Transportation Priorities Plan 2025 - 2030

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During the February 25, 2025, meeting of the County Transportation Committee. Supervisor Herrity pointed out the extensive need for small fixes such as crosswalks in high risk areas and how far we are behind funding the large backlog of maintenance and repair of existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This should take priority over building any new stand-alone trail projects.

Bicycle and pedestrian spot improvements are needed throughout Fairfax County. Using innovative methods like VDOT's menu of Bicycle and Pedestrian Street Treatments- https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/doing-business/technical-guidance-and-support/transportation-and-mobility-planning/bicycle-and-pedestrian-accommodations/bicycle-and-pedestrian-treatments will reduce the rising rate of pedestrian fatalities. The recent project at Vienna Metro that added bicycle facilities along Virginia Center Blvd is a model of what can be done.

In our transportation projects in general, "multimodal" aspirations too often turn into "bimodal". Trees are sacrificed to asphalt to improve motor traffic flow, then more trees are sacrificed for bicycle paths (generally little-used). Hope for significant encouragement of transit usage generally falls by the wayside. Innovative solutions for Bus Rapid Transit should be a priority. We will never be able to make our roads wide enough to accommodate all the traffic generated by regional population growth.

These projects sound interesting, but the descriptions available on the Transportation Priorities Plan website seem too generic to allow citizens to evaluate them:
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Access - Parks TPP#: Z24
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Projects DOT TPP#: Z26
- Federal Earmark Funding allocated for unspecified projects TPP#: Z36
- New Active Transportation Projects TPP#: Z37

The Cinder Bed Road Bikeway (TPP#: 109) was ill conceived from its inception, a line drawn through a "blank" green space on a map without consideration of what that green represented. Year after year, planning has continued and funds have been expended, even as conservation groups warned against the harms of intruding into the protected habitat and as the expected costs ballooned, out of proportion to any possible benefit. That possible benefit is unknown, since FCDOT maintains there is no way to conduct usage studies. We can expect usage to be minimal, since the Bikeway would actually bypass all the neighborhoods closest to its ostensible destination at the Springfield Metro station. All those neighborhoods are already served by bicycle routes to Metro with prominent signage pointing the way. All those existing routes could be improved at far lesser cost for far greater payoff. In addition to being a pointless conversion of forest to asphalt, the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway would add all-night lighting to this natural habitat, disrupting the lives of wildlife large and small. As a final insult, the easement for the Bikeway is being taken from private owners under the threat of eminent domain.
More about the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway - http://accotink.org/2021/CinderBedRoadBikeway2021.htm

The Frontier Drive Extension (TPP#: 16) will remove 20+ acres of forest just upstream from the proposed Cinder Bed Road Bikeway (TPP#: 109). How ironic it is to build what is effectively a Metro station bypass with one hand even as we putatively improve Metro access with the other hand by building the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway.

- This loss of woods also means the loss of 500-600 tons per year of CO2 capture. This must be either avoided or compensated by other means.
- The goal of connecting Frontier Drive and Loisdale Drive could be largely accomplished by simply unlocking the Metro Access Road gate.
- The addition of a barren asphalt bus plaza replacing a currently wooded area is regrettable. Can't we find an already-paved area for this purpose?
- The project plan states measures will be incorporated to avoid and minimize impacts to Long Branch and its tributaries and to wetlands. There is nothing minimized in removing 20+ acres of wooded riparian buffer on the banks of this stream. These impacts can be avoided by scrapping the project.
- More about the Frontier Drive Extension – https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/projects/northern-virginia-district/frontier-drive-extension-and-braided-ramps-in-fairfax-county/
- More about the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway - http://accotink.org/2021/CinderBedRoadBikeway2021.htm

Braddock Road Improvements (TPP#: 45, 46) Some neighbors have questioned the justification for shared use paths on both sides of Braddock Road. They are right. Braddock Road from Guinea Road to Rt. 28 has had a shared use path on one side for decades. Long term observation of that path shows a minimal level of usage. Similar levels of usage are to be expected for the new shared use paths provided by this project. Can this low level of expected usage really justify the cost in dollars and habitat of building and maintaining paths on both sides? Other projects such as the Gallows Road Study, the Rolling Road Widening, and the Rt. 50 Walkway seem to have managed with paths on only one side.
- More about Braddock Road - https://www.accotink.org/2015/BraddockRoad.htm

Protection for habitats & environment - Transportation projects (and others) should be evaluated at the concept stage for adherence to County priorities beyond transportation, such as Resilient Fairfax, Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan, stormwater management, tree canopy preservation, invasives management, etc. Waiting until funds are in hand for project planning can create an inertial effect, driving projects forward in a manner that turns other worthy considerations into afterthoughts.
- "Minimize" is a commonly used word in project planning to describe impacts on natural habitats. Frankly, it is not a synonym for preservation. It can mean almost anything short of total clearcutting. Instead of attempting to "minimize", projects should avoid natural habitats and preservation areas like forests, wetlands, and floodplains.
- Street trees should be an integral part of every project.
- Exclusively native species should be used for all planting, including during construction.
- Invasive plant species control should be incorporated during construction and for a follow up period of several years to allow native plant species to reestablish themselves.
- Replacing more and more trees with asphalt while imagining there will be no climate consequences is not realistic.
- Lighting must avoid impact on wildlife. Insect friendly wavelengths would help, as would limiting lighting as much as feasible. It should go without saying that dark sky lighting should be the standard.
- Habitat is finite while human demands upon it are infinite. Cumulative effects of projects cause the continual diminishment of tree canopy and natural habitats in our region. Every loss contributes to a decline for the climate, the Chesapeake Bay, and local flora and fauna. No net loss of tree canopy or habitat should be the standard.
- **"Begin with the premise that the automobile must accommodate the earth, rather than vice versa."**