



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

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To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

## Fairfax County Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee

April 12, 2023, 7:00 p.m.

Room 8, Fairfax County Government Center

12000 Government Center Pkwy

Fairfax, VA 22035

Website: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/trails>

Note Taker: Bob Cosgriff (Vice-chair)

### Members Present:

Ken Comer (At Large/Chair), Bob Cosgriff (Braddock District/Vice-Chair), Jim Klein (Mount Vernon District), Brooks Stephens (Providence District), Lydia Lawrence (Dranesville District), Erin Parlan (Franconia District), James Albright (Mason District), Tyler Schleifelbein (Springfield), Howard Albers (Washington Area Bicyclists Association), Shawn Newman (Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling), Katherine McDaniel (Clifton Horse Society)

### Members Absent:

Karen Ampeh (Sully District), Beth Iannetta (Fairfax County Park Authority), Alex Rough (Hunter Mill District), Mark Tipton (Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Association), Soledad Portilla (Northern Virginia Builder's Industry Association), Diane Monnig (Fairfax Area Disability Services Board), Mike DePue (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority),

**Others in Attendance:** Nicole Wynands (FCDOT), Jai Cole, Executive Director, FCPA, Brendon Hanafin (FCPA), Tom McFarland (FCPA), Bill Niedringhaus (Fairfax Trails and Streams), Karen Jones (Fairfax Trails and Streams), Jackie Alvarez, Antonio Alvarez

**Call to Order:** Ken Comer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**Presentation:** Ms. Jai Cole, Executive Director of the Fairfax County Park Authority gave a presentation focused on parkland trails. She outlined the many benefits that parks and trails provide: creating a sense of space, contributing to equity goals, improving health, and fighting climate change. Currently, there are 420 parks in the county: highly-developed parks with recreation centers at District Parks, parks with playing fields and other recreational amenities, parks with nature centers and land set aside for environmental protection, stream valley parks, and undeveloped parkland. Many parks have Master Plans, others do not. There are currently 334 miles of trails on FCPA property.

The Park Authority has developed a new program to develop data to inform decision-making on where, when, and what kind of parks to develop in the future, as well as to possibly upgrade existing parks. This program is PROSA (Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Access). It aims at identifying gaps in the goal of having no citizen more than a 10-minute walk from a park,

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determining what a ‘complete park’ experience would be for each type of park (current and future), identifying and analyzing habitat connectivity between environmental corridors, and finally, analyzing and prioritizing findings of needs assessment through an equity lens in consonance with One Fairfax policy and goals. Basically, PROSA will identify “opportunity areas” for creating new parks or improving current parks and will provide critical data for the 2026 FCPA bond issue.

Ms. Cole used the analogy of playing fields: they are not all alike due to the different types of sports played on them. Trails are also not all alike. Some might serve hikers/bikers/horse, some only hikers and bikers, and some only hikers. Whether natural surface or hard surface (paved), all trails need to be properly built, sustainable, safe, and accessible to all users regardless of age or abilities. The cost of any given trail depends on the type of use (therefore the surface) and its overall length, plus any engineering or environmental issues that might need to be addressed.

Other park trail issues are mid-block crossings of roads traversing park trails, fallen or dangerous tree removal, maintenance (repaving, regrading, etc.), the need for proper stream crossings, and consideration of environmental factors (e.g., avoiding forest fragmentation or removing tree canopy, thus opening the park up to invasive species of vegetation).

The Park Authority is currently in the process of interviewing candidates for a full time senior Trail Planner. There are also other positions (trail construction, maintenance, and forestry) which need to be created, funded, and filled via the annual County budget process.

Going forward, the Park Authority will focus on trailheads (ensuring that there are ways for users to safely enter the park when arriving by foot via other connecting trails or sidewalks), new trail amenities (e.g., better wayfinding signage, bike fix-it stations, blazes to mark trails, trail maps at trailheads), and trailer user counters, as well as identifying ways to improve trail safety, for example the placement of bollards.

Following the presentation, there was a lengthy Q&A session.

**Citizen Inputs/Comments:** Bill Niedringhaus (FT&S) asked about the hiring timeline for the new Trail Planner.

**Staff Report:** (Nicole Wynands, FCDOT) provided the schedule for the VDOT briefings to each district supervisor on the 2023 paving plan. She also confirmed that Andrew Sheldon, the new FCPS Safe Routes to School Coordinator was confirmed to be the speaker at the May meeting.

**Other Business:** Due to the length of time of the presentation and the subsequent Q&A session, two items on the agenda were deferred until the May 2023 meeting: approval of the February and March minutes and a discussion of TSB priorities and metrics.

**Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.