

## REGARDING THE GEORGE SNYDER TRAIL – Comments of Friends of Accotink Creek

Testimony before City Council , October 24, 2023& via email

Mayor and City Council

I speak tonight representing the Friends of Accotink Creek. We ask again that the George Snyder Trail extension be paused and realigned away from woods and wetlands onto existing infrastructure.

An [analysis provided this week](#) by the Audubon Society of Northern Virginia puts the abstract engineering drawings and graphs of the George Snyder Trail extension into layman's terms. Our hearts sink at reading in that analysis the Panama Canal style cutting and filling and clearing needed to make this trail fit into the unsuited terrain.

Yet just yards away, the [Bike Fairfax City](#) plan provides for a parallel Neighborway on the welcoming, already graded, already paved, Cardinal Road.

It is a simple equation. The George Snyder Trail extension would provide a nice amenity for recreational bicyclists, but at what cost?

- The cost is too high in - Finances - The City would not have undertaken this engineering extravaganza if it had to pay with taxpayer funds. Now the cost estimates are already \$4 million over the budgeted "free" grant money.
- The cost is too high in - Environmental sacrifice - Tree City USA cannot replace the function of the riparian forests lost to construction and permanent asphalt. There is simply no City property that could conceivably be restored to an equivalent state.
- The cost is too high in - Setbacks to other important City goals - Tree canopy, stormwater control, and climate change, all of them negatively impacted by the sacrifice of riparian forest.

Rather than marginally improve theoretical access to Nature, let's instead devote our resources to exclude the very real intruders (in the form of invasive exotic species) that are denying access to native species and people alike by overtaking our limited natural habitat. Let's also instead expand access to alternatives for the desperate people whose refuge of last resort is to make their sad homes in these very same wooded areas.

Please pause and realign the George Snyder Trail onto existing infrastructure. Please do the same with all similar projects that would pave our woods and wetlands.



*"Of all the paths you take in life, make sure some of them are dirt." - John Muir*

## Testimony before City Council, October 10, 2023 & via email

Mayor and City Council,

I speak tonight representing the Friends of Accotink Creek. We ask again that the George Snyder Trail extension be paused and realigned away from woods and wetlands onto existing infrastructure.

Accessibility is offered as a motivation for the George Snyder Trail extension. Yet how much accessibility is enough? Accessibility to wooded areas has already been achieved in a number of City parks. Among these are the wooded trails in:

- Wilcoxon Park
- Thaiss Park
- Van Dyck Park
- Even the portion of the existing George Snyder Trail in the woods adjacent to the playing field.

Rather than sacrifice any more of our dwindling natural areas to pavement, let's instead expand accessibility to Nature by planting Nature along existing sidewalks. We might even begin now to implement the [Linear Park](#) concept of the Northfax Small Area Plan.

Right in the same vicinity as the George Snyder Trail extension, Eaton Place lacks continuous sidewalks and in many places also lacks wheelchair ramps. Shouldn't shortcomings like this be the first priority for accessibility here and throughout the City?

Just yards from the proposed route along the banks of Accotink Creek, the City is spending millions to rectify the erosion caused by excess runoff from paved surfaces. It is that erosion that compelled the City to impose the [Stormwater Utility Fee](#) on paved surfaces. Should the City expand its paved surfaces at the same time citizens are asked to pay additional tax for their own?

Throughout our parks we face the accessibility issue of thickets of rampant invasive exotic plant species, which deny access to everyone.

In considering the George Snyder Trail extension, we have to ask what is the cost – millions in cost to the City treasury above and beyond the grant funding, the perpetual cost of maintenance, the cost of setbacks to other important City goals such as stormwater control and climate change avoidance.

Not to mention we need to hang onto every carbon-sink tree we have at this critical time of climate change.

Please pause and realign the George Snyder Trail onto existing infrastructure. Please do the same with all similar projects that would pave our woods and wetlands.

**Testimony before City Council, September 26, 2023 & via email**

Mayor and City Council,

I speak tonight representing the Friends of Accotink Creek.

The George Snyder Trail extension as proposed would certainly be a nice trail and a pleasant recreational ride, but at what cost? What we want is not always what we need.

Accotink Creek is a neighbor and friend to all citizens of the City. On behalf of Accotink Creek and on behalf of the woods and wetlands that shelter and protect the creek, we ask the Council to pause and realign the Trail away from our limited remnants of those woods and wetlands and onto existing infrastructure.

Let's be inspired by the example of what has recently been done at the Vienna Metro for improved on-street bicycle facilities. Let's be inspired by this City's very own plans, such as [The Spine](#), the [Mason to Metro Route](#), and the [Blenheim Blvd Study](#) to weave safe and inviting non-motorized mobility into the fabric of the life of the City.



**New Bike lanes at Vienna Metro, Virginia Center Drive**

During a recent stream cleanup, I met a homeless individual who was familiar with the area proposed for the route of the George Snyder Trail. He exclaimed 'How can they build there? It's all marsh!' Indeed.

The sight of the tree sacrifice now underway by the County at Rt. 50 and Pickett Road should cause us to ask if what may be unavoidable along a transportation corridor is what is appropriate for our forests. Our woods are not improved by asphalt. Tree City USA need not add a black scar of tar to every remaining woodland.

Please pause and realign the George Snyder Trail onto existing infrastructure. Please do the same with all similar projects that would pave our woods and wetlands.



**Few of us need to ride our bikes in wetlands**