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Greater Prince William TRAILS COALITION

October 2026 Newsletter

see more at our [calendar](#), [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page.

Quarterly Meeting on October 22, 10:00-11:30am

Everyone is welcome to attend. In addition to networking and sharing updates by the various organizations which compose the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition, we will discuss:

- “what’s next” after the expected approval of **Pathways 2035** on October 20
- the status of major bike/pedestrian projects being managed by the Department of Transportation and Capital Construction
- results of the Mental Health working group of the **Community Health Improvement Plan** (CHIP) produced by the Community Healthcare Coalition of Greater Prince William. Then, those results can help demonstrate to elected officials the health benefits of trails.
- opportunities for volunteers to build “low hanging fruit” trails
- strategies to get funding to build 300 miles of new trails, particularly those labeled “Tier 1”

As a point of reference for funding, check out **Supervisors Approve \$57M for 8 “Missing Link” Sidewalk Segments** (LoudounNOW, September 21). *“The goal is to fill in ‘missing links’ in the county’s existing pedestrian and bicycle network. On Sept. 15, the board approved a contract with Shirley Construction for just over \$40 million to build the trails. In addition, the county estimates \$16 million will be needed to acquire the land needed for the pathways.”*

Quarterly meetings are hybrid. We meet in person at George Mason University’s **Potomac Science Center** at Belmont Bay, where there are donuts, coffee and tea. You can also join via Zoom. **Please register.**

GOAL 4

MOBILITY

GOAL STATEMENT

Foster an inter-connected and accessible transportation network that advances the County's mobility infrastructure, broadens transportation choices, and enhances safety.

Key Objectives

1

Enhance connectivity through transit-oriented development and improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

Strategies:

1. Integrate technology and transit networks in designing and planning communities to ensure seamless connections between various transit modes.
2. Design streets around transit hubs that equally accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit vehicles, with features like wide sidewalks, bike lanes, and accessible crosswalks.
3. Provide a secure biking infrastructure and implement traffic calming measures to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists and to reduce reliance on vehicles.
4. Design built environments that prioritize the mobility of people over vehicles.

PARK TYPE	WALK/BIKE SERVICE AREA	DRIVE TIME SERVICE AREA
Neighborhood	5 to 10-minute walk/bike time; bus stop within ¼-mile, preferred	Less than 10 minutes
Community	10 to 15-minute walk/bike time	10 to 20-minute drive time
Regional	Greater than 15-minute walk/bike time	20 to 30-minute drive time
School/Community-Use	5 to 10-minute walk/bike time	Less than 10 minutes

Pathways 2035 to Board of County Supervisors on October 20

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) expects the Trails Master Plan, **Pathways 2035**, to be on the agenda for the 2:00pm meeting on **October 20** of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (BOCS). (*Until the final draft of the plan is released, check out the **draft** shared with the Trails and Blueways Council in August.*)

Supporters of expanding the county's bike/pedestrian network can show support by **speaking** during Public Comment Time at the meeting and/or by sending an e-mail to **bocs@pwcgov.org**

Formal adoption of Pathways 2035 will establish the basis for the FY28 budget to start funding planning, design, construction, and maintenance of about 300 miles of new recreational and active mobility trails. Planning a comprehensive bike/pedestrian network is the necessary starting point, but not the end point. Implementation will require funding for staff, contractors, and long-term maintenance.

New trail segments are essential for the county to meet the **Level of Service** standards adopted by the BOCS in 2020 when the supervisors approved the Parks, Recreation and Tourism chapter of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Funding and building new trails will also implement the specific action strategies to improve the bike/pedestrian network that were adopted in 2022 in the **Mobility Chapter**,

The eight elected county supervisors can take four specific actions to facilitate implementation of Pathways 2035:

- ***generate support by Home Owner Associations (HOAs) and private landowners***, where the county needs to acquire rights-of-way to authorize construction of public trails
- ***direct the Department of Transportation and Capital Construction (DTCC) and DPR to prioritize grant applications for trail projects*** to be funded by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTa) and state/Federal programs
- ***appropriate sufficient and sustained county funding*** in the FY28-33 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for DTCC and DPR to design, construct, and maintain a bike/pedestrian network that meets the Level of Service standards adopted in 2020 and creates the live-work-play walkable communities envisioned in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan
- ***include in the county's 2027 legislative agenda strong advocacy for state funding of trails***, particularly local segments of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail



What Should the Next Generation of Parks and Recreation Look Like in Prince William County?

The Occoquan District Supervisor, Kenny Boddye, is **asking for public input** to prioritize projects in the FY28 budget - especially the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

This is an opportunity to express public support for funding and implementing the new 10-year master plan for trails, **Pathways 2035**.

If you know people who think planning alone is not enough, and actually building the planned trails is important, you can suggest that they too can send comments to **occoquan@pwcgov.org**

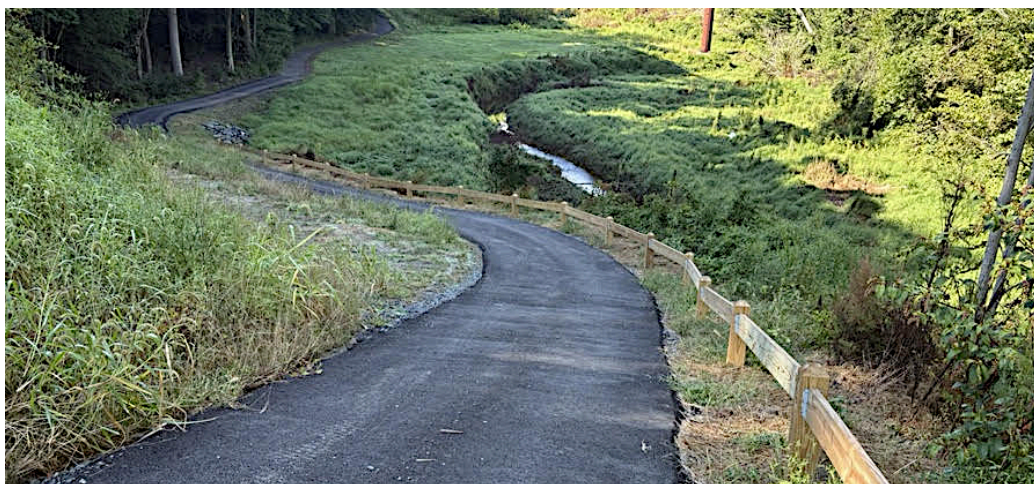


Pedestrian Safety Proclamation on October 6

The Board of County Supervisors will recognize October as Pedestrian Safety Month at the start of the October 6, 2:00pm meeting.

The Greater Prince William Trails Coalition, Active Prince William, and the Prince William County Trails & Blueways Council will be recognized as partners working with the Office of Community Safety and the Department of Transportation and Capital Construction to identify locations that need safety improvements and to help address the challenges.

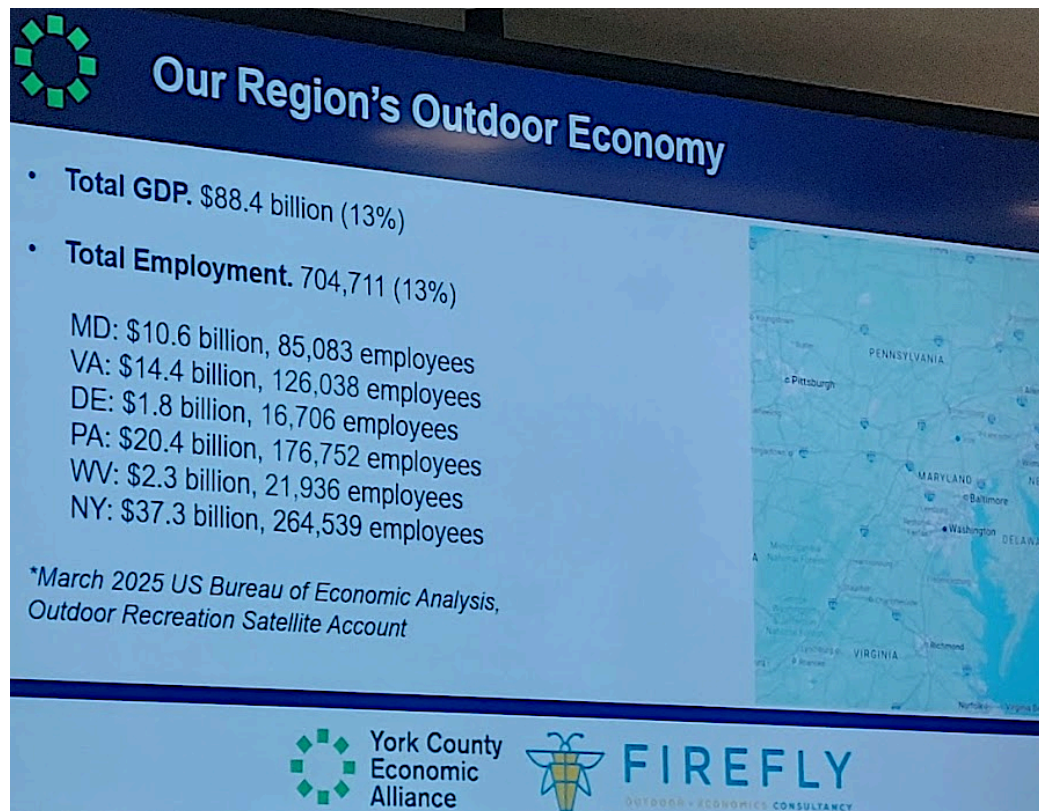
Helping the county implement the **Comprehensive Traffic Safety Action Plan**, which was adopted in 2025, is a fundamental part of creating the bike/pedestrian network planned in **Pathways 2035**. Sidewalk gaps need to be closed and intersections need to be improved, as well as new trails completed, to provide safe routes from houses to schools, libraries, bus stops, parks, community activity centers, etc.



Second Sunday Hike on October 11

The Second Sunday hike on October 11, 1:00-3:00pm will explore the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail from Belmont Bay to Veterans Park. Join us for some outdoor exercise, to meet fellow trail champions, and for a fun experience together.

Please **register** to get details, and to be notified if weather forces a cancellation.



Planning an Annual Special Day for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST)

The US Congress passed the National Trails System Act in 1968, and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation published a feasibility study for a Potomac Heritage Trail in 1974. The **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail** (PHNST) was authorized as a unit of the National Park Service (NPS) on March 28, 1983.

The **Potomac Heritage Trail Association** (PHTA) has proposed creating an annual PHNST Day with events on the trail, starting in 2027. It will seek official designation by the Virginia General Assembly and local jurisdictions, to highlight the value of the trail. The Greater Prince William Trails Coalition will organize hikes and events between the Occoquan River and Chopawamsic Creek as part of the first PHNST Day in 2027.

PHTA is preparing a grant application to the Chesapeake Gateways program of the National Park Service to organize a conference in 2027 that would gather representatives of all communities and organizations interested in the PHNST. Before COVID-19, the National Park Service (NPS) hosted several such conferences.

NPS is drafting the first PHNST Comprehensive Plan now, with completion anticipated in late 2027. The proposed conference offers an opportunity, particularly for health- and tourism-related businesses, to share perspectives on how to enhance trail benefits and apply “lessons learned,” as well as to prepare more useful comments on the draft plan.

In addition, there is the potential for communities and organizations all along the 900 miles of the PHNST to coordinate scheduling and outreach for events and marketing, volunteer projects, and advocacy for funding/building the incomplete segments. There is a particular opportunity to enhance the understanding of public officials in Virginia regarding benefits of trails for economic development, including tourism and enhancing property values, expanding beyond the initiatives in Pennsylvania (*see above*).



*On September 19, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Trails and Blueways Council visited recreational sites in eastern Prince William County on the **annual bus tour**.*

Getting Trails Funded in the FY28 Budget

Prince William County departments are currently preparing FY28 budget proposals for submission to the County Executive. Currently the county allocates only \$1 million/year for new trails.

After approval of Pathways 2035, the Board of County Supervisors has a clear choice. It can ignore the plan it just adopted or start to fund it in the FY28-33 Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

In the past, supervisors could say they were waiting for the trails master plan to identify specific projects with cost estimates. That information gap has now been closed.

In its budget request, the Department of Transportation and Capital Construction (DTCC) can request funding for almost 300 miles of new Active Mobility segments identified in Pathways 2035. The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) can choose from almost 120 miles of Recreational segments for the FY28-33 CIP.

Volunteers can assist in constructing the 84 “low hanging fruit” segments totaling over 61 miles, but 85% of the planned trail mileage will require costly land acquisition, detailed design, bridge construction, and other elements beyond the capacity of volunteers. Only a small percentage of the now-approved bike/pedestrian network might be funded through proffers.

With adoption of Pathways 2035, the county supervisors will have “planned the work” to implement Objective #1 in the Mobility section of the **2025-2028 Strategic Plan**: ***Enhance connectivity through transit oriented development and improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.***

A **Key Performance Indicator** (KPI) in the strategic plan is:

Projects with bicycle and pedestrian elements.

This measure shows the number of major transportation projects completed at the end of each fiscal year that include bicycle and pedestrian elements such as shared use paths, sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals.

Impact Statement: The inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian elements as part of transportation projects helps provide alternate and safe access for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Members of the General Assembly have made clear that there is potential for state funding for trails in Prince William County only after local government demonstrates its commitment with local funding.

The FY28 budget, the last to be approved before primaries and then elections for the eight supervisor seats in November 2027, will demonstrate if the County Executive and the elected supervisors will “work the plan.”



Occoquan River Cleanups

Next Friends of the Occoquan **stream cleanup** at five locations will be on October 3, 9:00am-noon. Preregister by sending an e-mail to **foto@friendsoftheoccoquan.org**

17th Annual Upper Occoquan River Cleanup results, as reported by **Prince William Trails and Streams Coalition**:

"Volunteers worked at four sites on Saturday, September 26, gathering trash from the upper

Occoquan River, the Hooes Run section of the Occoquan Reservoir, and stormwater ponds (including the border of a commuter lot) in Lake Ridge.”

From the stormwater pond & commuter lot at the corner of Minnieville Road and Old Bridge Road in Lake Ridge:

“Some major items collected were: A large sofa, 2 chairs, 3 VDOT cones, asphalt shingles (actually dumped), a mattress, 3 shopping carts, 3 tires, construction materials- concrete, plywood, pipes, a bucket of paint, auto oil, auto parts, 2 large TVs, 3 tires, a large grill, among other items. Miscellaneous items collected were plastic and glass bottles, plastic bags, plastic wrappers, etc.”

New Active Transportation Facilities

Each year, the Virginia Department of Transportation tracks the completion of new projects to support bike/pedestrian traffic along the highways. For the most recent year, Prince William County reported completing four new active transportation facilities:

Token Forest Sidewalk: Project constructs 420 linear feet of 5-foot concrete sidewalk on the south side of Token Forest Drive (Route 751) from the entrance/exit of a Church to existing facility to complete a missing segment.

Talon Drive and Route 234 Signal: Project constructed a new traffic signal including a crosswalk across Route 234

Stockbridge Drive - 234 Signal: Project constructed a new traffic signal including upgrading crosswalk across Talon Drive

Opitz Road Sidewalk: Construct a 5' concrete sidewalk on the northside of Opitz Boulevard between the I-95 Ramp and the Sentara Hospital entrance. (This was a task order addition to the Neabsco-Potomac Mills Commuter Garage Project.)

Some new “active mobility” projects planned in Pathways 2035 will be completed as new road projects are built. Unless the current pace of construction is accelerated, few gaps in the existing sidewalk network will be closed before the next 10-year trails master plan is developed.



Bike/Pedestrian Path Underneath I-66 at Route 234: Funded

On September 22, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors approved an additional \$7 million in Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) Federal funding for the Route 234 Business (Battleview to Godwin) Improvements Project. The RSTP funding does not require a local match.

With the nearly \$20 million previously funded, the project will create a continuous sidewalk system along Route 234 Business from Battleview Parkway to Godwin Drive. The exit lane from I-66 will be converted to a signalized turn to allow for safe pedestrian crossing.



Sidewalk “Opportunity” in the Neabsco District

On October 6, the Board of County Supervisors is expected to approve use of proffer funding for the **Worth Avenue Pedestrian Improvements Project**, upgrading pedestrian safety at the intersection of Worth Avenue and Prince William Parkway. The improvement will address a problem on the north side of Potomac Mills.

One of the upcoming, high-risk pedestrian problems is nearby, on the south side of Potomac Mills. There is no sidewalk on Telegraph Road between the I-95 exit ramp and Opitz Boulevard.

Two years ago the Board of County Supervisors approved **#REZ2023-00013, Evergreen At Telegraph Road**. It will add 311 multifamily units. When completed, everyone in that new development going to Potomac Mills nearby will have to drive - or walk in the traffic lanes.

To create a sidewalk connection to Opitz Boulevard, additional right of way would have to be acquired from the adjacent shopping center. Because proffers are limited to a “nexus” of the rezoning, no funding was provided by the developer for a safe pedestrian route offsite (see *red line, above*). Currently, no funding source has been identified for the needed sidewalk.



Highlights From the September 22 Meeting of the Trails and Blueways Council

Note: official minutes are posted online by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)

- **Pathways 2035** Trails Master Plan is scheduled for adoption at the 2:00pm October 20 meeting of the Board of County Supervisors
- DPR has identified the preferred route of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail south of the Potomac Shores VRE station
- the public meeting on the design and cost estimates of the Powells Creek Crossing is not scheduled yet; DPR is still awaiting conclusion of geotechnical and archeological studies
- **ribbon cutting ceremony** to open new bridge over Rocky Branch on Broad Run Trail was on September 10
- the **Hooes Run bridge construction** may be completed as soon as April 2027 (see above)
- Cotton Mill Drive shared use path to Lake Ridge marina has been completed. It was built to state standards, and the county is now seeking a grant to reforest the hillside.
- DPR has submitted what are expected to be final comments on Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail route for proposed **Destination Place** rezoning. No Planning Commission hearing has been scheduled yet.
- Planning Ahead: DPR is proposing specific routes for trail easements via discussion for proffers to link Wellington Road/Linton Hall Road/University Drive Extended where data centers are proposed at Devlin Tech Center Park, so natural surface trails could be constructed by DPR.
- The chair of TBC presented a spreadsheet listing bike gaps on Route 234 and suggested dates for closure, and suggested priorities for "low hanging fruit" projects which volunteers might help construct.
- DPR is trying to streamline approval process for volunteers to build trails. Based on a master list of prioritized low-hanging fruit projects, DPR staff will ground truth and flag routes for volunteers.
- DPR will schedule trail construction projects annually so the agency will have the capacity to maintain segments after completion. DPR plans to use Volunteer Prince William to sign up volunteers for trail projects
- DPR anticipating two bridges will be required for **Flat Branch Trail**, with total cost of trail around \$500K
- the Silver Lake trail maintenance project to add gravel and culverts is not completed yet
- e-motorcycles circled and harassed horse riders in ugly conflict at Silver Lake. Park rangers were not present when the incident happened.

- Jason Williams will speak to the **Lake Ridge Occoquan Coles Civic Association** (LOCA-PELT) in November on the challenges of managing e-motos, too often mislabelled "e-bikes"
- DPR is finalizing its study of the at-capacity boathouse at Lake Ridge. TBC discussion noted that access to Lake Manassas would be an appropriate site for western county boating program



County Events in October

A **Route 234/Sudley Manor Drive Interchange Project Public Information Meeting** is scheduled for October 7, 6:00-8:00pm at the Freedom Aquatic and Fitness Center. The presentation begins at 6:30pm.

The county-sponsored **18th Annual Mental Health Awareness event** will be on October 7 at the Ferlazzo Building. Activities run from 9:00am-7:00pm, including the Community Wellness Expo and Community Navigation Hub from 9:00am-noon. Trails are health infrastructure for both physical and mental wellness.

The **Backpacking 102: Time to Backpack** class will be at Silver Lake Park on October 10, 9:00am-1:00pm. *"This four-hour program will give you the opportunity to pack your own gear, hike in and out of the park with a loaded pack, set up your campsite, practice your bear hang, and ask any questions along the way!"* Cost: \$25.

A **Twilight Trek** on Neabsco Boardwalk will be October 10, 6:30-8:30pm. It's a family program

that brings you up close and personal with some of the wetland's best-known inhabitants, the beaver, muskrat, deer, and other wetland critters. Cost: \$12.

The **Walk in the Woods: Mussel Power** event will be at Locust Shade Park on October 17, 10:00am-noon. Expect to walk about one mile on a shaded gravel trail with some gentle slopes. Discover how the pilot mussel reintroduction project will improve stream health. Free.

The Prince William **Board of County Supervisors** will meet on October 20, 2:00pm. **Pathways 2035** is expected to be adopted then.

The **Parks and Recreation Commission** will meet on October 21, starting at 7:00pm. The **Trails and Blueways Council** will meet on October 27, starting at 6:30pm. Both meetings will be at the **Hellwig Building**.



Do You Know: Where Is This Trail?

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

In Other News...

- Prince William Forest Park is recruiting a Chesapeake Gateways Ambassador, a paid Americorps position hosted by Conservation Legacy. For 50 weeks, the Ambassador will help the park's interpretation, education, and visitor services division. **Apply** by October 11.
- On October 8, 10:30am at the Lyndon B. Johnson Memorial Grove, the Rails to Trails Conservancy and the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail invite people to attend the induction of the Mount Vernon Trail into the **Trail Hall of Fame**. Please **RSVP** online.
- **State grants \$160K to 9-11 Memorial Trail at county government center** (*Prince William Times*, September 9)
- **New regional initiative brings e-bike safety events to W&OD Trail** (FFX Now, September 3) "Class 1 and 2 e-bikes are allowed on the W&OD Trail, but NOVA Parks prohibits anything exceeding a top speed of 20 mph."

- **Speak Up for the Lorton Trail Connection** (Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling, September 17) *"It would help connect the Lorton VRE station to the Cross County Trail while filling an important gap in the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail."*
- **Shelters Have Long Been a Symbol of the Appalachian Trail. Are They on the Way Out?** (Backpacker, September 17) *"The AT's shelters are facing a sustainability problem. Here's what the future of camping on the long trail may look like."*
- **200 cyclists rally at Rappahannock Rough Ride for free medical clinic** (Rappahannock News, September 22) The 30th annual Rappahannock Rough Ride was a fundraiser benefiting the Fauquier Free Clinic.
- **A hike through the woods feels natural. It's anything but** (Washington Post, September 13) *"Hiking is often seen as a natural activity, but there's nothing natural about it, and almost nobody did it before the industrial revolution."*
- **National Park Service Proposes Rule to Expand Bicycle and E-Bike Access in National Parks** (National Park Service, August 31) The proposal would restrict use of e-motos with this prohibition: *"Except where use of motor vehicles by the public is allowed, using the electric motor exclusively to move an electric bicycle for an extended period of time."* Comments on the **proposed rule** must be submitted by November 2.
- **E-scooter hospital visits nearly doubled in 2 years, new Howard study says** (WUSA, September 28) *"Researchers found the average age of juvenile riders was around 12 years old."*
- **Big Views. Bigger Rewards** (post on Go Hike Virginia, September 24) Check out "8 Super Short Hikes with Seriously Good Views" in Virginia.
- Leesylvania State Park **Fall Festival** on October 24 will include *"hayrides, crafts, trunk or treat, vendors, and more."* Check out the trails as the leaves change colors.
- Heather Barrar has been appointed to serve as Virginia's first-ever **Director of Outdoor Recreation**, with responsibility for coordinating with other state agencies *"to ensure outdoor recreation is integrated into broader economic, tourism, public health and workforce strategies."* Locally, the Greater Prince William Trails Coalition is already focused on ensuring that health, transportation, recreation, and economic development agencies are aware of trails plans and the benefits of improving the bike/pedestrian infrastructure.
- **As E-Bikes and Scooters Surge on New York Streets, So Do Fatal Crashes** (New York Times, September 30) *"These are not unavoidable tragedies; they are preventable losses."*



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