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Regional Leaders Break Ground on W&OD Trail Enhancements in the City of Falls Church

Congestion, Environmental Sustainability and Safety Addressed

City of Falls Church, August 26, 2020 – On Wednesday, August 26, 2020, regional leaders gathered in the City of Falls Church to break ground on a nearly 1.5 mile-long segment of the W&OD Trail, impacting the region at large. The W&OD Trail is the most popular trail in Virginia, and one of the first rail-to-trails projects in the nation.

To address congestion on the busy Trail, which has seen an influx of even more users over the past six months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the "Dual Trails" improvements will feature dedicated parallel paths for pedestrians and cyclists. Separating the users will greatly improve mobility and accommodate the new level of use. A two-foot median between an eight-foot walking path and an 11-foot cycling path will be constructed, separating trail users traveling at different speeds, resulting in both capacity and safety improvements.



“If people have good alternatives to their cars, we will help to make for a more environmentally sustainable world,” remarked Michael Nardolilli, Chairman of NOVA Parks. “This and future Dual Trails in the urban areas of the trail are the most significant improvement to the W&OD Trail in a generation.”

The first section of this new Dual Trails approach now starting construction will include most of the 1.5-miles through the City of Falls Church. A separate segment of the Dual Trails will be designed for a area located in Arlington County, and other sections of the W&OD Trail will be enhanced in the years to come.

“It is fitting that the new Dual Trail enhancements start in the City of Falls Church, as the first section of the trail began here in 1974,” said P. David Tarter, Mayor, City of Falls Church. “The City is pleased to once again be at the forefront of better and healthier ways to move people.”

NOVA Parks was awarded more than \$3.24 million in Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) regional revenues to fund the W&OD Trail Enhancements in the City of Falls Church now underway.

Additionally, through the recently adopted NVTA FY2020-2025 Six Year Funding Program, NOVA Parks also received \$650,000 in NVTA regional revenues to partially fund Trail Enhancements in Arlington County.

“The W&OD Trail Enhancements Project is a significant step in reducing congestion and increasing capacity through non-motorized transportation investments for cyclists and pedestrians utilizing the busy pathway,” said Monica Backmon, Executive Director, NVTA. “The Authority is excited to team with the City of Falls Church and NOVA Parks to keep the region moving.”

In addition to promoting less congestion on roadways through the use of the Trail and carbon-free commuting, the improvements significantly improve the stormwater performance of the trail property. Numerous low impact development techniques, like swales, French drains, areas of pervious pavement, and modular wetlands that filter the rainwater, have been employed. Pollinators such as bees and butterflies, in addition to birds, will also benefit from the enhanced biodiversity of adding meadow grasses to areas. This bold project demonstrates the Northern Virginia region as a leader in environmental sustainability.

Through a regional collaboration with NOVA Parks, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority and the City of Falls Church, the following trail benefits are made possible:

- ✓ Improve the flow of people in congested areas of the W&OD by increasing capacity
- ✓ Reduce road congestion
- ✓ Provide enhanced bike and pedestrian access to the two Metrorail stations within the I-66 corridor
- ✓ Improve safety by separating slower and faster moving trail users



- ✓ Improve stormwater management with swales, modular wetlands and other low impact development tools
- ✓ Improve biodiversity with meadow grasses to enhance habitat for pollinators and birds

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