

Fairfax County Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2021 at 7 p.m.

Location: Remote Meeting via Cisco Webex Video Teleconferencing

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

Committee Members in Attendance:

Ken Comer (At-Large / Chair), Bob Cosgriff (Braddock/ Vice-Chair), Wade H.B. Smith (Dranesville), Alex Rough (Hunter Mill), Dyami Pipkin (Lee), James Albright (Mason), Jim Klein (Mount Vernon), Stiven Foster (Providence), Karl Liebert (Springfield), Karen Ampeh (Sully District), Kathryn McDaniel (Clifton Horse Society), Debby Cohen (Fairfax Area Disability Services Board), Shawn Newman (Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling), Mark Tipton (Fairfax Council of Community Associations), Beth Iannetta (Fairfax County Park Authority), Soledad Portillo (Northern Virginia Builders Association), Andrea Reese (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority), Howard Albers (Washington Area Bicyclists Association)

Committee Members Absent: None

Others in attendance: Nicole Wynands (FCDOT), David Loss (FCDOT), Sam Aparicio (Sully District resident), Sheila Dunheim (Co-Chair Coalition to Replace Gabrielson Bridge)

Call to Order: This remote meeting, the tenth since Governor Northam's State of Emergency declaration of 12 March 2020 prohibited all in-person gatherings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was called to order by Ken Comer (Chair) at 7:00 p.m. This is the fifth remote meeting using Cisco Webex video conferencing. Mr. Comer then read the recitals required under Virginia Code § 15.2-1413, the uncodified Fairfax County Board of Supervisors emergency ordinance adopted on 14 April, 2020, and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (Virginia Code §§ 2.2-3700 to -3714) pertaining to meetings that must be conducted remotely during a declared State of Emergency as being essential to the continuity of government. As required by the legal guidance, Mr. Comer introduced a motion, which was seconded, that this meeting is required for conducting an essential governmental function and must be conducted remotely. He requested that the motion be approved by acclamation and hearing no objections, declared the motion approved. Mr. Comer next conducted a roll call to determine which members, staff, and other participants were in attendance and that every member, staff, and other participants could hear every other attendee clearly. Following this roll call and determining that a quorum was reached, Mr. Comer moved that the committee confirm that every participant could hear every other participant clearly. The motion was seconded; Mr. Comer called for approval by acclamation and hearing no objections, declared the motion approved.

Agenda Items & Discussion Topics:

ActiveFairfax Plan Discussion: Nicole Wynands, FCDOT, gave an update on the project including Phase I project milestones, community engagement, advisory group meetings, and funding status. Phase I is anticipated to be complete by June 2021. Phase 2 is still awaiting a defined funding source and may need to be broken up into smaller phases to keep progress moving until funding can be obtained. Mr. Albright provided insight and observations on the virtual tools being utilized for the project. Mr. Newman noted some issues with the mapping and asked for additional information on the funding. Mr. Foster noted an upcoming GMU/FABB co-sponsored event as an opportunity for dialogue on this project. He commented that what he has seen so far has been great. Mr. Comer noted a concern over the state of the plan and potential weak spots that can be addressed.

TSB members participated in a shortened visioning exercise to demonstrate the various perspectives from trail users and how trails are perceived in the county.

Draft Capital Trails Coalition (CTC) Network Map: FCDOT staff has refined the proposed changes to the CTC Network within Fairfax County. Staff shared the latest version of the map with TSB members through the virtual meeting platform. The proposed trails on Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) property were removed over the discrepancy between the design criteria for the CTC network and the typical trail standards for FCPA trails. Mr. Smith inquired about the definition of a regional trail. Ms. Wynands explained that the proposed additions connect activity centers and destinations. Mr. Newman asked for an explanation of the purpose of this map. Mr. Albers asked about the inclusion of the Cross County Trail (CCT), however most of the northern section of the CCT does not meet the CTC trail criteria. He commented that the Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA) and the Rails to Trails Conservancy will utilize the CTC network of trails in upcoming projects and reports as a resource for the area. Mr. Klein inquired about the inclusion of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST). Mr. Foster noted an error in the I-495/ Route 50 interchange. He recommended they correct what has been depicted as a trail will not go through that intersection as indicated on the map. Mr. Newman commented it was a good interim map. Ms. Wynands noted that CTC staff has indicated in writing that they would be flexible regarding the trail criteria. FCDOT staff requested that TSB members review the map and send any revisions to her.

Staff Report:

- VDOT 2021 Repaving Community Meetings – Nine (9) meetings have been scheduled. The date and times for the virtual meetings have been posted on FCDOT’s website/ Mr. Newman noted his concern on some of the roads selected for bicycle lanes, specifically Commonwealth Boulevard. Mr. Comer had similar safety concerns. Mr. Tipton requested that VDOT make crosswalks more visible.

Citizen Comment / Question & Answer Period:

- Sam Aparicio., a resident from the Sully District, commented that he applauded the ActiveFairfax effort in asking the public for real trail priorities and seemingly what they want is more trails, safer crossings, and connections to parks. He hoped the crowdsourcing effort can live beyond this project. He commented on the benefits of leisurely enjoying nature and

his thoughts on over asphaltting natural areas. He felt the past year gave people a chance to escape into nature and spend more time outdoors. He encouraged people to visit a new park, as he has tried to do with his family. He noted challenges with trails and the fragmented system with many barriers, access to accurate data, too much asphalt being proposed in forested areas and near streams. He felt trails are a great use of the money spent on them and encouraged more crossing points. Another major concern is the lack of access to private/HOA trails. He hoped the county can incentivize HOAs to open them up to the public.

- Sheila Dunheim, Co-Chair Coalition to Replace Gabrielson Bridge, asked to address the TSB committee to gain their support in her request for the Park Authority to rescind their decision to name the recently installed bridge over Difficult Run in honor of the Burnet family. She expressed her appreciation for FCPA's effort in designing and constructing the bridge. She emailed the project manager a list of recommendations for improvements for projects in the future and insights on lessons learned. However, she felt the public was blindsided by the naming process and the decision by the Park Authority Board. She has sent emails to the Park Authority and Board of Supervisors (BOS), including resolutions from both the Hunters Valley Association Executive Board, the Sully District Council of Citizens Associations, and the West Fairfax County Citizens Association Joint Sully District Land Use and Transportation Committee. She felt the Park Authority Board did not have the authority to "rename" the bridge since they had never had it named previously, and since they do not own the 2018 quitclaim from David Wickens to the BOS that is the easement for the access path.

She requested that the TSB vote on a resolution supporting her request to rescind the name "Burnet Bridge", that the BOS transfer the bridge and outlet road to Gabrielson Gardens Park and that they place the Gabrielson Garden Park on their work program and prioritize focus on it with funds and efforts to try and save Dr. Gabrielson's house that has been left idle and is deteriorating. Mr. Comer commented he was shocked to learn of the Park Board's action. Mr. Albers commented that it doesn't seem like the public was notified. Mr. Smith stated it didn't seem like this is a TSB committee issue and that naming of facilities is out of the committee's responsibilities. Mr. Cosgriff agreed with Mr. Smith. He added that the committee advises the BOS and not the Park Board. He felt the ownership questions should be directed to the County Attorney's Office. After more discussion a motion was made for the committee's consideration.

Motion to Approve: Mr. Comer made a motion for the authorization of a letter to be sent to the Board of Supervisors concerning the naming process for the bridge over Difficult Run near Gabrielson Gardens Park without the full review of the committee beforehand. The motion, seconded by Mr. Foster, was approved (16-0-2 with Ms. Reese and Ms. Iannetta abstaining).

Active/Unresolved Issues:

- I-495 NEXT Trail Project Update: Mr. Smith inquired about a recent meeting with an HOA in the I-495 project corridor. FCDOT staff did not have any information regarding this question currently.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.