

Written Public Comment Submissions
Annual Organizational Meeting
January 14, 2021

1. Jerry Cowdan (Arlington County):

The world is changing. A transportation system based on individually owned and operated vehicles is no longer viable. NVTA's focus needs to shift from building new highways or bigger highways to improving common carrier-based forms of transportation and to improving walking and bicycling infrastructure. We need sustainable mobility options like dedicated bus lanes, trails, protected bike lanes and sidewalks in order to meet our climate goals and improve our air quality, not more highway widenings.

2. Bernard Berne (Arlington County):

The NVTA needs to revise its criteria for ranking bicycle/pedestrian trail projects, such as the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's W&OD Trail Enhancements project in Arlington. The NVTA presently ranks proposed trail projects according to their Congestion Reduction Relative to Cost (CRRC) ratings relative to comparable ratings for projects involving other transportation modes (such as transit and highways).

Bicycle/pedestrian trail projects have much lower costs than do transit and highway projects. The present rating and ranking procedures therefore favor trail projects, even where their congestion reduction (if any) is minimal.

This is especially important because any reduction of congestion on bicycle/pedestrian trails rarely, if ever, reduces congestion on area roads and highways. Many users of such trails travel for short distances and therefore would not otherwise use roads and highways for their trips.

Further, many bicycle/pedestrian trails primarily serve recreational uses, rather than transportation uses, This is especially true for trails that travel through parks. NVTA should not fund any such trail projects, as they are outside of the scope of NVTA's legislative mandate.

NVTA has never validated its rating and ranking procedures for bicycle/pedestrian trail projects. NVTA and external groups have only validated these procedures for projects involving other modes of transportation. Such validations are not relevant to bicycle/pedestrian trails, many of which have heavy recreational uses.

I therefore recommend that NVTA either revise its rating and ranking procedures for bicycle/pedestrian trail construction and improvement projects or stop funding them. The present rating and ranking criteria for such projects are inappropriate, lack validation and do not consider congestion that recreation, rather than transportation, creates.

(**Note:** This citizen pre-registered to provide live comment before the Authority as well.)

3. Neal Hicks (Arlington County):

Wherever possible, please reduce the amount of space in the public domain that is prioritizing cars. Reducing parking and car travel lanes and adding new space for pedestrians, bicycles, and small motorized vehicles should be a priority. We need bold leadership to make Northern Virginia a place that prioritizes public transit and PEOPLE, not cars.

4. Steven Ward (Fairfax County/Dranesville District):

I do not wish to speak and will not be available for the meeting. I do want to submit the following for your consideration.

As a recreational bicyclist and occasional bike commuter, I believe that NVTA should prioritize the substantial buildout of complete, connected bicycle networks to increase ridership and improve safety outcomes for all modes of transportation.

Paint alone is insufficient for roadway bike lanes, which need to be protected with substantial barriers that allow people on bikes to travel safely without inconveniencing drivers and walkers.

NVTA should prioritize improved intersection markings (e.g., bike boxes, turn queue boxes, through bike lanes, special lights, etc.) and signage that are clear and do not leave bike riders, motorists, and pedestrians in unsafe and confusing situations.

NVTA should prioritize the installation of the paved shared use paths as part of the connected network that are wide enough to reduce conflicts between users, clearly marked street intersections, and, where possible, underpasses for uninterrupted riding.

NVTA should prioritize working with local transportation officials on the identification of suitable locations for and then the creation of neighborhood bikeways on quiet streets where the speed and volume of traffic are low enough that cars and bikes can

mix comfortably. These bikeways are relatively inexpensive and quick to deploy means to allow people to rely on bikes rather than cars for short neighborhood trips and errands, and many could be connected to the larger network.

To build a quality network of bike lanes and trails, NVTA should prioritize funding for deploying analytic means to gauge infrastructure quality rather than quantity and to benchmark the status of the existing bicycle network, set goals, prioritize projects, and measure progress. At a minimum, NVTA should devote funds for the purchase of sufficient bike counters to begin gathering more data on bicycling in northern Virginia.

5. Stephanie Piperno (Fairfax, Arlington, Alexandria):

The Capital Trails Coalition would like to thank the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority for investing in multimodal projects aimed at improving mobility and reducing congestion in the region.

The Capital Trails Coalition is a collaboration of over 70 public and private organizations, agencies, and citizen volunteers, across six jurisdictions, working to complete a nearly 900-mile interconnected network of multi-use trails in the National Capital Region. The Coalition includes Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), East Coast Greenway Alliance, National Landing BID, Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling, and several advisory members, including the National Park Service, and the District Department of Transportation and other local county and city governmental agencies.

NVTA has awarded funding to several key projects across the Capital Trails Coalition Network including the Boundary Channel Drive Interchange, enhancements to the W&OD Trail, and the Route 7 widening/shared-use path. We urge you to continue to invest in multi-use trail and shared-use path projects in the next round of funding. Trails across our region have seen an unprecedented increase in use during the pandemic, and we expect this to continue even after the roll-out of the vaccine. The W&OD Trail, for example, saw an 96% increase in use from March-December 2020 (compared to 2019)!

As people start to ease back into commuting to work, people are going to turn to trails as a safe, socially distanced mode of transportation.