

Recommend transmission by email

Date

Bill Cuttler, P.E.
Northern Virginia District Engineer
Virginia Department of Transportation
4975 Alliance Dr, Fairfax, VA 22030

Subject: Invitation to attend the September 11, 2024 EQAC Meeting on Trees and Trash in the Fairfax County Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Right of Ways (ROW), especially in and near One Fairfax populations

Dear Mr. Cuttler,

The Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC), an advisory council to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, invites you to our September meeting. We would like to understand how VDOT addresses or could address tree planting and maintenance as well as trash removal within Fairfax County in the VDOT ROW. In addition to yourself, we understand that Lauren Mollerup and Shawn Faull should be helpful in this discussion and hope that you can invite them to join you for this discussion. We are also inviting the Directors of several county departments, including the Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, Department of Code Compliance and the Department of Health. We expect these county departments will share information that they have about trees and trash in the VDOT ROW.

The mission of EQAC is to advise the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on matters affecting the quality of the physical environment of the County. Aspects of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors' Environmental Vision relating to trees and trash are the following:

- "Achieve climate and energy benefits by implementing urban forest management policies and practices to increase tree canopy."
- "Fairfax County highly values water as an essential part of our ecosystem through protecting and restoring the natural environment, helping provide safe drinking water, and preserving the aesthetic and recreational opportunities these natural resources provide for county residents."

In addition, the One Fairfax Policy established the requirement for advisory boards including EQAC to consider equity issues in all matters.

On-going Issues of VDOT Trees and Trash:

The Fairfax County Office of Energy and the Environment has analyzed the impact of trees on current and future heat island impacts throughout the county. Tree cover needs to be increased to reduce health risk and improve the quality of life for One Fairfax populations impacted by heat islands. Separately, the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services has observed elevated levels of trash in streams from the VDOT ROW. This is a particular problem in low income areas.

Latest information and testimony provided to EQAC.

EQAC recently heard testimony on the issues of trees and trash in the VDOT ROW. At our September meeting, we ask that you address the issues described below. This testimony and other shared by EQAC members highlighted the following issues:

- VDOT practices result the loss of tree cover and limits tree plantings in existing VDOT ROW.
- VDOT does not adequately remove trash from VDOT ROW
- VDOT ROW trash issues are pronounced in low-income areas.

EQAC is planning to provide recommendations to the Board of Supervisors this year on how the Board could 1) employ county resources and 2) recommend legislation changes to address the trees and trash issues. As of this letter, the following potential recommendations to the Fairfax Board of Supervisors have been discussed.

- Ensuring the preservation and replacement of trees lost in VDOT project through the County VDOT project approval process.
- Reviewing the status of tree planting and preservation in all existing Fairfax County VDOT ROW and planting trees where feasible.
- Ensuring that trash in the VDOT ROW will be removed in a timely manner.
- Adopting a Total Maximum Daily Limit for trash and incorporate it into future VDOT DEQ stormwater permits.
- Adopting tree planning policies in the ROW to align with the Fairfax Board of Supervisors Environmental Vision and the County's Tree Canopy Goals.
- Facilitating volunteer tree planting where safety is not impaired.

Our hope is that by working together we can provide transportation in the County which better achieves the Environmental and One Fairfax goals of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.

EQAC also recognizes that VDOT is in the process of reviewing its landscaping policy. We ask that the policy conform with the Virginia's Stormwater guidance that was issued earlier this year and we request the opportunity to comment on the draft policy when it is drafted.

The September 11, 2024, 7:15 PM meeting will be held at the Government Center. Please let me know if you will attend.

Yours sincerely,

Larry Zaragoza, DEnv
EQAC Chair

Ok for email, if this is a letter, the name and organization should be provided

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