

Fairfax County Trails and Sidewalks Committee
Minutes of the February 21st Meeting

Members and Staff Attending: Deborah Leser (Sully), Brent Reynolds (Braddock), Wade Smith (Dranesville), Bruce Wright (Hunter Mill), Robert Michie (Lee), Peter Christensen (Mount Vernon), Roger Diedrich (Providence), Mary Flowers (Clifton Horse Society), Dennis Frew (WABA), Dan Iglhaut (NVRPA), Gregory Galligan (At Large), Rebecca Cate (FCFCA), Liz Cronauer (on behalf of Jenny Pate, FCPA), Ann Pimley (Fairfax Area Disability Services Board), Chris Wells (FDOT), Sheng-Jieh Leu (DPZ)

Guests Attending: Kathy Smith, Vice Chairman of Fairfax County School Board; Janet Oleszek, School Board member At Large; Kathy Partlow, representing School Board members Kaye Koury and Tessi Wilson; Ken Campo, Safety Specialist, FCPS; Christine Stapp, Sleepy Hollow Elementary School PTA.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chairman Bruce Wright. Mr. Wright welcomed the guests from the Fairfax County Public Schools and briefly described the mission of the committee. The committee members introduced themselves to the guests.

Mr. Wright began the discussion by asking the members of the school board and their representatives to describe their thoughts about the need to encourage students to walk or bicycle to school. Issues presented included:

- Overcrowded buses resulting in more students walking.
- Sidewalk maintenance during inclement weather.
- Pathway maintenance including bridge construction.
- Safety and efficiency issues with Kiss and Ride.
- Lack of programs supporting walking and biking.
- Fairfax County's guidelines for walking are shorter distances than the state guidelines – 1 mile instead of 1 ½ mile for elementary schools and 1 ½ instead of 2 miles for high schools.
- Heavy backpacks and musical instruments make it hard for students to walk or bike.
- School safety officers attempt to encourage walk and bike by holding bike rallies, stranger danger programs and safety bees and the distribution of letters to families discouraging driving their children to school.
- Some schools have children bused even within the restricted distances if there are safety issues such as construction. It is difficult to remove the bus service once the conditions have changed and the area is now safe to walk.
- Mr. Ken Campo, Safety Specialist agreed to be a contact person for committee members. His email address is ken.campo@fcps.edu.

Trail and Sidewalk Committee members described the Safe Routes to School Program that is gaining momentum in the US. Louise Archer ES has begun the process and is making progress largely due to an excellent school based advocate. The school based advocate is an essential part of the program which also includes a sidewalk inventory, the

identification of suitable route, groups walking together and reeducation about the value of walking and biking instead of driving.

Suggestions from the Trails and Sidewalk Committee members to the School Board include:

- Supporting the Safe Routes to School Program
- Joining the committee in requesting an ordinance that would require owners of sidewalk frontage to clear sidewalks and pathways within the walking area.
- Encouraging HOA's to get on the email contact lists of their school district so that they can support walking and biking as well as sidewalk and pathway maintenance.
- Participating in International Walk to School Day.
- Ask the School Health Advisory Committee to support the Safe Routes to School Program and include encouraging students to walk and bike to school as a way of fighting obesity. Greg Galligan (At Large) is also a member of that committee and agreed to bring the issue up at their next meeting.
- School Communities need to know that they can approach their Trail and Sidewalk Committee member to let him or her know of missing links in sidewalks and pathways as well as for support of walking and biking programs.
- Set a policy to discourage the routine requests for waivers of sidewalk and trail construction as part of school capital projects.
- Provide support and incentives for teachers who encourage walking and biking to school
- Share information with the Trails and Sidewalks Committee such as numbers of students who are eligible to walk or bicycle.
- Support the production of videos to support the Safe Routes to School Program.

At 8:40 Mr. Wright thanked the school board members and their representatives for coming and expressed a hope that the committee members can continue to assist the school system to encourage students to walk and bicycle to school.

DPZ Staff Report – Sheng-Jieh Leu

Mr. Leu distributed to each committee members a disc containing the existing Trails Map. Committee members need to review the trails map of their districts and let Mr. Leu know about errors and additions so that the map can be updated.

Mr. Leu distributed the Monthly Projects Status Report and a report of the results of requested waivers. He also distributed the county policy on lobbying by staff and committee members.

Mr. Leu is in the process of becoming authorized to update the web page.

FDOT Staff Report – Chris Wells

Mr. Wells distributed the list of requested pedestrian projects for the 2007 Transportation Bond. The list goes to the Board of Supervisors on Monday. \$15 million dollars is allocated for pedestrian projects.

Mr. Wells reported that he is working with a task force on lighting pathways and crosswalks. Since no national standards exist, the county is working with experts from Virginia Tech to establish standards.

Report of the Chairman – Bruce Wright

Mr. Wright reminded Mr. Leu that the committee members wanted access to the maintenance maps that Katherine Moore mentioned in a previous meeting. Mr. Leu will investigate.

Mr. Wright has begun the annual report to the Board of Supervisors. He will distribute a draft to the committee members and asked for additions and comments.

The committee needs to be ready to testify at the budget hearings in April.

Election of the Chairman and Appointment of the Vice Chairman and Recorder

Dennis Frew nominated Brent Reynolds for Chairman of the committee. Wade Smith seconded the nomination. Mr. Reynolds was elected unanimously. He then appointed Wade Smith Vice Chairman and Deborah Leser to be Recorder.

New Business

Robert Michie described the Tour de Lee as a model for committee members to publicize the role and mission of the committee. He also asked committee members to come to the presentation. It will be on March 24 in the morning. He will send the link via email. Topics suggested for the presentation included: Safe Routes to School and pictures of the worst walkways.

Deborah Leser suggested that the committee send a letter to the school board thanking them for coming to the meeting and reiterating the requests made during the meeting. She will develop a draft and distribute it to the committee members via email for approval at the next meeting.

Bruce Wright told the committee members that the Tyson's Corner Work Shop will meet March 19th through the 21st and encouraged every committee member to attend a session.

There being no Old Business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:06 PM.

Deborah Rimmer Leser, Recorder