

Fairfax County Trails, Sidewalks, and Bikeways Committee
Meeting Notes
Regular Meeting - December 12, 218

Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035
Conference Room 8

Web site: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/trails>

Note taker: Karen Ampeh (Sully)

Committee Members in Attendance: Representative At-Large and Chair Ken Comer, Robert Cosgriff (Braddock), Jim Klein (Mt. Vernon), James Albright (Mason), Karl Liebert (Springfield), Karen Ampeh (Sully), Soledad Portilla (Northern Virginia Builder's Industry Association) Tom McFarland (Fairfax County Park Authority)

Committee Members Absent: Jeff Anderson (Hunter Mill), Robert Michie (Lee), Wade Smith (Dranesville), Chester Freedenthal (Fairfax Area Disability Services Board), Anne Mader (Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling), Katie McDaniel (Clifton Horse Society), Dan Ilghaut (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority)), Mark Tipton (Fairfax County Federation of Citizen's Associations); WABA (new representative pending to replace Chris Maimone)

County Staff Present: Chris Wells (Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Manager, FCDOT) Nicole Wynands (Bicycle Program Manager)

Others in Attendance: Jehanne Arslan (Coalition to Replace Gabrielson Bridge), Sheila Dunheimer (Coalition to Replace Gabrielson Bridge), Howard Albers

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Representative At-Large and Chairman Ken Comer at 7:03pm

Approval of the Minutes

Committee minutes (November 2018) with edits were approved by acclamation. Edits included correcting attendance of Anne Mader who was not absent because she was not a committee member yet, fixed McKay's name and added Chris Maimone's last name.

Staff Report/Maintenance Discussion

Chris Wells (Committee Staff, VDOT) presented the staff report to the Committee.

Pilot of snow removal on trails plan: Meeting with BOS Transportation Committee reviewed issue of trails operations in winter and a pilot program to remove snow from two trails near the Metro Stations Springhill, Vesper Trail, and Franconia, Amberleigh/Berry Road Trail. Issues were raised about need for access to trails that are buried in snow and also the problem of trails and pathways sometimes being used to deposit snow from adjacent roadways.

Briefing on a presentation about Scooters options in Tysons and Reston: Stressed the issue of how different Fairfax is from other municipalities because the county roads are owned/regulated by the state (VDOT) and not the County. In Arlington and DC and other more urban areas, roads are controlled by the local government, so they can enter into legal agreements with scooter rental companies, but Fairfax cannot. Nevertheless, the county has some options for entering in some agreements with the Scooter companies. Scooters are taking off around the country in a very successful and popular way, sometimes providing a faster and cheaper alternative than Uber in traffic congested areas. Laws determine what scooter are and what users can do with them. Scooters are not safe. Lyft and Uber have gotten into the Scooter business. The County is looking for a position on Scooter companies. Capitol Bikeshare bikes are relatively safe and have been designed to be as safe as possible. Scooters raise a lot of questions about safety. The maintenance and condition of the scooters can be problematic, if the single brake fails there is no backup brake. County could issue guidelines, such as “Wear Helmet, Slow Down”

Chair Ken Comer asked Chris Wells for staff report on the Braddock Road Pedestrian Bridges crossings. He stated there are three options in previous plan: 1. Kings Park, 2. Stonehaven, 3. Wakefield Chapel. The problem is that the bridge should not be at the same crossing where there is a crosswalk and it looks like that is the current plan. Asked Chris to include in next report if the new bridge will replace a crosswalk or just be next to a crosswalk? Discussion of the project included types of crosswalks that were options for this project: HAWK, wig-wags, etc.

Nicole Wynands reported about Capitol Bikeshare locations and the need to relocate Merrifield station. Four alternative sites were being considered. There is a new location planned at the McLean station. There is a delivery pending of new Bikes from China.

Brainstorming Trails Maintenance Issues

Ken Comer introduced topic of ways to progress Maintenance of Trails, thinking collaboratively with citizens and government agencies, review of recent efforts and status. Chris Wells reported that there was the 2013 Assessment Public Works Study on Maintenance of Trails. The Dept of Public Works Maintenance and Storm Water Division has a large role in trail maintenance. In recent years, there has been a few million dollars annually available for Trail Maintenance and the county has been doing a lot with it. There are approximately 600 miles of Trails in the County that the County has responsibility for, while there are 9,000 miles of VDOT trails that the State has responsibility for. The Fairfax County Trail and the PW County Trail have been paved by VDOT. Ken Comer asked how citizens can insert themselves into the maintenance of trails issue. Nicole clarified that for the government agencies there are two separate areas of Trail Maintenance and one is called “operations”, which is routine upkeep of the trails and the other is called “maintenance” but is really about construction or reconstruction of new or rebuilding requirements, such as paving. Staff reported there has not been a new or updated Trail maintenance assessment since 2013 or any request for a new presentation on the topic. Tom, of FCPA reported that FCPA does not have a formal process but that area managers know where the Trail problems are in their areas, so they help allocate available resources to those areas.

VDOT now has a [mechanism](#) to report Trail issues on it' Website

www.my.vdot.virginia.gov/ I need to report an issue on a sidewalk, or pedestrian or bicycle path

Chris reported that “Walkable, Bikeable Fairfax” is our economic development strategy. “Maintain the Network” first and plan expansion/ improvement next

Nicole explained that old trails are sometimes at risk because they have smaller buffer than is required of new trails.

Chair Comer introduced topic of public/private partnerships for maintenance of trails, both routine (Operations) and reconstructive (after destructive incidents or end of expected lifespan). Nicole offered in many jurisdictions it is the responsibility of adjacent property owners to maintain public trails, but this is not the case in Fairfax. Some owners do this in Fairfax, but they are not obligated to do so. Chris reported that we have the precedent of Reston Association, they already maintain their own trails, but they have an agreement with Fairfax to also maintain FFX county trails in Reston. Discussion included proposals of “Adopt a trail” programs similar to “Adopt a highway” Chris reported that the business groups in Fairfax Corner and Burke Center have these agreements with the county and they mow the grass on County Trails adjacent to their properties. Discussion ensued on how citizens could pursue similar arrangements and “Rails to Trails” conservancy was offered as an example of a group that knows how to pursue these arrangements. There are legal agreements that help provide gifts for maintenance. Often these are passed through “Foundations” instead of direct gifts to maintenance providers. Discussion included an option citizen may have to form a “Fairfax County Trails Foundation”

Chris reported that there is a need to update the Trails Maintenance Plan and that Storm Water Grants/Monies could be used for Trail Maintenance, we may be able to seek a presentation from “Storm Water” It was agreed we need a better “Road Map to Maintenance” for our Trails network, leading to a discussion about OP3, Volunteer Fairfax, and FCPA/private/public partnership options. It was agreed all such partners would welcome an influx of resources for trail Maintenance. It was noted that VDOT and DPW do not do “Trail Operations” (routine upkeep). FCPA does do “Trail Operations”

Chris Wells reported that the New Charter for TSB passed at BOS Meeting on November 20th. A minor change was made regarding Article 7 based on CA advice that some specificity was needed about inactive member procedures. Chris Wells will distribute Newly approved charter to all members by email and it will be posted to website.

Unfinished Business

Huntley Meadows Trails Deletion Plan Amendment

The Letter TSB signed for the BOS about Huntley Meadows was sent by Chris Wells on December 6th. There is a planning committee mtg scheduled for January 9th at 7:30 pm and a BOS mtg Jan 22. Committee members asked to have Chair Comer represent TSB at these meetings and present our position on the Huntley Meadows Plan Trail Removal Issue. Jim Klein

made a motion to support this and Karl Liebert seconded, motion passed unanimously with Tom Abstaining. Chair Comer agreed to go and present TSB's position.

Gabrielson Gardens Bridge Removal

Tom McFarland provided an update on the rescheduled Gabrielson Bridge meeting called by Supervisor Smith for Dec 13. Around 7:15 p.m. will start a formal presentation that will include opening remarks by Supervisor Smith. Staff will then provide a history of the bridge, and then discuss items such as existing conditions, concept design process, concept design process schedule, next steps, and funding contribution opportunities. After the presentation, there will be a Question and Answer session. It is anticipated that several Park Authority staff will be in attendance such as Dave Bowden, Cynthia McNeal, Paul Shirey, Tom McFarland, and Wayne Brissey. There will also be representatives from the County Attorney's office.

Two citizens representing the Coalition to Replace Gabrielson Bridge were asked to speak about the issue. Sheila Dunheimer, Co-Chair of the Coalition, informed committee that they had been trying to identify funds that could be used to rebuild the bridge, Discussion turned to the opportunity cost of rebuilding this bridge, does it mean another important bridge elsewhere will not get built? No. Funding could come from BOS, not transferred from other accounts specific to trail maintenance or FCPA.

Sheila expressed alarm that the BOS had not done any public advertising of the meeting and that the TSB's recommendation to pursue opportunities for public private partnerships to get the bridge rebuilt efficiently and expediently are not being sought. Tom reported the feasibility study contracted out to the consulting firm is just getting started and not nearly done.

The committee members expressed support for the replacement of the Gabrielson Bridge, as they had done in previous meetings. Sheila Dunheimer noted that advocacy for Trails is the TSB's responsibility and that there are some other Trail issues in the Hunters Valley Area where the rezoning and building of a senior living center is threatening the future access to existing Trails near a church. Staff explained that when trail waiver requests are submitted it is within the purview of the TSB to review those and impact, they may have on the Trail network.

Committee discussed having elevated overview toward trails stewardship on front end instead of an afterthought as it seemed to come up as an issue for TSB only now after the bridge was destroyed. The County Wide Trails Plan was discussed as including all those trails specifically in the purview of the TSB, but the Gabrielson Bridge was possibly not part of that plan. Tom McFarland later shared the detail of the County Wide Trails plan confirming the Gabrielson Bridge is part of the existing Trails network identified in the County Wide Trails plan. Discussion by committee members noted that maintenance of the existing Trail network should be a higher priority than expanding the network with new trails.

Some discussion ensued as to how the Bridge could be constructed after the plan and funding were determined, RFP process. Further discussion on hold for meeting on Dec 13.

Update on the Board Transportation Priorities Plan

Chris provided update on the Board Transportation Priorities Plan. There will be informational public meetings in each magisterial district from Jan to March regarding the restriping proposal. Today there was a meeting with VDOT over some errors in a restriping job because the approved plans were not available at the job site.

I-66 OTB Trail – No Update

Future Presentation: Request for a report on pedestrian Accidents from Police department is still pending. Also noted to schedule presentation from Bill Niedringhaus of Potomac Trails as agreed previously.

Committee Web Site is ongoing, will reflect new name soon and include Charter. Also, will include date (Second Wednesday of Month) and Time (7:00pm) for our meetings.

Volunteer Trail Maintenance Program will be absorbed in the part of Volunteer Fairfax Foundation

New Business: None

Klein moved to adjourn

Cosgriff seconded

Chair adjourned meeting at 9:45 p.m.