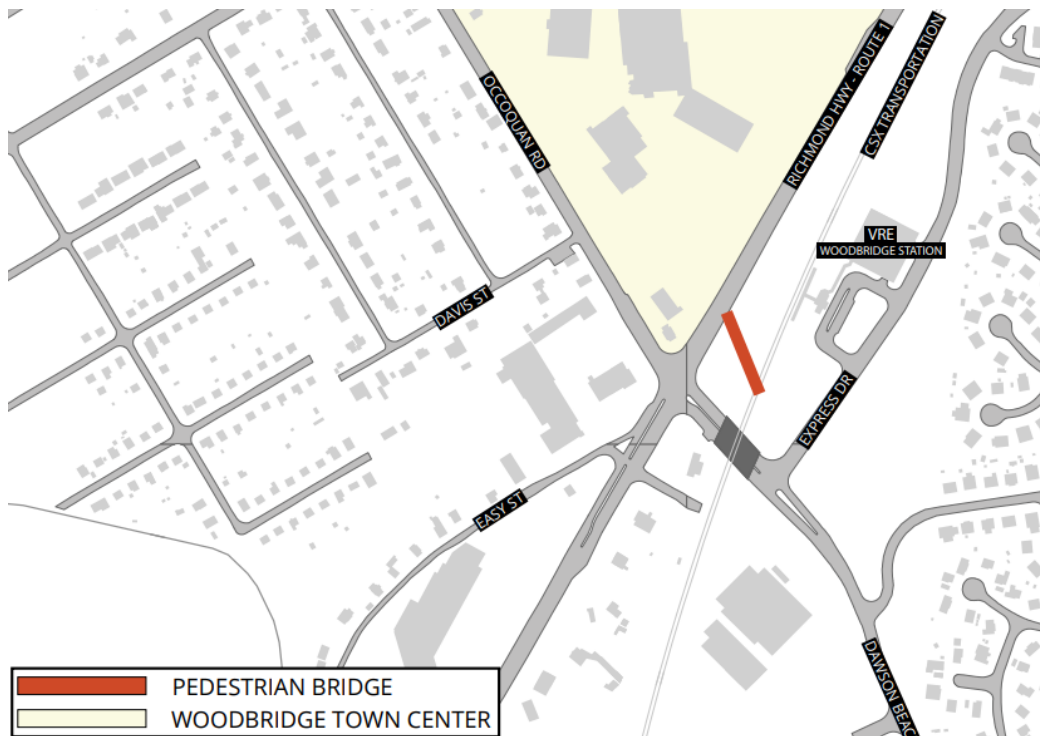
The BOCS also **approved** \$4.6 million for the Old Carolina/Jefferson Street Sidewalk Project and \$2.3 million in Federal funding for the North Woodbridge Pedestrian Bridge Project (*see below*).

The **Pathways 2035** Countywide Trails Master Plan proposes over 400 miles of trails - 291 miles of Active Mobility trails and 118 miles of Recreational trails.

Active Mobility trails are projected to cost up to \$4.5 million/mile. Simply painting markings to identify sharrows can involve very low costs; the most expensive segments will involve construction of new 10' wide paved shared use paths.

Estimates of Recreational trail costs range from \$435,000 to \$6,000,000 per mile. The highest cost estimates are for segments of elevated boardwalk through complex terrain and with bridges. Volunteers can assist in constructing 61 miles identified in 84 "**low hanging fruit**" segments.

The **FY27 county budget** includes just \$1 million from General Funds for trail construction. Implementing Pathways 2035 will require the County Executive and the BOCS to increase the priority of adding bike/pedestrian routes to a mobility network that has focused on infrastructure for moving cars for the last 75 years.



Trails and the Chesapeake Gateways Network

The National Park Service (NPS) invites communities that connect people to the watershed, such as Occoquan and Dumfries, to become designated "gateways to the Chesapeake." Organizations such as the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition can join as programmatic partners, after which they can apply for technical assistance and outreach grants.

In a September 1 workshop on how to partner with the National Park Service, the superintendent of Chesapeake Gateways highlighted that the Federal agency was committed to working with other organizations to get the general public to recognize the value of protecting the character of the Chesapeake watershed - and that extended far beyond just the edges and water of the bay.

Creating more public awareness is consistent with the Save the Bay initiatives. As she put it, "you can't science your way out of this... you need people."

Trails, including the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST), are assets that get people connected to the Chesapeake. So are the boat ramps along the Occoquan and Potomac rivers, Neabsco Creek, and the waterfront park being developed by the Town of Dumfries on Quantico Creek.

Prince William County's Tourism Department will release a Maritime Study soon identifying how to further "activate" the waterfront. Events such as the programs at the Neabsco Boardwalk and in Leesylvania Park, bird walks at Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and festivals in the Town of Occoquan demonstrate how our area is already highlighting the waterfront.

Look for more outreach coordinated with NPS. Preliminary planning is underway now to launch an annual PHNST Day in 2027.



Do You Know: Where Is This Trail?

Guess first - then **see the answer.**

In Other News...

- Seth Hendler-Voss has left his position as Director of the Prince William County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). He **is now** the city manager of Falls Church. Janet Bartnik returned to DPR as Acting Director on August 24.
- Prince William County Public Schools is hiring a **Bike Safety Specialist.**
- **Antietam Elementary Empowers Students with Bike Safety Awareness** (*Prince William Living*, August 19) Antietam ES has participated annually in Bike & Roll to School at least since 2023. In 2026, Antietam was the only PWC school registered. Check out the **video.**

- **Active Prince William** has submitted comments on the proposed **Clover Hill Road-Prince William Parkway interchange**. Suggestions include building box culverts to separate traffic on the ramps from bikers/pedestrians using the planned trail parallel to the parkway. Expanding the project area along Godwin Drive to Winged Elm Court would complete/enable the bike lane connection between the existing bike lanes on Godwin Drive to the proposed new roundabout.
- **Virginia boy's death comes as more children are getting hurt on e-scooters** (Washington Post, August 5) A Fairfax County police officer commented "Please have your kids wear helmets. Teach them the basic safety rules. Keep an eye on them."
- **Capital Bikeshare to launch its first Vienna stations this month** (FFX Now, August 4) "Fairfax County staff have found that the typical e-bike rider uses the equipment for rides that last about 15 minutes, with a typical trip distance being about 2.2 miles."
- **A Surprising (and Easy) Way to Boost Your Attention Span** (New York Times, August 11) According to attention restoration theory, "...our ability to focus is a finite resource that gets easily used up, and being in nature is an effective way to replenish it."
- **Proposal calls for more concentrated upgrades to Arlington bike corridors** (ArlNOW, August 10) "...findings supported improvements to a limited number of key bicycle corridors, rather than a more scattershot approach." See also the draft of **Arlington's Multimodal Transportation Plan**.
- **Virginia's Mount Vernon Trail Receives Rails to Trails Conservancy's Top Honor, Named 2026 Hall of Fame Trail** (Rails to Trails Conservancy, August 20) "The trail's origin story is one of community activism and volunteerism, which carries forward to the present, with thousands of volunteers working year-round to steward, promote and activate the trail - all of which are essential ingredients for a world-class trail and a valued community asset."
- **'A beautiful tradition': What goes behind the upkeep of the Appalachian Trail** (Cardinal News, August 13) "Every piece of PPE [personal protective equipment] we have on is because a volunteer got hurt."
- **Self-Serve Kayak Rentals Now Available at Virginia State Parks** (Blue Ridge Outdoors, August 13) "...officials have installed kayak kiosks at 10 state parks, including Bear Creek Lake, Belle Isle, Claytor Lake, Douthat, Fairy Stone, First Landing, Hungry Mother, Lake Anna, Pocahontas, and Smith Mountain Lake."
- **First section of Eastern Shore Rail Trail opens in Cape Charles** (Shore Daily News, August 21) To date, **\$58 million** in funding has been provided for the 49 mile rail-to-trail project.
- **As complaints about e-bikes and e-scooters rise, police emphasize safety and education** (Loudoun Times-Mirror, August 21) "All types of motorcycles, including e-motorcycles, are illegal to ride on the W&OD Trail. Class III e-bikes and mopeds are also illegal to ride on the trail."
- Smart Growth America has **published** "Complete Streets, Stronger Economies." Six case studies identify the business-based benefits, which "include revitalized downtown areas, increases in sales, business growth, job creation, tax revenue, and property values, as well as cost savings from fewer traffic crashes and reduced physical inactivity."
- The Safe Routes Partnership and the Urban Libraries start the **Safe Routes to Libraries Virtual Learning Series** on September 8, 3:00-4:00pm.
- **George Mason officials roll out plans for The Pier at the Potomac Science Center in Belmont Bay** (InsideNOVA, August 24) "During last week's meeting, attendees brought up everything from the aesthetics of the pier to potential space constraints that could hinder kayakers from passing underneath the pier safely."

- **The Real Value of Established Trails on Rural Property** (*United Country Real Estate*, June 12) “When it comes time to sell the land, if a buyer can comfortably ride or walk a trail system, they will get a better sense of the property, which will lead to stronger offers.”
- It’s not a new idea - see **Trail-Oriented Development: The Next Frontier in People-Friendly Design** (*Urban Land*, April 25, 2016) “Through supporting bike infrastructure, real estate professionals can play a significant role in creating healthier, more sustainable communities. They can also help position their projects and communities in a marketplace that increasingly values active transportation.”
- **Do D.E.I. Bike Paths Exist? The Trump Administration Says Yes** (*New York Times*, August 31) “A 2025 YouGov poll showed that 76 percent of Americans supported bike lanes in and around where they live, including 66 percent of Republicans. But it also showed that only a third of Americans are pining for more.”



The Department of Parks and Recreation has analyzed the various trail segments in Pathways 2035 and identified 84 that qualify as **low hanging fruit**, where volunteer assistance would be most appropriate.



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The Greater Prince William Trails Coalition is a 501(c)(3) organization
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