



I-66 Outside the Beltway Meeting Memo - December 7, 2018

A meeting of parties interested in the I-66 Outside the Beltway project with representatives of VDOT, FAM, EMP, Friends of Accotink Creek, Senator Dave Marsden, and Delegate Kay Kory (by conference call).

Philip Latasa (FACC):

Introduced the topic by noting about 5.1 miles of I-66 pass through the Accotink Creek watershed, crossing the headwaters of the creek and several tributary streams.

Explained the Friends of Accotink Creek are concerned at:

- The loss of tree cover and habitat that will result from the project
- The introduction of invasive species that are often planted in road construction
- The introduction of sediment into streams from eroding construction zones
- The loss of fish populations in streams within the project.
- The perpetuation of existing inadequate stormwater controls that erode and degrade streams.

Presented a series of photos illustrating concerns with the condition of the Accotink Creek tributary that flows in the 123 cloverleaf, citing the clearance of nearly all vegetative cover down to the banks and unstable condition of some channels.

<https://i66outsidethebeltwayaccotink.shutterfly.com/pictures/414>

Stated the wetland at Willow Crescent Drive is reminiscent of the natural spring at the edge of the 495 Express Lanes project that was first protected, then devastated, then given signage to “protect” its devastated state. We need to ensure that the Willow Crescent wetland is preserved.

Asked the questions:

- Can the remaining vegetated area in the southwest quadrant be at least partially spared?
- Can we begin revegetating now in spots along the banks?
- Are any measures envisioned to protect fish during construction?
- Will culverts be designed to facilitate fish passage?
- What advanced features will be incorporated into the stormwater detention ponds.

Requested that only plant species native to the region be planted, and that in particular, no Chinese lespedeza and no Kousa dogwood be used in replanting. Noted Kousa dogwood is responsible for bringing the plague that has devastated native dogwoods. Requested that FACC be involved in plant selection.

Requested consideration of daylighting Hunter Branch, which currently flows under the Nutley Street cloverleaf in a storm drain.

Requested consideration of accommodation of fish passage through culverts, even where not mandated.

Senator Dave Marsden:

Stated he would love to see the project periodically involve legislators and Friends of Accotink Creek

Inquired if a portion of a \$500 million fund is available up front for flexibility in environmental protections.

Mentioned his collaboration with Potomac Riverkeepers in Alexandria on wastewater discharge and in the Shenandoah Valley, where only 20% of streams are fenced from cattle. He advised to avoid getting on the Riverkeepers' radar.

Encouraged seeking the nexus of overlapping interests while ensuring we're doing everything we can.

Proposed meeting to inspect the project in April, and regular onsite meetings once or twice a year to evaluate the project.

Susan Shaw (VDOT):

Advised the \$500 million is fully committed elsewhere for transit options.

Explained VDOT is working with Fairfax County Stormwater Management to optimize stormwater control features outside the VDOT right of way.

Made clear that most vegetated areas outside cloverleaves will be sacrificed for soundwall-to-soundwall paving.

Noted plans for the Nutley Street interchange are in transition from the current double diamond design to a "dog bone" featuring two traffic circles. Public meetings will introduce the concept.

Sandy Collins (FACC):

Confirmed Friends of Accotink Creek observations of the project will be ongoing.

Kris Unger (FACC):

Requested meeting with VDOT and partners to discuss permanent stabilization/landscaping plan once it has been developed.

Francisco Metcalf (FAM):

Explained orange fencing is for "jurisdictional resources" i.e., waters of the United States defined by the Corps of Engineers. The eastern branch of the tributary in the 123 cloverleaf is not jurisdictional waters.

Noted that from original plans, impact has been reduced from 24000 linear stream feet to 6600 and from 26.87 wetland acres to 4.2. The wetland at Willow Crescent Drive may not be preserved, VDOT does not have the permit from the US Army Corps (implying that is why it is currently behind the orange construction fence).

Confirmed new culverts are required to be designed for fish passage, but the requirement does not apply to modification of existing culverts.

Anticipate receiving the Section 404 permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers by April 2019.

Ivan Saer (FAM):

Indicated the remaining wooded area within the 123 cloverleaf has only been temporarily left uncleared.

Susan Shaw asked that they re-examine the staging requirements in that area and see whether they can leave the remaining woodland intact.

Bruce Barnett (VDOT):

Explained stormwater ponds will be designed for level 2 bioretention. Some ponds will be wet and some dry. It is too early to say the extent of vegetation vs. mowing in dry ponds.

Asides:

Senator Marsden discussed his efforts to provide highway incident pullover locations and signage.

Several attendees mentioned favorite traffic circles pros and cons. Senator Marsden cited the positive example of new traffic circles in Loudon County.

Philip Latasa asked why the Barta Road interchange of the Fairfax County Parkway extension was never replanted.

Conclusions:

- We will meet in April to review and inspect the project.
- The project partners will examine possibilities for:
 - Protection of the remaining wooded area,
 - Conserving fish populations,
 - Accelerated revegetation along streams,
 - Daylighting Hunter Branch in the Nutley Street interchange

Friends of Accotink Creek

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