

# Active Transportation and Trails Plan – Quick Guide

PA-2025-CW-T1 (Active Fairfax Transportation Plan Study)

10-minute read



## Active Transportation

Active transportation is a technical term; all forms of non-motorized travel are part of active transportation (e.g., recreational purposes, utilitarian purposes). This includes electric micromobility vehicles, electric scooters, electric bikes or regular bikes, and others.

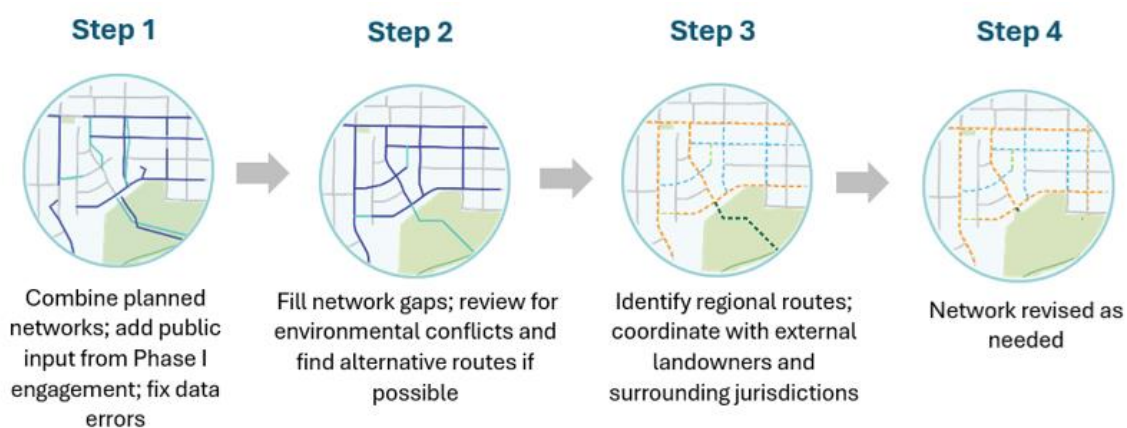
## Plan Amendment

Fairfax County is updating and consolidating the Bicycle Master Plan and the Countywide Trails Plan into a single, comprehensive document titled the Active Transportation and Trails Plan. The Transportation Element of the Policy Plan must be revised to ensure consistency with the proposed Plan. This includes aligning definitions, bicycle and pedestrian recommendations, map notes, and references.

There are several existing plans with sometimes differing facility type guidance. It can be difficult to determine what type of active transportation facility should be implemented because there are sometimes two or three conflicting recommended facilities for each location. Furthermore, some facilities and design recommendations are outdated and no longer meet current best practices (e.g., federal and state standards), and there is a lack of countywide pedestrian specific recommendations. Amendments to Special Area Plans and other elements of the Comprehensive Plan may be necessary to reflect updated references and maintain internal consistency across planning documents.

## Map Development Process

The first step of the process was to merge and consolidate the recommendations in the adopted plans. Next, to incorporate modern facility types for easier identification and provide flexibility, different facilities offer the same level of comfort for all ages and abilities.



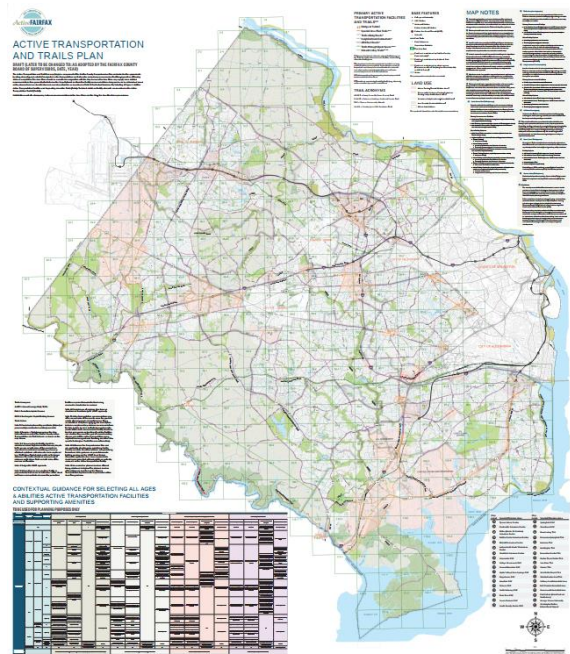
Finally, the data was cleaned up, gaps filled in, and the network was reviewed for accuracy and to make sure it was concise. The map development process included coordinating with land owners, parks, and surrounding jurisdictions to ensure the network lines up seamlessly.

### *Active Transportation and Trails Plan Map*

The [Active Transportation and Trails Plan Map](#) includes the Map Notes and Contextual Guidance for Selecting All Ages & Abilities Active Transportation Facilities and Supporting Amenities Table (Table); it is supported by the [ActiveFairfax Active Transportation Toolkit](#). The map is visionary; there is no explicit differentiation of existing facilities from planned facilities. These recommendations are intended to provide convenient and comfortable active transportation connectivity to support both utilitarian and recreational trips. The recommendations are priority based and not currently funded; project prioritization will be needed at such time as funding becomes available.

The map indicates the approximate location, character, and extent of designed active transportation and trail routes and primary recommended facilities, regardless of funding status or completion. The text encourages consultation of the Area Plans for key regional and local active transportation routes and indicates optional or alternate facilities recommendations can be determined based on the planned land use classification and road characteristics as described in the Table.

Several **Base Features** are provided for situational awareness when interpreting the map, as well as a recommendation to refer to park-specific matter plans for more details regarding planned facilities on parkland. The **Land Use** is based on the Concept for Future Development map and informs facilities listed



in the facility selection table. The **Special Planning Areas** are numbered; plans may specify different or additional active transportation facilities. **Primary Active Transportation Facilities and Trails** designate trails by location. There are different line thicknesses for regional or local routes. Further is provided in the **Table** for all roads including those with specific trails (**orange, purple**), and other roads (**gray**). The footnotes further guide the interpretation including facility type and specific guidance.

The **Map Notes** indicate minimum requirements (e.g., 6 ft wide sidewalk) and further references to more specific guidance (e.g., VDOT IIM-TOD-400). Primary recommendations for bike and trail facilities (e.g., two-way bike facility) and disclaimers (e.g., owned and/or

maintained by Park Authority<sup>1</sup>) are also included. The **Table** provides contextual guidance for selecting facilities and supporting amenities (e.g., lighting, streetscaping).

#### *How to use the Table*

For facility selection for a specific road, you will need to know the average traffic volume, speed limit and number of travel lanes, as well as the applicable land use context. Once the applicable row is identified, the Table provides recommendations for each side of the road, road crossings and buffer width. In most cases there are multiple applicable facility options to provide some flexibility to consider available space, expected facility usage, and the type and/or location of existing facilities.

Finally, the **Table Notes** provide additional facility selection and design guidance. The Table Notes point back to the overall network as shown on the Map in Note 2.

#### *Process for Determining the Recommended Facility*

##### **Step 1: Determine Trail Type.**

- Special Area Plan Trails (**orange**)
- Trails along Roads (**purple**)
- Neighborhood Connector (**blue**)
- All Other Roads (**gray**)
- Open Space Trails (**green**)<sup>1</sup>
- Stream Valley Trails (**brown**)<sup>1</sup>

If there is a **Special Area Plan Trail (orange)**, see applicable Special Area plan for detailed recommendations (For ease, Special Area plans are numbered on the map). Occasionally the Special Area plan will refer to the ATT plan. Once you have determined the **Trail Type**, move onto the next step.

**Step 2: Determine Land Use Context.** Applicable land use context(s) should be based on the most recent [Concept for Future Development Map](#). For ease, the Concept for Future Development Map is provided as part of the base features of the Active Transportation and Trails Plan Map.

- Urban Center, Transit Station Area
- Community Business Center, Suburban Center, Large Institutional Area
- Suburban Neighborhood, Industrial Area
- Low Density Residential

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<sup>1</sup> The development of all facilities that are to be owned and/or maintained by the Park Authority, or which are to be built on land owned and/or to be dedicated to the Park Authority, is guided by the FCPA Park Authority Board decision-making and established planning process.

**Step 3: Identify Speed Limit.** Speed Limits can be identified in the field using posted signs or by desktop using [VDOT's Speed Limit Map](#)

- 25 mph (or less)
- 25 – 30 mph
- Above 30 mph

**Step 4: Determine if the facility is Regional or Local.** Regional facilities are identified by bold dotted lines and should be determined within the context of the active transportation and trails network. Local facilities are identified by un-bolded dashed lines and should be determined within the context of the corridor.

- Regional Trail
- Local Trail

**Step 5: Use Map Notes to determine the recommended Trail Network Facility.** For Special Area Plan Trails (**orange**), Trails along Roads (**purple**), Neighborhood Connectors (**blue**), and All Other Roads (**gray**), use Map Note 6, and information from Steps 2 – 4, determine the primary and optional recommended facilities. For Open Space Trails (**green**) or Stream Valley Trails (**brown**), use Map Note 7 and guidance from the Fairfax County Park Authority Trail Coordinator.

**Step 6: Identify Future Traffic Volume.** The Fairfax County and Regional Travel Demand Model should be used to predict future volumes. Current [VDOT Bidirectional Traffic Volume](#) may be used as a proxy if little growth is expected or within the median of the following daily traffic ranges:

- 0 to 1,000 vehicles per day
- 1,000 to 3,000 vehicles per day
- 3,000 to 6,000 vehicles per day
- 6,000 to 15,000 vehicles per day
- 15,000 vehicles per day and higher

**Step 7: Identify number of travel lanes.** Use current or planned number of travel lanes, whichever is higher. The planned number of travel lanes is depicted on the [Transportation Plan Map](#).

- 2 – without centerline; no curb and gutter preferred
- 2 – with centerline
- 4
- 6+

**Step 8: Determine Minimum Facilities for Both Sides of Road.** Use the Contextual Guidance for Selecting All Ages Abilities Active Transportation Facilities and Supporting Amenities Table and the information from Steps 2, 3, 6, and 7:

- A. The Table lists recommended facilities for both sides of the roadway, buffer/landscape/amenity panel and recommended crosswalk treatments. In some cases, there are multiple facility type recommendations. These are identified as Options a), b), c), etc. Each Option includes minimum complementary recommendations for Side A, Side B, and a buffer/landscape/amenity panel.

For example, the recommendations for a 15k and higher, all speed limits, 6-lane roadway in a Suburban Center include:

- On Side A: a) 8+ft Two-Way Cycle Track with 6+ft Sidewalk or b)10+ft Urban Trail.
- On Side B: a) 8+ft Two-Way Cycle Track with 6+ft Sidewalk or b)10+ft Urban Trail.
- Buffer recommendations include:
  - a) Off Street: 8ft Landscaping and Amenity Panel between Curb and Cycletrack, vertical or detectable separation between Cycletrack and Sidewalk; On Street: 3+ ft Buffer with Deflective Vertical Barrier between Travel Lane and Cycletrack + 8 ft Landscaping Panel between Curb and Sidewalk OR 3 ft Buffer between Parking Lane and Cycletrack + 8 ft Landscaping and Amenity Panel between Curb and Sidewalk.
  - b) 8 ft Landscaping Panel
- Recommended Crosswalk Treatment is: Marked Every 1,000 ft or Less, Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) or Signal.

- B. The Notes identified in the “Number of Travel Lanes” column recommends interim condition facilities.
- C. The bottom of the table includes Landscape/Amenity Panel Design Details associated with the land use context.
- D. The Policy Plan calls for sidewalks on both sides of the road and Map Note 1 indicates those facilities should be a minimum of 6-feet wide.

**Step 9: Reconcile and Select:** Occasionally the recommendations in the Table (Step 8) and the Map Notes (Step 5) differ. If the Table recommendations (Step 8) provide a higher pedestrian/ bicyclist level of comfort,<sup>2</sup> the Table recommendations prevail. Otherwise, for network (if a Regional Trail) or corridor (if a Local Trail) consistency, the Map Note recommendations (Step 5) prevail, with consideration for transitions between facility types. Considerations of transitions along a corridor between facility types should inform the selected facility type.

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<sup>2</sup> As referenced in the [ActiveFairfax Active Transportation Toolkit](#) in Appendix B: Guidance on Pedestrian Level of Comfort and/or Appendix C: Guidance on Bicycle Level of Comfort.