

May 24, 2021

Recommendations submitted by

Catherine Ledec

2020: Sally Ormsby Environmental Leadership Award, Fairfax County Park Authority;  
2019: Environmental Excellence Award-Individual, Fairfax County, VA; 2018 Fairfax  
County Citizen of the Year, Fairfax Federation of Citizens' Associations, Fairfax County,  
VA

These comments were also sent to

DOTinfo@fairfaxcounty.gov in the event of a delivery error from the project's web page  
and to be sure they are received at Fairfax County DOT for action. Also to Supervisor  
Storck and Supervisor Lusk.

1. Cinder Bed Road Bikeway

May 10, 2021 public meeting - Cinder Bed Road Bikeway: A paved, lighted trail through  
the floodplain, including a rare magnolia bog.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/projects/cinder-bed-road-bikeway>

2. Frontier Road Extension:

May 17, 2021 public meeting - Frontier Road Extension: A new crossing of Long  
Branch south where an alternative exists.

[https://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northern\\_virginia/frontier\\_drive\\_extension-  
virtual\\_public\\_information\\_meeting.asp?fbclid=IwAR2swQdhvuF7UThwA5intRINaz8wV  
owmDQyefYMwl1uC2f1TJilrcprRXGY](https://www.virginiadot.org/projects/northern_virginia/frontier_drive_extension-virtual_public_information_meeting.asp?fbclid=IwAR2swQdhvuF7UThwA5intRINaz8wVowmDQyefYMwl1uC2f1TJilrcprRXGY)

I strongly oppose these projects in their current form. I very much hope for a  
redesigned project that preserves our scarce and limited natural resources and shows a  
more environmentally responsible use of scarce taxpayer funds.

**Here we go again. It's like the movie Ground Hog Day.**

PLAY.....REPEAT and PLAY with the same playbook with no changes, nothing  
learned, no new knowledge used to inform decision-making and, wasteful spending of  
scarce county resources, nothing new – same old project implementation practices.

**It is clear that Fairfax County ( FC ) including FC Department of Transportation  
staff, VDOT, Bicycle Advocates, other County and VDOT staff have learned  
NOTHING from previous experiences.**

I very much support improved Bicycle transportation...but any related infrastructure  
including paved and lighted trails must be in the right place.

Here we are at the same place where we were with the Huntley Meadows Park proposed conceptual paved bicycle transportation corridors.

**Except that here County Staff have moved ahead to wastefully spend scarce county funds.**

**These projects should never have moved forward into the design phase until the project locations were relocated so as to NOT permanently destroy sensitive natural habitats including wetlands and a rare magnolia bog habitat.**

I would have expected some learning to have occurred from the recent experience of removing from the County's Plans (including the Bicycle Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan) the conceptual paved bike transportation corridors through Huntley Meadows Park (HMP).

**These two projects are evidence that this learning has not yet happened.**

**So here we are again.**

**I expect a high level of service for my tax dollars and I am disappointed that we, and residents of Fairfax County, are not getting good quality research, planning and design, or knowledgeable and informed staff recommendations on these transportation projects**

Please let me remind all of you of the following:

**The 2014 Bicycle Master Plan is significantly flawed.**

An appropriately qualified staff team or outside consulting team with expertise in environmental impact review of the proposed Bicycle Trails noted on the Bicycle Master Plan should have been done. This was not done and is resulting with this project that would cause the permanent destruction of unique natural resources when non-destructive alternatives exist.

*[As a side note: The Active Fairfax Transportation Plan should include this or there might well be delays in the approval process. Also members of the environmental community including NGOs should be represented in the plan's Advisory Committee and should be specifically included in any focus groups. ]*

Fairfax County residents deserve an appropriately qualified team to protect our scarce and limited natural resources and a Bicycle Master Plan that protects those resources.

**Anything less is not consistent with the County's Environmental Vision that has been approved by the Board of Supervisors.**

How many more proposed trails are on the 2014 Bicycle Master Plan that will inappropriately destroy our scarce and limited natural resources – including natural ecosystems, mature trees, rare plant and animal species habitats, and historic resources?

WHEN WILL FAIRFAX COUNTY ACT SERIOUSLY TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE COUNTY'S SCARCE AND LIMITED NATURAL RESOURCES AND OUR ENVIRONMENT?

That's what I voted for.

The severe negative environmental impacts that would result from these projects is not what I voted for.

### **Bicycle Trails LOCATIONS TO BE AVOIDED IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES**

Paved (or unpaved) Bicycle Transportation corridors should **NEVER** be placed nor planned where there are locally (regionally or globally) sensitive natural habitats, or rare or threatened species habitats.

### **AVOID DIRECT IMPACTS on NATURAL RESOURCES:**

The direct impacts of these two paved and lighted trails are significant.

The direct impact is not just from the 8-9 foot wide paved path but it also includes the substructure needed to support the paved trail. The lighting impacts are not just on the trail itself but result from spillover lighting into the natural areas through which the paved trail will pass.

**This makes the direct adverse impact at least TWICE the width of the paved trail.**

### **SERIOUS ADVERSE WILDLIFE IMPACTS**

These trails are intended for bicycle commuting purposes. As such wildlife crossing the trail will be run over and killed by fast-moving moving bicycles (including electric bicycles and/or electric scooters). This includes reptiles and amphibians including turtles, salamanders, young birds and more.

There would be other significant indirect impacts, including increased pedestrian presence with many going off-trail disturbing natural habitats which will be immediately adjacent to both of these proposed trails.

Let's not forget about nesting birds or other mammals: they will be dead and will never return. Forget about wildlife that requires quiet solitude for survival. These species will be permanently eliminated from the area and resulting from the destruction of habitat.

## **HYDROLOGICAL DAMAGE**

Both of these trails are to be constructed like a dike or elevated berm, which will function like a dam and permanently change the hydrology of the area.

When constructed across or next to a wetland, stream, or, bog, the hydrology will be permanently changed, resulting the loss or degradation of the wetland, along with the disappearance of the many plants and animal species that depend on the wetland.

Has any appropriately qualified staff or consultant even studied the hydrology of the area? How does the water flow? Will the change to the hydrology result in increased flooding of nearby neighborhoods or the common area of a nearby homeowner's association? Are nearby neighbors accepting of this? Do you have their agreement to accept the increased flood risk in writing – this will likely impact the HOAs insurance premiums? What about the nearby HOA? Do you have their agreement in writing that they accept the increased flooding risk due to the change of hydrology? Can the HOAs stormwater management systems handle the significant changes in stormwater flows due to hydrological changes? Especially when considering the likely increased frequency and intensity of precipitation events?

## **ANOTHER FLAW IN THE BICYCLE MASTER PLAN**

Volunteers vetted the proposed bicycle trail locations noted in the 2014 Bicycle Master Plan.

No Environmental NGOs were include in the overarching Bicycle Advisory Committee. Public meetings held were inadequate to address the flaws in the bicycle master plan. The public meeting invitation lists excluded the impacted Fairfax County Park Authority park managers and staff, along with environmental NGOs.

No environmental review of the areas where bike trails (paved or not paved) are proposed in the 2014 Bicycle Master Plan was done.

Fairfax County residents deserve better than this.

### **Volunteers looked at some of the trail locations in the 2014 Bicycle Master Plan.**

These volunteers were not appropriately qualified to review a site for its hydrology or the presence of historic resources or natural resources, including threatened or otherwise sensitive natural habitat or species.

What is now the result of this? Proposing paved bicycle transportation corridors through sensitive natural habitats.

I recall that FC DOT actively participated in the details of the recommended removal of the conceptual paved bicycle transportation corridors through Huntley Meadows Park Property. I am very disappointed that FC DOT apparently did not learn from this experience.

## **ALL OF US HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Each of us, especially ALL Fairfax County Staff and our elected officials have a responsibility to support projects that protect our environment and natural resources. Environmentally responsible projects are needed to help protect us from the impacts of CLIMATE CHANGE and to enable a future with a healthy environment that supports us. Unfortunately, based on their misguided locations, these two bicycle trails are not examples of environmentally responsible projects.

### **NEED TO SUPPORT ALTERNATIVES:**

What alternatives to the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway and Frontier Road Extension projects have been considered? Alternatives are clearly needed to the currently proposed projects, which if built will result in the permanent destruction of sensitive natural resources.

(revised from project web page submission)

This proposed paved and lighted trail should be alongside the nearest already established roadway. Placing the trail on an existing roadway might even be less expensive to implement. In any case, it would save our scarce and limited natural resources from the permanent destruction that would result from the currently projects.

Implementing this alternative would also show Fairfax County residents that County Staff are being thoughtful about preserving and protecting our natural resources.

That is what Fairfax County residents deserve. Not this current set of projects.

I strongly oppose these projects in their current form. I very much hope for a redesigned project that preserves our scarce and limited natural resources and shows a more environmentally responsible use of scarce taxpayer funds.