

Strategic Trails Plan

Part 1: Plan Summary, Priorities and Recommendations

Department of Parks and Recreation
Prince George's County, Maryland



ABSTRACT

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Part 1: Plan Summary, Priorities and Recommendations

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ABSTRACT: This document contains text, figures, graphics and maps outlining a strategic approach to bicycle and pedestrian trail development in Prince George's County, Maryland. The plan provides specific project priorities and recommended actions in the areas of trail planning, design, policy, management, maintenance and programming. It sets a specific course for achieving the trail-related goals established by the *Formula 2040 Functional Master Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces*. Developed with the assistance of stakeholders and the community, this compendium of four documents includes the following: Part 1—a summary; Part 2—a list of recommendations in table format; Part 3—extensive background material describing a countywide network of trails and a DPR park trail program that will serve transportation and recreation needs; and Part 4--documentation of public comments and existing conditions. Key Plan components include a new classification system for shared use paths and trails, trail design guidelines and a discussion of economic impacts.

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Prince George's County

M-NCPPC

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

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The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bicounty agency, created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties: the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District;
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system; and
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire county public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation (M-NCPPC)

Mission Statement

In partnership with our citizens, the Department of Parks and Recreation provides comprehensive park and recreation programs, facilities, and services which respond to changing needs within our communities. We strive to preserve, enhance, and protect our open spaces to enrich the quality of life for present and future generations in a safe and secure environment.

Vision Statement

The Department of Parks and Recreation pledges to:

- Provide stewardship of our county's natural, cultural, and historical resources.
- Foster the need of our citizens for recreational pursuits in a leisure environment.

Provide the highest standard of excellence in public service through cooperative partnership with our diverse community.

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Introduction

History of Trail Planning and Development

Since the early 1970s Prince George’s County has been on the forefront of trail planning and development. In 1975, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) developed one of the first trail plans in the Washington metropolitan region¹. It outlined a 112-mile trail system for bicycling and walking in the urban sections of the county including the Anacostia River Tributaries, Bowie, Oxon Hill and South Laurel, and additional mileage for connections into suburban areas. This trail system was envisioned to serve recreational cycling, hiking, access to nature, as well as bicycle transportation. At the time bicycling was seen as a logical, if not widely accepted, response to urban air pollution problems and the need to conserve non-renewable energy.



In the 1980s the public’s interest in trails waned somewhat, but gathered steam again in the 1990s. Since that time, the M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) began a small, but intense effort to develop paved and natural surface trails in its growing inventory of parklands. In response to public demand, DPR also developed trails by taking advantage of land dedications and required public amenities related to development activities.

In the 1990s, the M-NCPPC Prince George’s County Planning Department (Planning) began to integrate trails recommendations into the Transportation chapters of master and sector plans and the *Countywide Master Plan of Transportation* (MPOT). These plans resulted in construction of many additional miles of trail, built by developers and state and county road agencies. Also during that time, DPR maintained a slow but steady emphasis on trail building within its stream valley park system and developed the WB&A rail-trail. The long-term planning for park trails was largely included in the Planning Department’s routine community and countywide planning processes. Trails were not singled out or emphasized when DPR established a 12-division institutional framework. Rather, they were included as one of many park components to be addressed through general park maintenance and operations.

By the 2010s, it became clear that over a 40-year period, a significant volume of trails had been built, and the vision for the trails system that was established in the 1970s had been fulfilled and surpassed. DPR staff recognized an acute need for a new plan to guide the trail development process over the next 20 years and beyond. Moreover, increased trail use for both transportation and recreation, aging trail infrastructure, and the physical extent of the trail system led to agency inadequacies in funding, development, management and maintenance of the DPR trails network. It was also recognized that DPR and the county as a whole was probably not fully taking advantage of the economic impact the trail system could have as a competitive advantage within the metropolitan region.

¹ *Adopted and Approved Countywide Trails Plan for Prince George’s County, Maryland*; M-NCPPC, 1975.

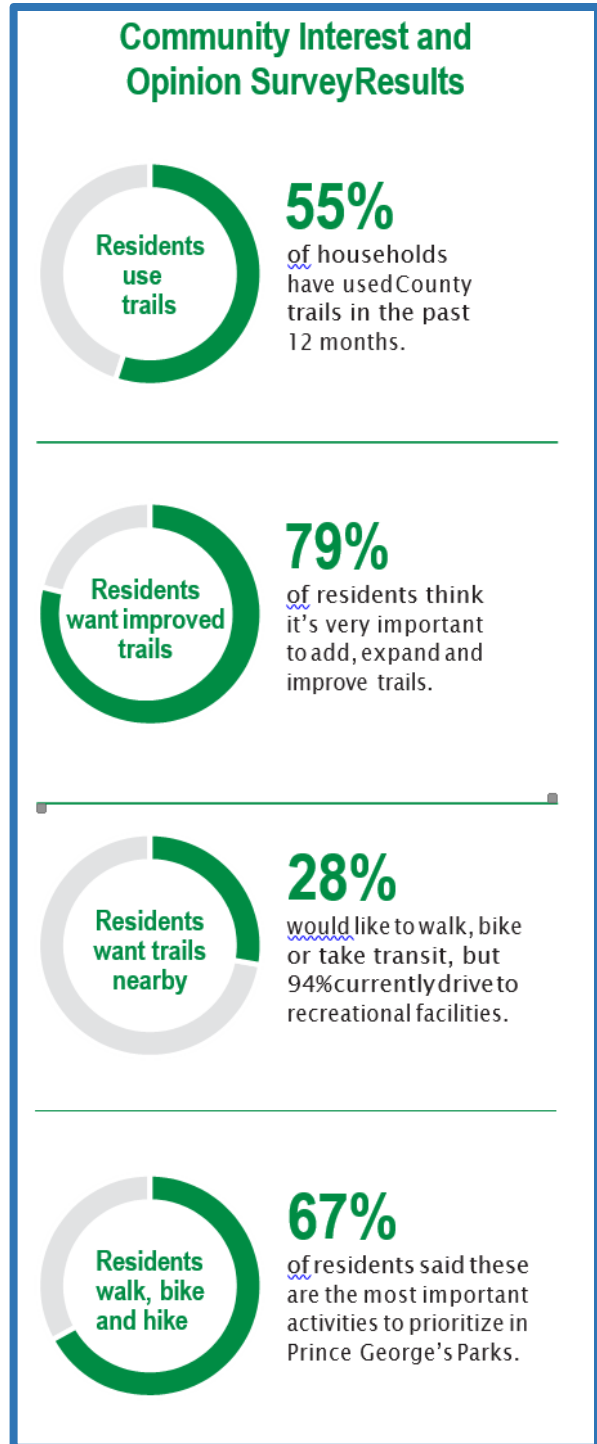
Specifically, ongoing management and maintenance of the network was not keeping up with the aging infrastructure, and a nationwide embrace of bicycle and pedestrian transportation generated national trail standards that were now far ahead of DPR. Moreover, the public was demanding features that had previously been seen as desirable but non-essential “amenities,” such as wayfinding signage, restrooms, safer road crossings and even greater network connectivity. In addition, the distribution of trails in this geographically large county (499 square miles) was heavily skewed to the north. Many of the densely-populated areas in central and south central parts of the county were not well served by the trail network.

Formula 2040 Parks and Recreation Master Plan

In 2013, *The Formula 2040: Functional Master Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space* (Formula 2040) was adopted. It emphasized the need to grow and improve the trail system and develop a new long-term vision for trails as a major component of DPR’s overall mission to provide parks, recreation and open space for county residents. Formula 2040 also underscored DPR’s need for trails to fully support the overall park and recreation goals. A statistically valid survey of citizens countywide showed that walking, hiking and biking trails are the single-most visited recreation facilities that DPR manages. It also found that maintaining and expanding the trail system is a top-three park development priority for residents (see side bar). Formula 2040 laid the foundation for developing a robust network of paved and natural surface trails as a key resource that will meet the service needs of the public and fulfill Formula 2040 goals.

Formula 2040’s three main goals are **connectivity**, **health and wellness**, and **economic development**. It is not hard to understand that trails are a perfect fit in this framework:

- **Connectivity:** Park trails, in all of their diverse settings, provide connectivity—linking people to people, people to places in their community and people to nature. And it is clear from public demand that even greater connectivity is desired for the trail system so that it can be used for



efficient transportation and that underserved communities want to get connected to the trail networks as well.

- **Health and Wellness:** Park trails also contribute to health and wellness in the most basic of ways, by providing safe and accessible places to walk, run or bike for daily exercise, activities in which people from 8 to 80 can easily partake. Loop trails in community parks and corridor trails in stream valley parks and along abandoned rail corridors offer close-to-home fitness centers. And natural surface hiking trails located in regional parks and conservation lands offer the mental health benefits that county residents need to maintain a loving relationship with the natural environment.
- **Economic Development:** Finally, in study after study over the past 30 years, park trails have been shown to contribute significantly to local and regional tourism, stable property values and tax revenues. They are a growing, yet sustainable contributor to economic development.

Keeping Prince George's County competitive means addressing the needs and desires of the two largest U.S. population groups—Baby Boomers and Millennials. National surveys have shown that both groups prefer walkable environments with recreation, shopping and other amenities that are close to home. They understand the value of trails and parks for their health and quality of life.

A Strategic Trails Plan

Upon completion of Formula 2040, DPR prioritized development of a strategic trails plan to provide more detailed guidance related to trail implementation and program development for the agency. This report is the culmination of that planning process. This plan recognizes that the context for trail planning and development has changed significantly since the 1970s, however, the essential role for trails in a suburban jurisdiction and multi-faceted park agency is much the same.

Trails are needed for recreation as well as transportation. Trails foster a healthy and happy population and natural environment. Public trails build community at a human scale and foster physical, social and economic connectivity and access for every subset of the community, regardless of class, economic status, age or ability.

Scope and Objectives

The scope of the planning process was varied and broad. It included the following activities:

1. Developing an accurate inventory of paved and natural surface trails throughout the county, including trails on DPR lands, and those owned and managed by other entities (federal, state, municipal and private).
2. Conducting a preliminary assessment of the physical trail infrastructure and demonstrating potential new methods for ongoing assessment of trail infrastructure.
3. Refining the network of existing and planned trails both inside and outside of parkland.
4. Developing a coherent framework for organizing and describing the various types of trails making up both the DPR and countywide network, their settings, owning/managing agencies, and purposes.

5. Identifying the following aspects of the physical trail network: a) physical and institutional barriers that make development of a connected network difficult; b) gaps in the physical network that diminish its potential impact and benefits; c) opportunities presented by new initiatives, both public and private; and d) discuss strategies for overcoming barriers, filling in gaps, and seizing opportunities over the next 25 years.
6. Assessing current policies, practices and activities (primarily within DPR) related to trail planning, funding, project prioritization, design, construction, maintenance, management, policing, programming, promotion and usage.
7. Developing recommendations for changes in policies and practices in these same areas, especially: a) prioritizing capital funding, b) project permitting, and c) trail design.
8. Engaging the trail-using park advocacy public to identify needs and ensure that plans and recommendations are prioritized and well supported by the constituencies served by DPR.



Captions and credits will be provided in the final publication.

This planning effort was countywide in scope and many of the recommendations span beyond the lands that are currently owned and operated by DPR. In some cases, the recommendations will be used to guide future acquisition priorities for the department; however, in order for the goals of the plan to be fully realized countywide, further planning and implementation efforts will need to be undertaken by key partners. Most importantly, the Planning Department will need to update the MPOT to formalize the recommendations for the proposed trail network in order to facilitate the expansion of the network through private development.

DPR Strategic Trails Plan Organization

- Part 1: Plan Summary, Priorities and Recommendations
- Part 2: Implementation Action Plan
- Part 3: Plan Elements (see box)
- Part 4: Summary of Public Outreach and Existing Conditions

What's Inside the Plan

Part 1 of the plan (this document) includes the following components:

- **The Planning Process**, which summarizes public input, includes an assessment of physical trail conditions as well as an assessment of trail operations, management and maintenance activities.
- **A Countywide Trail Network**, which introduces a new trail classification system and describes how the planned trails mapped in this process were identified and selected.
- **A List of Trail Development Project Priorities for DPR (10-year plan)**.
- **A Summary of Trail Program Recommendations: Strategies and Actions**.

Part 2 of the plan is an expanded list of the Implementation Action Plan needed to implement the plan, in a table format. Additional detail includes identification of responsible parties, projected timeframes and discussion of the approaches to be taken.²

Part 3 of the plan presents the planning analysis behind the network and provides additional tools to guide trail development in the areas of funding, design, management and maintenance (see box for details).

Part 4 documents a) the public comments that were received and used to guide network development and program recommendations, and b) the assessment process used to study physical trail conditions.

Other plan products delivered by the consulting team include GIS mapping data, a video inventory of select trails, environmental planning guidance, and a discussion of economic benefits and impacts of trails.

Part 3: Plan Elements

What is the Countywide Trail Network?

Trail Classifications

Network Goals and Objectives

Trail Overlays

Maps (existing and planned trails, by classification and ownership)

Trail Planning and Development Strategies

Cost Estimating and Funding Strategies

Project Development Strategies and Prioritization Criteria

Trail Design Policy

Guidelines

Wayfinding Signs

Waysides and Trailheads

Natural Surface Trails

Managing and Maintaining Park Trails

Data Gathering

Asset Management

Maintenance Schedules

New Technologies

² Parts 1 and 2 will be submitted to the Planning Board for endorsement.

The Planning Process

The planning process took place over three years, 2015–2018. It was led by DPR staff from the Planning Section of the Park Planning and Development Division (PP&D) and supported by an interdivisional staff team. Transportation planners from the Planning Department provided close collaboration with the park planners.

Public, Staff and Stakeholder Engagement

Staff and stakeholder engagement was facilitated through a series of meetings conducted in the spring of 2015, between March and June. A total of ten meetings were conducted involving staff from a diverse set of divisions and offices within the M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation, as well as the Planning Department. Representatives from other county, state and federal agencies engaged in trail-related activities within the county were also involved, as were representatives from county and/or region-based trail user and advocacy organizations. Staff from municipalities within Prince George's County also participated in these meetings.

Community outreach took the form of three open houses in three distinct parts of the county and use of an online Wikimap, which received over 250 unique user visits. Meetings included discussions covering a wide range of topics related to trails and the location, desire for and ability to build and maintain new trails.

Technical Analysis

GIS maps of existing DPR trail inventories and previous Planning Department activities were compiled, reconciled, verified and consolidated into four distinct sets of data: 1) existing paved trails, 2) existing natural surface trails, 3) planned/proposed paved trails, 4) planned/proposed natural surface trails. This initial baseline inventory was used to create draft maps that were used in public meetings and with focus groups attended by DPR staff and other stakeholders. As the planning process progressed, the inventory was continually updated.

Updates included the following:

- Verification of the existing trail network.
- Verifying trails as paved or natural surface.
- Validating trails to be attributed as planned, which includes those formally adopted in plans; and those to be attributed as proposed, because they arose during this planning process.

Planned/Proposed Trails

In this plan, **planned** and **proposed** trails are addressed as a single unified set of trails and are referenced as **planned/proposed**; and symbolized on maps with the same line type.

This combined terminology is used because this set of unbuilt trails includes both those that have been approved in the Countywide *Master Plan of Transportation* (MPOT) or in various approved sector plans (planned), as well as trail concepts not yet formally adopted by the Planning Board or County Council (proposed). Proposed trails include those identified subsequent to the 2009 MPOT adoption process and new trail ideas proposed during this planning process by the public, stakeholders, or the consultant planning team.

- Classifying existing and planned/proposed trails as either Primary, Secondary or Recreational (see next section for discussion of the classification system).
- Assigning trail ownership to various agencies based upon underlying property ownership.

Using the consolidated and refined data set of existing and planned/proposed trails, an extensive functional analysis of the network was undertaken. The recommended network was evaluated using a set of ten objectives (see below). These included objectives related to the park and recreation goals established by Formula 2040, and Countywide objectives flowing from goals set in the *Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan* (Plan 2035) and the 2009 MPOT. These objectives are as follows:

Park and Recreation Objectives

- Proximity of residential population to the paved trail network.
- Geographic distribution of trails within the nine DPR park service areas, as defined in Formula 2040.
- Connectivity to priority M-NCPPC parks and facilities.
- Addressing challenges presented by environmental barriers.

General Planning Objectives

- Trail connectivity to existing and future activity centers.
- Trail connectivity to municipalities.
- Closing key gaps in the paved trail network.
- Addressing barriers created by the built environment.
- Providing trail connectivity between the county's trails and those in neighboring jurisdictions.
- Effective utilization of existing linear corridors: highways, railroads, utilities.

Toward the end of the planning process, a final round of adjustments was made in the network of planned/proposed trails to improve its ability to address all of the objectives listed above. Table 1 summarizes the mileage in the existing and planned/proposed trail network. [Appendix 1-1 and 1-Map A provides details about the Planned/Proposed Primary and Secondary Trail Network; i.e. paved trails.]

Existing Conditions

DPR and other trails in the county were assessed in general terms. The total length of the trail system was documented, ownership/management responsibility was studied, and trail surface was determined/verified. Pavement conditions, pavement width, road and stream crossings, and other features were reviewed in sample locations. Input from staff, stakeholders and the public was also key in verifying trail conditions. In addition to this general physical assessment, DPR's policies and practices related to trail operations, management and maintenance were reviewed.

Table 1			
Mileage in Existing and Planned/Proposed Trail Network			
	DPR	Non-DPR Owned	Total
	Miles	Miles	Miles
Existing Trails			
Paved	117.9	100.2	218.1
Natural Surface	47.1	68.0	115.1
Total	165.0	168.2	333.2
Planned/Proposed			--
Paved	82.5	542.9	625.4
Natural Surface	32.7	67.0	99.7
Total	115.2	609.9	725.1

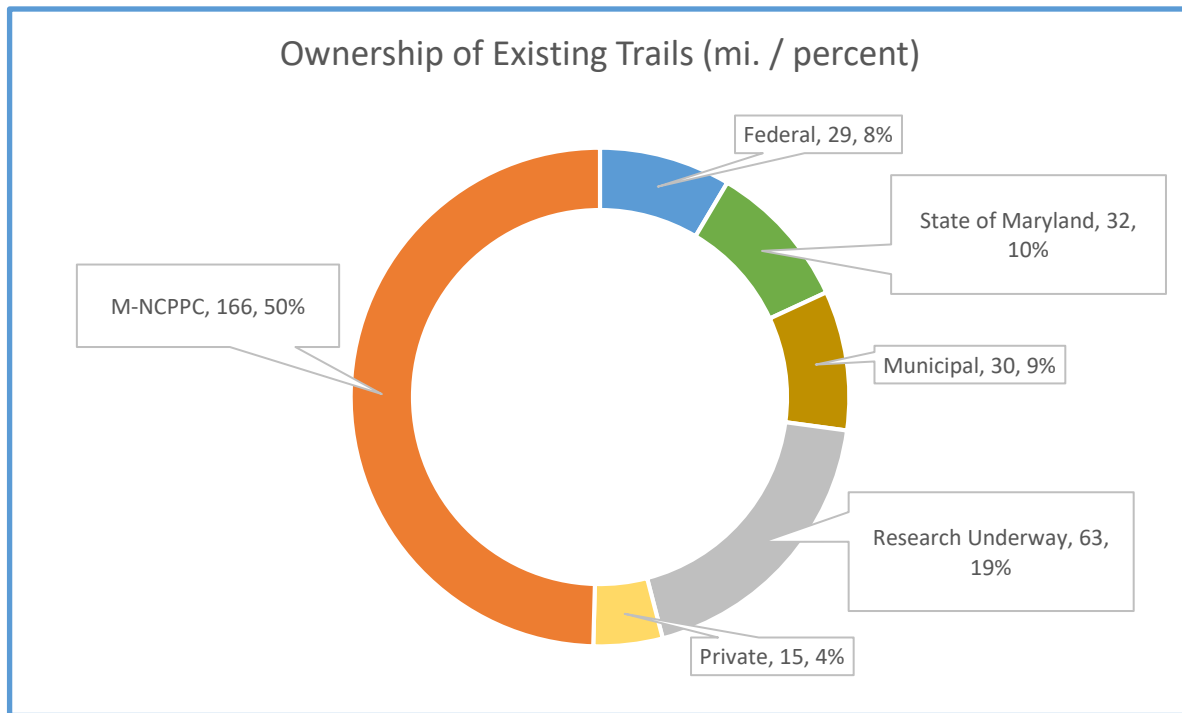
A general summary of conditions is provided in this executive summary. For additional background information about existing trail conditions see Strategic Trails Plan Part 4: Summary of Public Outreach and Existing Conditions.

The Existing Network

Over three hundred and thirty miles of existing trail were identified and mapped in this planning process (See Appendix 1-Map B). Forty-nine percent (165 miles) are owned by DPR. The remaining miles of trail are owned by a wide range of entities, including municipalities, state and federal agencies, and private organizations, such as homeowner’s associations (see Appendix 1-Map C). Figure 1 illustrates ownership/management responsibility for trails in the county.

- Municipalities own about nine percent of the existing trails in the county. The City of Bowie has the largest municipal trail network, with 19 miles of paved and unpaved pathways.
- The State of Maryland owns approximately ten percent of the existing trails in Prince George’s County, primarily in Rosaryville State Park, in state lands along the Patuxent River, and within state highway rights-of-way.
- The National Park Service (NPS) owns about 7.2 percent of existing trails, mostly in Greenbelt Park and in NPS lands along the Potomac River.
- Other federal agencies that own trails in the county include the Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Beltsville Agricultural Research Center) and the Department of Defense (Joint Base Andrews).
- Private entities, such as conservation groups, civic associations, and homeowner’s associations, own 4.3 percent of trails in the county.

Future research by DPR or the Planning Department should identify ownership for about 19 percent of the existing trail network.



While the focus of this planning effort was on the existing and planned trails on DPR lands, or otherwise managed by DPR, recommendations are included for the countywide network. These recommendations and planned/proposed trails should be further reviewed for inclusion in an update of the Countywide *Master Plan of Transportation*.

Physical Trail Conditions

Concurrent with public and stakeholder engagement and technical analysis, a modest assessment of the physical conditions of the DPR trail system was undertaken.

Findings include the following:

- Much of the trail system was built more than 20 years ago, and typical pavement widths of six–eight feet are based on previous standards. Many of the trails were laid out prior to establishment of Americans with Disabilities Act guidance and thus are not compliant. Moreover, limitations based on environmental and levee regulations on the Anacostia Tributaries Trail System make achieving desirable design standards difficult.
- Operational signage, wayfinding signs and trail identity signs are intermittent and not uniform. In many locations, trails are not effectively branded as DPR/M-NCPPC facilities.
- Pavement quality should be upgraded in some locations; however, portions of the trail system have been resurfaced in recent years. Due to the presence of aggressive grasses and periodic flooding in stream valleys, in some areas pavement edges are crumbling or significantly covered by sand and silt.
- Invasive species are killing trail-adjacent tree lines and forested areas throughout the system.

Subsequent to the completion of the consultant phase of the planning process, DPR staff have begun a major initiative for system-wide bridge inspection, replacement and rehabilitation. The park and trail system has approximately 250 bridges, including some that are nearing the end of their life expectancy.

- The number of users participating in recreational bicycling (especially in small and large groups), as well as bicycling for daily transportation, has increased.
 - In response, the Commission changed its paved trail operational rules to allow legal transient bicycle use between 5 a.m. and midnight.
 - Additionally, the design and placement of existing bollards, boardwalks, and narrow highway bridge underpasses warrant safety assessments due to increased trail user volumes and expanded hours of operations.



- While some trail/roadway intersections have been upgraded in past years, design limitations dictated by the road management agencies [State Highway Administration (SHA) and Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T)] continue to make some crossings challenging for trail users. However, in one location (Queens Chapel Road and Northwest Branch Trail) the sheer volume of trail users crossing to and from the Metrorail station has resulted in greater stopping and yielding behavior by motorists.

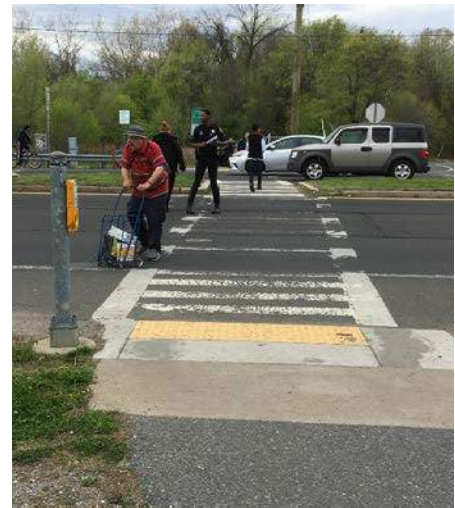


A primary product of the existing conditions assessment is a video inventory of 42 miles of trail in the DPR network. The purpose of this product was to demonstrate how bicycle-mounted video can be used to inventory trail assets and major maintenance needs. To enable DPR to make effective use of this resource, initial coordination was undertaken with the staff developing the agency’s Enterprise Asset Management system.

Trail Management: Operations and Maintenance

Given the limited scope of this study and the decentralized nature of DPR’s maintenance and management staff among four separate divisions, it was not possible to achieve an in-depth assessment of DPR’s operations and maintenance protocols. Subsequent to the consultant team’s work, DPR staff has gained a greater understanding of policies and practices related to trail management, which is reflected in the findings that follow. They are organized around four key trail management topics:

- Maintenance
 - Mowing of the extensive lawn areas adjacent to most of the park trails is well managed and executed.
 - Responding to maintenance requests from trail users is also generally timely and effective.
 - Addressing location-specific safety and structural issues is weak.
- Policing
 - Park Police presence on the trails is heavily focused on just a few areas where crime has been a major issue. However, countywide, crime and personal security on the trails has not been a system-wide problem.
 - Reporting and tracking of both incidents and crimes on the trail system is often indistinguishable from crime in the park system as a whole. As a result, trail-specific incidents and crimes against trail users require extensive research to identify, aggregate and assess on a system-wide basis.
 - When incidents happen, trail users and DPR staff both report that precise communication of the trail user's location is sometimes difficult; additionally, the best route for access is not always known by or obvious to the emergency responders.
- User Counts
 - The counting equipment used in past years has not been effective for evaluating trail usage due to technical issues. New equipment has been identified and is being deployed in phases.
- Communication with the trail-using public:
 - Print materials and maps used to market the major trails are largely excellent. However, due to the trail systems' constant expansion, updating these materials is a challenge and sometimes results in a lack of current and thus fully accurate materials.
 - Electronic communication such as the DPR website, social media and listserves are not well structured to serve the trail-using community.
 - Trails users increasingly need information about trail events, incidents, closures or detours in a very timely fashion, and the systems for providing this communication are not in place.



Creating a Countywide Network

This plan builds upon the MPOT, which includes a bicycle and pedestrian network that relies heavily on shared-use paths³ in a variety of corridors. The trail system located within the existing network of linear parks is nearly complete. Constructing trails in the remaining trail-less stream valleys parks present challenging environmental constraints. As a result, this plan attempts to chart a strategic path forward that merges what has been developed as part of the transportation system with what has been created through the park system.

Trails Vision

Prince George's County will create a trail system that provides residents and visitors with access to nature, recreation and daily destinations; promotes sustainability; and increases opportunities for health.

This new vision for trails calls for creation of a cohesive and connected countywide system of trails that can sustainably serve three missions: open space preservation, healthy recreation, and bicycle/pedestrian transportation.

A Countywide Network

While this plan does include continued development of the park-based trail network, it is important to recognize that increasingly, the majority of new trail mileage will be constructed outside of the DPR park system. On a trail-by-trail basis, a variety of arrangements may be made for land ownership, trail maintenance, infrastructure management, policing, etc.; yet as a whole, the countywide trail network will be woven more and more into the fabric of communities and cease to function solely as a park and recreation amenity.

To create this network, DPR needs, requires and requests considerable support from transportation agencies, public utilities, municipalities, educational institutions, and state and federal agencies, all of whom have jurisdiction over land, public infrastructure, regulations, funding and provision of public services that are critical to trail network development. And all of whom will also be served by the system by its contribution to community and employee health and environmental sustainability.

DPR is committed to provide leadership, overall coordination, development, and ongoing management and operations of the network; as well as full integration with the other components of park and

³ This plan uses the term “trail” to refer to all types of trails, paved and natural surface, shared use and single use. The term “shared-use path” is used to refer to hard surface (or engineered stone dust) trails that are used by bicycles and pedestrians. The terms “path” or “pathway” should be considered synonymous with hard-surface shared-use paths.

recreation services that are at the core of its mission. M-NCPPC as a whole (DPR and Planning) is committed to provide capital funding, planning and design expertise. Active support and engagement from other public agencies is needed in the areas of funding, engineering, maintenance, policing, access to public land through co-location of facilities, regulatory relief, and efficient permitting.

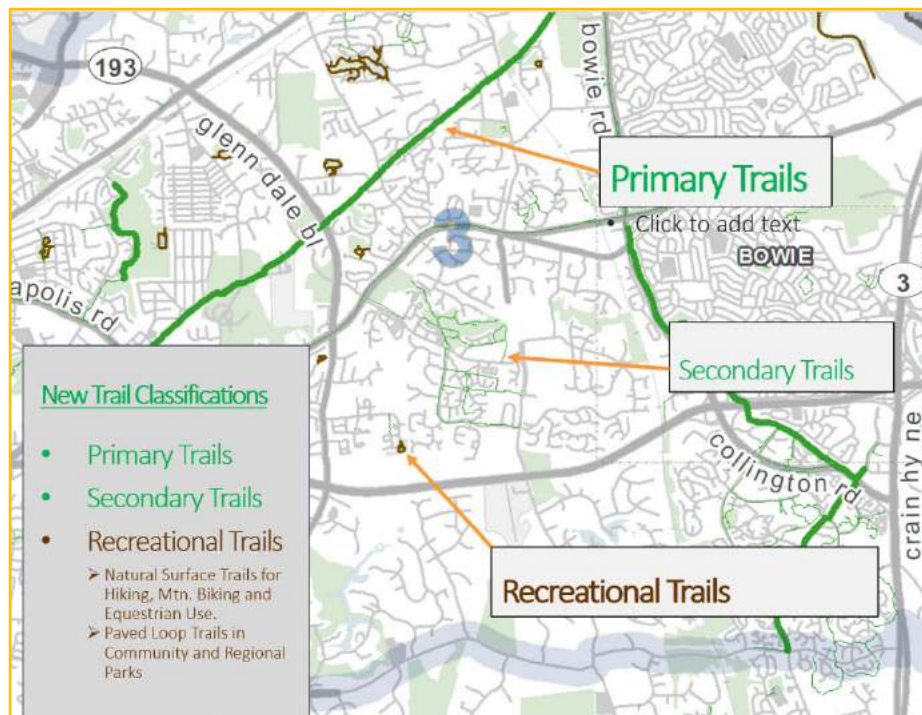
Trail Classifications

This plan describes the future countywide network in terms of existing shared-use paths and trails and planned/proposed paths and trails. Both existing and future trails are further subdivided into three basic trail classifications: Primary, Secondary and Recreational. Primary and Secondary trails together will make up the connected network. They will most often be hard surface facilities using asphalt or concrete. Recreational trails will most often be natural surface facilities but also include paved loop trails in parks that do not serve transportation purposes.

In general, these classifications are based upon the functional role each segment of trail plays in the overall network. The purpose of assigning classifications to trails is to ensure that when existing trails are upgraded and new trails are designed, their role in the overall network is defined and understood, and that role can be used to guide the decisions that are made about those projects. It is a simple framework that can be understood by the public, developers, agency staff at all levels, and trail advocates. It will serve these constituencies as they collaborate on trail planning, mapping, management and maintenance activities. (Table 2 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the countywide network showing trail mileage by status and classification.)

Primary Trails

Primary trails are shared-use paths developed and designed for bicycle and pedestrian use. They provide a contiguous network that serves all parts of the county for which M-NCPPC is responsible for providing parks. When fully built out, the primary network should link all of the activity centers as identified in Plan 2035, including the county’s traditional town centers and major suburban commercial nodes.



Primary trails are so designated to ensure that they are designed to the highest standards of safety, durability, aesthetic quality, and access for people with disabilities. They are generally characterized by

providing a high quality, park-like experience that will serve a variety of modal groups, trip purposes, ages and abilities.

Primary trails are designed to serve both recreation and transportation. They may be built with a variety of surface materials and widths, based upon their context and the amount of expected use; however, the typical Primary trail will be paved with asphalt, 10–12 feet wide. Based on need, context and available space, some may be designed with dual treadways⁴ (hard and natural surface) or otherwise configured to better serve recreational activities such as mountain bicyclists, runners, and/or equestrians.

Table 2 Primary and Secondary Trail Network				
	Existing		Planned/Proposed	
	DPR M-NCPPC	Other	DPR M-NCPPC	Other
	Miles			Miles
Primary Trails	46.2	17.3	53.8	200.5
Secondary Trails	35.4	77.5	27.2	367.5
Recreational Trails	79.7	71.7	33.8	67.0
Park Roads	3.7	1.5	--	--
Totals:	165.0	168.0	114.8	635.0
Grand Total:	333.0		749.8	

The Primary Trail Network includes a number of lengthy trails in higher density areas that serve as efficient bicycle/pedestrian transportation (commuter) routes. It should be noted, however, that few pathways (existing or planned) located adjacent to major highways, suburban arterials or rural roads (i.e., sidepaths) are designated as Primary. Sidepaths⁵ are designated as Secondary trails unless it is desirable that the character of the road and the design of the trail support a high quality park-like experience, i.e., it is comparable to other Primary trails in park and stream valley settings. Where and when sidepaths are designated as Primary trails, sufficient rights-of-way (ROW) should be reserved, required or allocated such that the trail and greenway is at least 25 feet in width; ideal widths are 30–40 feet.⁶

Secondary Trails

The network of Secondary trails includes both existing and planned trails. This classification includes most of the remaining paved pathways in the county and may include unpaved paths as well, where they are

⁴ “Treadway” refers to the portion of a trail corridor that is the travel surface. It may also refer to the surface material used for the travel surface.

⁵ The term “sidepath” is used to refer to shared use paths located alongside a roadway [typically within the public rights-of-way (ROW)]. It must be at least eight feet in width or else it is considered a sidewalk.

⁶ Research may need to be conducted to determine the appropriate range of ROW width needed for Primary trails proposed as sidepaths to state or county arterial roads.

built primarily to provide local access within the built environment. This classification includes spurs that connect the Primary trails to adjacent neighborhoods, homeowner’s association (HOA) trails built in residential communities, standard sidepaths along roads that enhance transportation access to destinations and extend the Primary Trail Network into adjacent communities. This category also includes short pathway links through parks and school grounds or along other easements that provide connections to M-NCPPC facilities, sidewalk networks and low-speed neighborhood streets.

Secondary trails will be designed for shared use among pedestrians and bicyclists and will serve both transportation and recreation users. However, many Secondary trails may be built to somewhat lower standards in terms of width, durability and surface materials because they typically serve shorter trips, support smaller user volumes, and do not need to accommodate bicyclists traveling at higher speeds. Generally, Secondary trails need to be ADA compliant, however, due to severe slopes in some areas, some exceptions may be needed. Where appropriate, Secondary trails may also be designed to serve equestrians.

Recreation Trails

Recreational trails are those that are used exclusively for recreation. These include 1) in-park fitness loop trails, 2) shared-use natural surface trails managed for hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use, and 3) natural surface trails that are managed for single- or limited-user groups (see Appendix 1-Map D).

1. Fitness loops are typically one mile or less in length and may be paved, stone dust or natural surface. They are designed primarily for walking, jogging and other exercise activities. They may be designed with fitness stations. Most are located in M-NCPPC parks; however, some may be located in municipal, national or state parks, or on other public lands.
2. Shared-use natural surface trails are typically used for hiking, mountain biking, equestrian use and nature observation. They exist in a variety of settings, including national parklands, state parks and wildlife management areas along the Patuxent River corridor, in M-NCPPC regional parks, and in some stream valley parks.
3. Single-use natural surface trails are designed and/or managed for a single use. Today all-natural

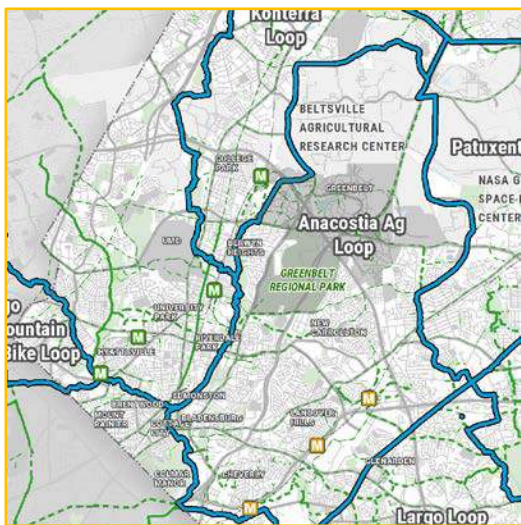
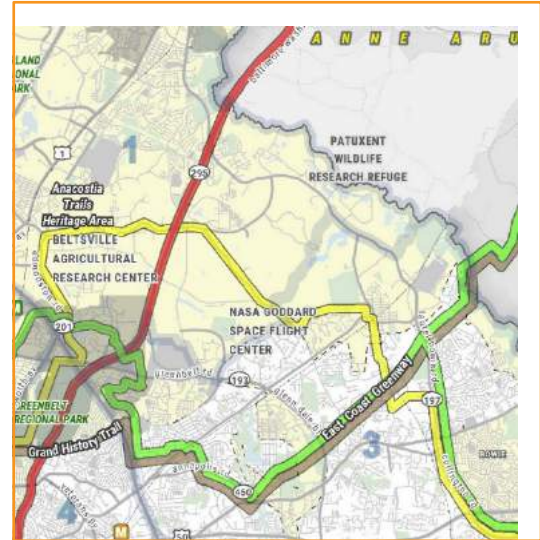
Table 3: Recreational Trails Owned By M-NCPPC (DPR)		
	Existing	Planned/Proposed
	Miles	Miles
Fitness Loop Trails in Parks	41.3	3.3
Existing paved	32.4	
Existing natural surface	8.9	
Linear Trails (Shared: Hiking, Mountain Biking & Equestrian)	38.4	30.5
Existing paved	0.2	
Existing natural surface	38.2	
Total:	79.7	33.8
	113.5	

surface trails in DPR parks are shared use, however, with increased use and the need for sustainability, it is expected that on select trails some uses may need to be restricted.

Trail Overlays

The classification framework is meant to be applied to all physical nonmotorized trails within the county that are open to the public, regardless of their location, owner or managing agency. However, another important way for DPR, other trail managing agencies and the general public to think about trails can be described as “trail overlays.” Trail overlays are essentially biking or hiking routes that are defined by special theme or purpose related to a recreational or educational experience. Trail overlays may use a combination of Primary, Secondary or Recreational trails in the Prince George’s County trail network. They may also be routed on roadways and sidewalks in order to achieve the experience around which the “trail” is organized.

- *Thematic Trails* (see map) are larger in geographic scope than Prince George’s County and are typically conceived of and developed by other organizations. Nonetheless they are routed on existing or planned trail alignments that pass through the county. Examples of these include the East Coast Greenway, the American Discovery Trail and the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.
- *Destination Trails* (see Table 4) are overlays of existing physical trails that offer such a unique and high-quality experience that they attract visitors from within and outside the county. These trails are sufficiently special that people plan intentional outings to bike, hike, run, stroll, birdwatch or ride a horse on these particular facilities. Examples include the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trail, the Anacostia River Trail and the Rosaryville State Park Trails which attract scores of mountain bicyclists, hikers, and equestrians.



- *Recreational Bicycling Loops* (see map) can be identified as a way to use the trail system for promoting tourism and economic development. Cyclists, cycling organizations and nonprofits that use group rides as fundraisers are a growing constituency that seeks access to day-long recreational bicycle/running outings that can begin and end at one location.

Trail Overlays are discussed in greater detail in Part 3: Plan Elements. Existing thematic trails in the county have been mapped. A list of existing and potential destination trails and recreational bicycling loops have been mapped as well. Along with the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (Maryland Milestones), these trail overlays provide a framework for strategies that can help capture the economic benefits of a well-developed trail

system. The establishment of this system is helpful for DPR, but more importantly, it is recommended that the Planning Department adopt these classifications through an update to the MPOT.

**Table 4
Destination Trails**

Trail Name	Trail Users	Planned/Proposed Extensions
<u>Existing Destination Trails</u>		
Anacostia Tributaries Trail System	Bike & pedestrian	Extend Paint Branch Trail to Konterra, and Indian Creek Trail to Greenbelt
WB&A Rail-Trail	Bike & pedestrian	Extend along MD 704 to DC
Henson Creek Trail	Bike & pedestrian	Extend north to SuitlandBog, and south to Harmony Hall CC/Art Center
Woodrow Wilson Bridge	Bike & pedestrian	
Jug Bay Trails	Hiking & nature observation	
Cosca Regional Park Mountain Bike Trails	Mountain biking	Additional mountain biking loops are planned.
Rosaryville State Park Trails	Hiking, mountain biking, equestrian	
<u>Future Destination Trails</u>		
Piscataway Creek Trail	Bike & pedestrian	
Mattawoman Creek Trail	Hiking, mountain biking, Equestrian	
Chesapeake Beach Rail-Trail	Bike & pedestrian	
Tinkers Creek Trail	Bike & pedestrian	
Linked trails in the Patuxent River Park	Hiking, mountain biking, equestrian, nature observation	

Trail Network Level of Service Targets

Formula 2040 established trail network mileage goals based upon a desired trail level of service. The recommended level-of-service measure is by population: 0.4 miles of hard surface trail and 0.1 miles of natural surface trail per 1,000 population. Prince George’s County’s population is estimated to be one million by 2040 and thus, 400 miles of hard surface trail and 100 miles of natural surface trail are recommended.

Table 5 illustrates what is needed in additional trail mileage to meet 2040 goals. For natural surface trails, the goal of 100 miles is already met by the existing trail network. For hard surface trails an additional 182 miles are needed over a 22-year period.

	Existing		Needed to meet 2040 Goal		In Planned/Proposed Network	
	DPR M-NCPPC	Other	DPR	Other	DPR M-NCPPC	Other
	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Miles</u>
Primary trails	46.2	17.3	53.8	40.0	53.8	190.6
Secondary trails (+park rds)	39.1	79.0	27.2	57.6	27.2	352.3
Recreational trails						
Paved loop trails in parks	32.6	3.7	3.2	--	3.2	--
Totals:	117.9	100.9	84.2	97.6	84.2	542.9
2040 Goal for Paved Trails	218.2 Existing + 181.8 Planned = 400					
Recreational trails						
Natural surface trails	47.1	68.0	0.0	0.0	30.5	67.0
Total:	115.1					
2040 Goal for Nat. Surf. Trails	100					

Achieving Formula 2040 Level-of-Service Targets.

Countywide trail level-of-service targets can be met by building out 100 percent of the planned/proposed trails in DPR parklands (84.2 miles), and by building 20 percent of the planned/proposed trails outside of DPR parkland (110.9 miles). While on the face of it, this appears to be a reasonable expectation; however, many of the trails recommended in the MPOT for M-NCPPC/DPR parkland, may be difficult to build due to wetland and other environmental constraints in the stream valleys. For this reason, a larger percentage of the overall trail network may need to be built outside of the park system, such as along major roadways and within new residential and commercial developments. It is recommended that DPR seek opportunities to partner on the development of some of these trails.

Trail Development Project Priorities

The planning effort culminated in a two-part process to develop priorities for investment of DPR Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds in trail development, trail rehabilitation and major management initiatives. To get input from trails users and advocates on trail network investment priorities, a series of meetings and online mapping strategies were used. The second step included a detailed review of the current capital and operating budgets and recent DPR spending history, conducted by the consultant team and DPR staff. This review established recommendations for funding priorities.

Public Input

The final public meeting in the planning process provided an opportunity for the stakeholders to weigh in on potential priorities in the area of trail development, management and maintenance. The following list of strategic priorities indicate the preferences of the people who attended the meeting (in priority order):



- *Building the Network*
 - Develop trails for transportation
 - Fill key gaps and link up disconnected trails
 - Address barriers like highways and waterways
 - Rehabilitate and upgrade old trails
 - Address underserved parts of the county
 - Address safety issues like trail/road crossings
 - Serve recreational uses such as hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking
- *Managing the Network*
 - Provide more trailheads, waysides and restroom facilities and improve signage and wayfinding systems
 - Increase personal security
 - Engage volunteers to support trail maintenance and management

Capital Program Review

The consultant team and staff studied the DPR Capital Improvement Plan, reviewed projects that DPR is currently involved in as a partner or coordinating party, and reviewed recently completed projects. Additional study of the overall DPR capital budget process was conducted during the FY17–18 and FY18–19 funding cycles and greater insight into the prioritization, development and funding process was gained. This additional review also identified that major maintenance expenses such as trail resurfacing and bridge rehabilitation and replacement are funded through the operations budget.

The review of the capital program looked primarily at projects in the M-NCPPC “pipeline” at DPR or in the Planning Department, as well as projects already identified by DPR planners from previous

community planning efforts. These projects were evaluated by project readiness, project type, general level of difficulty, their stage in the development process, and geographic location within the county.

Recommended Priorities

To develop a set of recommended priorities, the outcome from the stakeholder meetings was merged with a review of the Capital Improvement Program. Projects are grouped based on project type and relative size. Within each grouping, projects are categorized in a working priority order. For a detailed table that includes project scope, length, cost estimate and partners see Appendix 1-2; for a map see Appendix 1-Map E.

Priority 1: For multi-phase projects already underway, ensure funding for unforeseen project costs.

- Patuxent River Bridge for the WB&A Trail*⁷
- Little Paint Branch Trail Extension
- College Park Woods Connector Trail
- Rhode Island Avenue Trolley Trail*

Priority 2: Continue phased development of major trails in the design and development process, and act as a funding partner

- Central Avenue Corridor Trail*
- Bowie Heritage Trail*
- Piscataway Creek Trail—Fort Washington Segment*

Priority 3: Develop a trail management team and address trail lighting and security needs

- Design and implement trail addressing system for coordinated emergency response
- Design and implement Anacostia Tributaries wayfinding signs
- Develop and implement a Trail Lighting Policy
- Develop and deploy a trail ranger corps

Priority 4: Fund natural surface trail rehabilitation and development

- Complete construction of planned trails in Cosca Regional Park
- Implement planned trail upgrades at Jug Bay Natural Area
- Implement planned trail upgrades at Watkins Regional Park
- Connect Cosca Regional Park with Rosaryville State Park
- Develop a natural surface trail plan

Priority 5: Conduct and fund trail safety audits and rehabilitation action plans

- System-wide bridge inspection and repair program
- Anacostia Tributaries Trail system



⁷ The star (*) indicates that DPR is a partner on the project. DPR is the lead agency for unstarred projects.

- Oxon Cove/Oxon Run Trail
- WB&A Trail
- Henson Creek Trail

Priority 6: Address short gaps in the trail system and construct in-park connector paths

- Little Paint Branch Trail Extension at Denim Road*
- Old Calvert Road Park Connector*
- Fairland Regional Park Connector—Phase 2

Priority 7: Revive stuck projects

- Prince George’s Connector Trail/Anacostia Gateway Trail
- Henson Creek Trail Extension

Priority 8: Fund and conduct major feasibility studies of planned/proposed trails

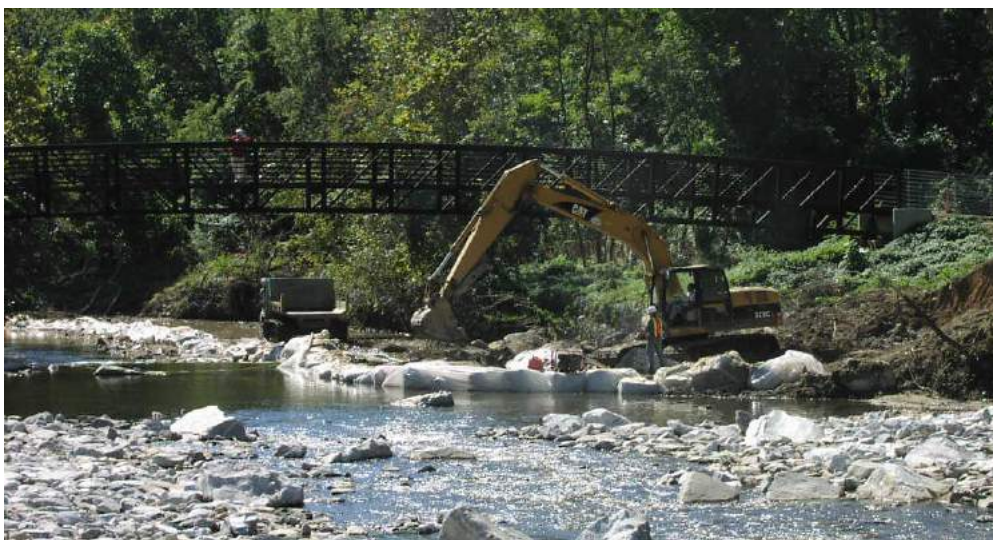
- Piscataway Creek Trail/Potomac to Patuxent Trail
- Oxon Run Trail—Northern Extension
- Folly Branch Trail
- Western Branch Trail
- Chesapeake Beach Rail-Trail

Priority 9: Support non-park trail proposals and studies

- Cheverly to Anacostia Trail*
- WB&A Extension on MD 704*
- Anacostia Tributary Trails System to WB&A Linkage*

Key Actions to Achieve Plan Objectives

The priorities listed above represent a larger capital program effort than has been managed in past years. While DPR has been involved on a few multi-million-dollar trail projects, they tend to have been



spread out over many years. DPR typically does not manage spending multiple millions of dollars per year on a year-in/year-out basis.

To continue moving an increased volume of trail projects forward, a broad range of trail planning, design and construction management activities must be maintained. To do this, DPR will need to focus on five key areas:

1. Spend approximately \$5 to \$7 million per year on trail planning, design and construction.
2. Increase staff support for project management and major maintenance activities, including planning, design, construction management and infrastructure maintenance (i.e., building a division for trail development and management).
3. Continue leveraging additional funding from outside sources: state, local and private.
4. Increase funding for staff and equipment that is dedicated to management and maintenance of trails.
5. Receive stronger support from the Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspection and Enforcement (DPIE) and the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) regarding permitting, and coordinate with ongoing road system management activities, including planning, acquisition of rights-of-way, rehabilitation, funding and maintenance.

Summary of Recommendations

This summary of overall strategic recommendations supplements the spending priorities identified in the previous section. It lists strategies and actions for DPR in its role as the lead county agency engaged in trail development and as the trail planning partner to the M-NCPPC Planning Department. The strategies and actions are organized around six themes, each representing a relatively discrete stage in the trail development process:

Trail Planning and Development

Trail Policy

Trail Management

Trail Maintenance

Trail Programming

Trail Partnerships





Coordinate Trail Planning and Development

Trail planning and development is a joint responsibility shared within M-NCPPC by the Planning Department and the Department of Parks and Recreation. Historically, the departments have worked closely together. Planning typically provides planning support for trail projects that exist *outside* of the DPR park system, and DPR typically plans, funds, designs, constructs and manages trails *within* the park system. Regardless of the context, proposed trails at the planning stage have an agency with the authority to move them forward. However, proposed trails outside of (or unrelated to) the DPR park system do not have a County agency dedicated to move them through final design and into construction, nor maintain them once built.

DPR Planning and Development Actions

To address Formula 2040 goals, DPR needs to build increased capacity for trail planning and development. The following strategies will enable DPR to respond to a variety of park trail needs including upgrading and improving the design of older trails, planning for trails in underserved portions of the county, developing park trails in conjunction with new development, and dealing with sophisticated and challenging environmental regulations.

Strategy 1: Educate and expand DPR staff working on trails.

Actions:

1. Establish an internal trail planning and management staff advisory team.
2. Hire or designate a Trail Program Manager to coordinate implementation of the Strategic Trails Plan.
3. Hire or designate a Natural Surface Trail Manager to plan and coordinate development and management of natural surface trails.
4. Brief DPR staff about the Strategic Trails Plan, its recommendations and implications.
5. Implement a training program for DPR staff related to best practices in trail design and construction management.
6. Expand staffing in the areas of mapping and data management, consultant management, engineering and construction management.

Strategy 2: Maintain trail planning data.

Actions:

1. Complete and maintain the GIS inventory of trail planning data.
2. Transfer GIS data developed in the trail plan to Planning for use in current planning activities and future updates to the Countywide MPOT.
3. Utilize trail usage data gathered by trail counters to inform trail design decisions and funding priorities (see Trail Management strategy C-1d: Strengthen



the trail counting program by upgrading existing counters and strategically placing new counters throughout the trail system.)

Strategy 3: Evaluate new park trail opportunities using the following criteria:

1. Proximity of proposed new trail to unserved and underserved residential populations.
2. Potential for proposed new trail to serve the least well-served park service areas, as defined by Formula 2040.
3. Potential for proposed new trails to provide connectivity to a priority DPR park or recreation facility.
4. Environmental challenges including wetlands, special habitats, floodplains, forest conservation, steep slopes, need to acquire additional parkland, etc.



Strategy 4: Undertake targeted trail planning and feasibility studies.

Actions:

1. Prioritize study of stream valleys in underserved communities for development of paved shared-use paths.
2. Prioritize trail connectivity needs related to DPR facilities.
3. Plan Primary, Secondary and Recreational trails as part of regional park master plans.
4. Develop a recreational trails management and development plan.

Strategy 5: Act as a clearinghouse for trail issues and inquiries.

Actions:

Serve as the first point of contact for all trail issues in the county.

Role of the Planning Department

The Prince George's County Planning Department is the lead agency with regard to trail planning issues related to transportation (MPOT and sector plan updates) and development review. In recent years, PGP has worked closely together with DPR to ensure integration of all trails (park and otherwise) into a cohesive and connected network.

Strategy 1: Update the *Master Plan of Transportation* and formal facility design standards for trails.

1. Facilitate M-NCPPC Planning Board adoption of an amendment to the Trails Component of the MPOT with the updated existing and planned trails network developed in this strategic planning process.
2. Facilitate M-NCPPC Planning Board adoption of the new trail classification system and design standards for application to all shared-use paths built in the county.

Strategy 2: Coordinate plan implementation with the Planning Department and ongoing planning activities such as master plans and sector plans.

DPR Actions:

1. Inform Planning staff about the Strategic Trails Plan's new trail classifications, design standards and approaches to trail development.
2. Coordinate planned/proposed trails in the GIS data set with sector and community planning activities undertaken by Planning.
3. Communicate and coordinate Strategic Trails Plan components with neighboring jurisdictions in the region and Maryland.
4. Utilize the land-use planning and development approval process to advance development of the trail network.
5. Set policy, goals and priorities related to the countywide trail development issues identified in this planning process, including the following:
 - a. Trail proximity for residential populations
 - b. Trail connectivity to development and activity centers
 - c. Addressing barriers of the built environment
 - d. Filling gaps in the trail network
 - e. Connectivity to neighboring jurisdiction trail networks
 - f. Use of highway, railroad and utility corridors

Role of DPR with Other Agencies, the Public and Private Sector Partners

DPR can provide leadership in the trail planning, design and coordination process and facilitate robust public participation.

Strategy 1: Inform and engage partner agencies that are essential for effective trail development.

Actions:

1. Brief key agency partners about the Strategic Trails Plan's new approaches to trail development in Prince George's County.
2. Coordinate planned/proposed trails with partner park departments including the Montgomery County Department of Parks (M-NCPPC), other surrounding county park departments, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service.
3. Coordinate trail/roadway crossing upgrades with WMATA, Amtrak, CSX, SHA and DPW&T, including at-grade crossings, grade separated crossings, railroad crossings, and crossings of the Beltway and other limited access highways.



4. Develop a template Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) allowing M-NCPPC to design, construct and maintain trails located on county ROW.
5. Cooperate with DPW&T regarding the development of a bike-share system in the county and coordinate use of DPR property for the siting of bike-share stations.
6. Coordinate with WSSC to determine how trails can be established with sewer line repair and replacement work.
7. Coordinate with PEPCO/Exelon and other utilities to utilize their utility ROW and construction projects to develop the trail network.
8. Coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers and DPW&T regarding trail development and upgrades related to the levee system and floodways.
9. Coordinate trail development on Capper Cramton lands with the National Capital Planning Commission.



Strategy 2: In conjunction with the Planning Department, provide trail development guidance to developers.

Actions:

1. Implement a trail design and development training program for private sector partners.
2. Use the development review process to ensure that revitalized suburban commercial centers and new development around transit stations are connected to the trail network.



Strategy 3: In conjunction with the Planning Department, represent the County with regional and national organizations promoting trail development.

Actions:

1. Coordinate trail development and management issues related to national and regional thematic trails that pass through Prince George's County.
2. Represent the County in the Capital Trails Coalition.





Adopt New Policies to Improve Trail Implementation

To provide a solid foundation for future trail development, it is recommended that M-NCPPC and the DPR Director formally adopt a policy framework to guide trail development activities on DPR lands. Clear policies will ensure equitable development of trails geographically, and support DPR's and Planning's efforts to forge strong partnerships with County and State agencies as well as local communities, municipalities and trail user/advocacy groups.

Strategy 1: Adopt new policies at DPR to guide the trail development process.

Actions:

- a. Adopt the new trail classification system for trails in the M-NCPPC park system.
- b. Adopt trail design guidelines and standards for the Primary and Secondary trail network in the M-NCPPC park system. (See Strategic Trails Plan Part 3: Plan Elements for details.)
- c. Establish a baseline for annual trail development spending and develop a prioritization process for programming DPR capital funds for development of new trails and rehabilitation of old and substandard trails.
- d. Establish a citizen-based DPR trail advisory committee to provide structured input on trail policy, development, management and maintenance.
- e. Adopt a Trail Lighting Policy, including lighting standards and guidelines.
- f. Develop and adopt other policies as may be needed to ensure equitable management and maintenance of the park trail system.

Strategy 2: Seek changes in County and State regulatory processes to reduce trail development costs and lessen the time it takes to move a trail project from planning to construction.

Actions:

- a. Streamline the permitting process at the policy and executive level.
- b. Address environmental regulations (County and State) that evaluate paved trails using the same environmental impact standards as streets, roads and highways.





Manage the Park Trail Network Effectively

In the past, DPR attention was primarily focused on trail development (planning—construction). Maintenance and operations of trails was simply part of maintenance and operation of parks in general. However, it is clear today that there is a need to communicate regularly and directly with users, ensure that safety matters are addressed in a timely manner, deal with public safety matters, and ensure that emergency response agencies know how to find trail users that call 911 for assistance.

Additionally, management tasks include working with constituent groups and DPR divisions to upgrade the network with signage, lighting and other amenities, and manage the impacts to the trail system that result from the work of infrastructure agencies and developers. The impacts to the trail system are significant because the volume of infrastructure and development activity is large, and the projects are frequently proximate to the trail system; activities include major upgrades to roads, transit systems, levees, water and sewer systems, as well as retrofits to stormwater facilities, in-fill development and public facility relocations.

Managing safety and access along the trail system is a daily activity and largely a separate function from managing safety and access to the park system through which the trails pass. As such, it needs a policy framework and newly focused attention on its unique needs. Park police and the park rangers will play a key role in developing and implementing this policy.

Improve Trail User Experience

Strategy 1: Upgrade trail infrastructure to enhance the user experience, especially along trails in urbanizing sections of the county.

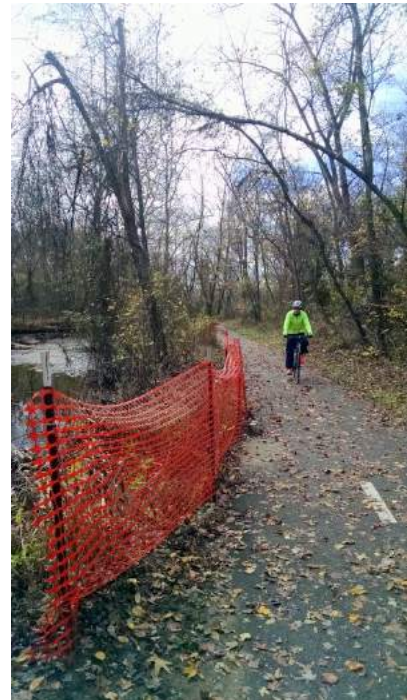
Actions:

- a. Improve the transportation function of Primary trails.
- b. Improve wayfinding on the network of Primary trails.

Strategy 2: Provide a higher grade of operational services for trail users, trail neighbors and trail partners, employing best practices used by other trail managing agencies

Actions:

- a. Establish a trail management point person in each Area Operations office and in each Park Police district.
- b. Provide a trail ranger program dedicated to the Anacostia Tributaries Trail System.
- c. Inform trail users and partner agencies and organizations about time-sensitive trail operations and management issues such as bridge closures and construction detours.



- d. Continue to manage issues arising from trails built and managed by developers, commercial property owners and homeowner’s associations (HOAs).

Increase Safety and Security

Strategy 1: Improve communication and coordination related to public safety and security.

Actions:

- a. Develop a trail address system to facilitate timely and efficient emergency response and implement it countywide.
- b. Conduct safety audits of the Anacostia Tributaries Trail System, the WB&A Trail and the Henson Creek Trail and develop remediation plans.
- c. Implement lighting, camera installation, patrol adjustments and other measures where appropriate to address public safety issues in particular areas.
- d. Compile and share crime, emergency response and user crash/incident data.



Establish Management Policies and Practices to Sustain Trail Infrastructure

Strategy 1: Develop systematic approaches for ongoing management of trail infrastructure.

Actions:

- a. Use the Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) system for data gathering, inspections and reporting of information related to trail management and maintenance.
- b. Continue the trail bridge inspection, rehabilitation and replacement initiative and develop an annual budgeting strategy based upon the results from the system-wide inspection.
- c. Separate the trail resurfacing budget from the general (M&D) asphalt resurfacing budget and establish a trail-specific needs assessment criteria and annual minimum level of investment.
- d. Strengthen the trail counting program by upgrading existing counters and strategically placing new counters throughout the system.
- e. Conduct periodic economic impact analysis using trail count data as a basis.



Maintain the Park Trail Network

Much of the park trail system follows stream valleys which are adversely affected by floods, changes in channel alignments, stormwater runoff, invasive species and stresses on forest stands due to urbanization and fragmentation. Much of the system was built in the 1990s or before and is now 20–30+ years old. These challenges, plus the steady increase of miles added to the system, make trail maintenance a challenge. To maintain trails to a standard commensurate with the agency’s national awards, expectations need to be raised, communications and coordination need to be improved, additional staff and equipment resources are needed, and volunteer/community contributions should be increased as well.

Strategy 1: Address a backlog of maintenance needs.

Actions:

- a. Continue resurfacing older sections of trail and sections with tree root upheaval.
- b. Address safety audit findings that can be categorized as routine maintenance.
- c. Initiate an invasive species removal campaign and reforestation efforts to reclaim and rebuild what remains of the riparian woodlands along stream valley trails.



Strategy 2: Establish a comprehensive trail maintenance program.

Actions:

- a. Establish a trail maintenance team leader in each of the three Area Operations offices, as well as in M&D and NHRD (Park Rangers).
- b. Determine if and how maintenance staff should be organized and deployed to make trail maintenance more efficient and effective.
- c. Determine what types of maintenance and communication equipment is needed for trail maintenance staff.
- d. Establish coordination and communication routines involving NHRD rangers, Area Maintenance staff, M&D specialists, police, trail planning and management staff and outside agencies (SHA and DPW&T).
- e. Establish and implement a trail operations and maintenance staff training program.
- f. Continue and increase activities in the Adopt-a-Trail Program.
- g. Develop a post-high school youth employment and job training program focused on trail maintenance.



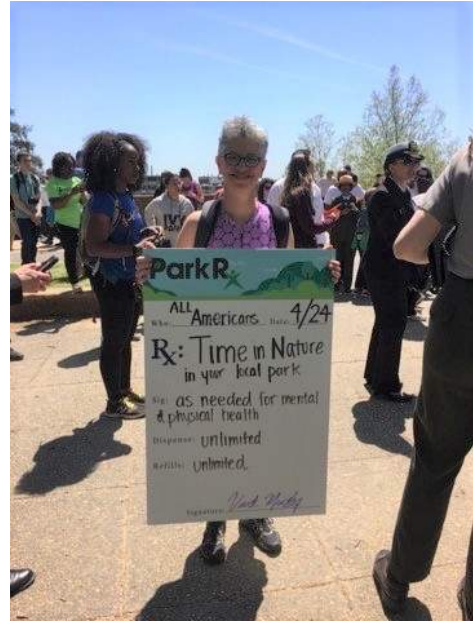


Activate the Trail Network

The 300 Club, a walking club for seniors, is one of the most successful trail activation programs initiated by DPR programming staff. More programs like this should be initiated for

families, youth, and those with mental and physical disabilities served by DPR programs. Increasingly DPR trails are being used for fun runs, Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA) rides, and similar fitness and fundraising efforts. These programs demonstrate that trails can have an important economic impact for small businesses and nonprofit organizations that share DPR's health, fitness and environmental goals.

DPR trail map/brochures are gold standard, however, the website can be improved to provide more in-depth information, timely updates, and interactive maps. An upgraded website and continued updating of trail map/brochures will form a solid foundation for additional marketing initiatives targeted at the regional tourism and recreation market.



Strategy 1: Improve trail marketing.

Actions:

- a. Brand and promote the 35+ in-park fitness loop trails.
- b. Upgrade and expand trail information on the Prince George's County Parks website; keep it current as new trail segments are opened.
- c. Update trail brochures and maps on a regular basis.
- d. Use social media, the seasonal course catalog, and other communication channels to promote and market DPR trails.
- e. Tailor and target trail marketing to recent immigrants, ethnic groups, and other cultural subsets of Prince George's County's population.
- f. Pursue direct marketing of Prince George's County trails for local and regional tourism, especially in Northern Virginia where bicycling is very popular.

Strategy 2: Add educational and training offerings related to trail activities.

Actions:

- a. Offer child and adult bicycle safety courses.
- b. Offer bicycle commuting and lifestyle courses and workshops.

Strategy 3: Use trails as a venue that supports other DPR programs and program objectives.

Actions:

- a. Establish a trails point person in each of the programming and support divisions of DPR.
- b. Use trails as a venue for providing health and fitness and environmental education programs for people with disabilities.
- c. Ensure that the Park Rx initiative effectively references DPR and other trails as health resources to be prescribed by local health providers.
- d. Use trails as a venue for *No Child Left Inside* program initiatives; this effort focuses on ensuring that all children have opportunities to play outside and develop a positive relationship with nature.
- e. Continue to use trails as a venue for environmental education and teaching Prince George's County and Maryland history, especially focusing on African-American history, farming, and themes related to the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area.
- f. Continue successful trail-based programming, including the 300 Club, Passport to Family Wellness, Fitness in the Parks, Walk with Ease, etc.





Create Trail Partnerships

Trail development and managing agencies around the nation have developed new funding streams and broadened their base of support by creating strong partnerships with the private sector. This includes nonprofit organizations, major corporations, health care institutions, small businesses, the tourism and hospitality industry and business support groups such as Chambers of Commerce. DPR and the Park Foundation should develop initiatives that can be pitched to the private sector as activities that support mutual goals.

Strategy 1: Grow the community of constituencies that are active supporters of trails in Prince George's County and create local economic impact.

Actions:

- a. Partner with the many trail-user organizations based in the county and the region, to sponsor and promote on-trail activities, including the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (Maryland Milestones), Washington Area Bicyclists Association, Anacostia Watershed Society, Black Women Bike, parkrun, the Capital Trails Coalition, TROT and others.



Strategy 2: Develop formal partnerships with municipalities within the county and education institutions, including Prince George's County Public Schools, colleges and universities.

Strategy 3: Develop formal partnerships with private sector organizations, including the business community, and health care and tourism industries.

Actions:

- a. Establish and grow partnerships with the fitness, wellness and health care industry.
- b. Establish and grow partnerships with the business community.
- c. Develop a corporate partnership program to leverage additional trail funding from the private sector.



Conclusion

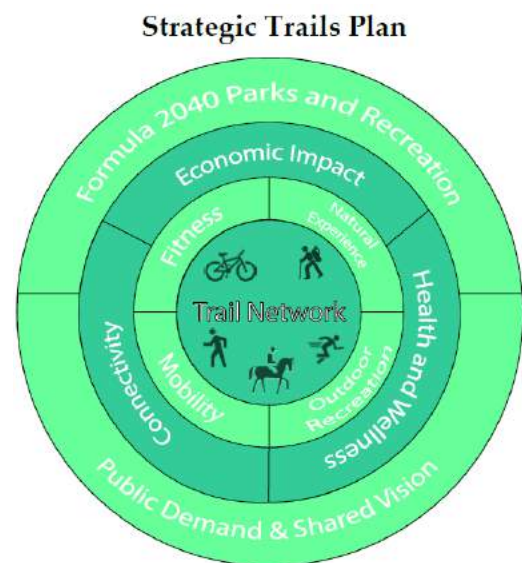
Prince George’s County has one of the largest and well-connected trail systems in the Washington metropolitan region. The Anacostia Tributaries Trail System now rivals the Washington & Old Dominion Trail and its connected trails in Northern Virginia.

In Prince George’s County, the challenges to trail development are similar in some ways to that of other Washington area jurisdictions and unique in others. Like Fairfax, Montgomery and Loudoun counties, Prince George’s County is largely suburban, making trails key as attractive bicycling and walking alternatives to large arterial roadways. However, these large roadways and other infrastructure divide the county into odd wedges and enclaves and crossing them is both critical to a functional system and costly.

Prince George’s County has two unique challenges that are not manifest in the same way in other parts of the region. First, it has strict and progressive stormwater treatment regulations. It is geographically located in the coastal plain and has wide stream valley floodplains where much of the parkland is located. This makes building trails and mitigating stormwater runoff a tremendous design challenge. Another unique challenge is the lack of a strong local transportation agency partner. DPW&T is still in the early stages of addressing multi-modal transportation and is just beginning to move beyond the 20th-century perspective about the importance of bicycling and walking in the mix of transportation options that urbanizing communities need to successfully compete in today’s economy.

Within DPR there is a need to continue building a strong trails culture. A culture where more DPR employees use the park trails and understand personally why surveyed residents say they are tops among important and needed recreation facilities. A culture where staff intuitively knows what makes a great trail and what they can do to support the trail network. A trails culture that wants every Prince Georgian to experience the outdoors, our outdoors, and enjoy the simple freedoms of walking, hiking, running, biking or horseback riding.

Finally, this culture needs to be contagious amongst residents. It needs to find and express its common cause with many other aspects of Prince George’s life, including physical health and fitness, mental health, history, tourism, economic development, strong neighborhoods and municipalities, environmental protection and conservation, youth development, sustainability and combating climate change, all the things that trails do. With such a culture, Prince George’s County will continue to lead this metropolitan region as it forges a new connection among all its communities and citizens.



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