

# GREATER CLIFTON AREA OPEN HOUSE

OCTOBER 6, 2011

## MEETING SUMMARY

Approximately 30 people participated in the open house, held at the Town of Clifton's meeting hall. In attendance were Clifton residents, local cyclists, members of the Master Plan Bicycle Advisory Committee including Supervisor Pat Herrity's representative, FCDOT Bicycle Program staff, Charlie Strunk, and project consultants from Toole Design Group, Robert and Katie Mencarini. The following narrative summarizes the discussion and has been organized by themes. It includes the comments, questions and requests made by participants.

### SAFETY CONCERNS FOR ALL ROAD USERS

Several participants remarked that the Plan should address safety issues for all road users.

One participant mentioned that Chapel Road is not ideal for bicyclists. Another agreed and suggested that signage be installed to discourage cyclists from using the road. This comment was not met by consensus of the group.

Many roads in the rural parts of the Clifton area were noted to be unsafe for cyclists due to hills, curves, and lack of adequate sight distances. Many participants suggested that signage be installed to remind motorists to "Watch for Cyclists".

It was suggested that someone should sign or map recommended roads for biking so that recreational cyclists can pick out which roads are the safest.

Many participants voiced concern that motorists do not know how to safely maneuver around bicyclists. For example, when is it safe to pass a cyclist in a motor vehicle? When is it safe to take the lane as a cyclist? How can people communicate these rules and guidelines more effectively? Are signs the answer or are educational programs needed?

Following are some of the ideas that were discussed to address safety issues:

- For blind corners and steep grades, put signs with blinking lights that detect cyclists (when the sign detects a cyclist, the lights begin blinking to warn motorists that a cyclist

is around the corner/going up the hill. They continue blinking until the cyclist is out of the way).

- If the BIKES MAY USE FULL LANE is used, it may be helpful to add a plaque to the sign assembly that says “FOR SAFETY”, to remind motorists that cyclists who may be in the middle of the lane are not doing so just to annoy the motorist, but rather because it is the safest location for the cyclist to be in when there is no shoulder.

## BICYCLING CONDITIONS IN CLIFTON

Colchester Road can be comfortable for cyclists. Participants noted that they have observed people walking along this road. It was also mentioned that this road can be a great alternative to using Clifton Road which is less comfortable for cyclists.

The best time to ride on the roads in Clifton is during the weekends before 10:00am because there is very low (if any) motor vehicle traffic on the roads. These conditions flip during the week; it’s better to bike on-road during the late morning or early afternoon.

The speed limit on Hampton road is 40 mph. This and other conditions make it very scary for cyclists and for motor vehicles trying to drive around cyclists on the road. Look into changing this or adding traffic calming measures to make this route friendlier for cyclists.

When roads are patched rather than repaved fully, this can be extremely challenging for bicyclists.

Speed bumps can be a challenge for bicyclists. Cutting out pieces for bicyclists would be helpful, but is not a high priority. The speed bumps on Yates Ford Road are not a problem for cyclists.

Rumble strips can also be uncomfortable for bicyclists, but traffic calming is also helpful.

Downtown Clifton does not have many (if any) short-term bicycle parking.

Adding pavement (even within the public right-of-way) may be politically challenging if the road runs in front of private, residential properties.

It will be important to talk to Susan Yantis about upcoming infrastructure projects in the Town of Clifton. The Streetscape project on Main Street is underway. Recreational development of the floodplain area is another project within the Clifton City limits that should be informed by the Countywide Master Plan recommendations.

## POSSIBLE TRAIL CONNECTIONS/IMPROVEMENTS

Participants asked if the Cross County Trail will ever be paved and completed? This would improve connectivity for many neighborhoods. [It was reported to the group, by County staff, that the CCT is not intended to be paved in all areas. It is primarily a hiking trail.]

Participants mentioned that the Oakmore trail is good for both transportation and recreation but it is not completely paved. It was intended to be a hiking/biking recreational trail, but it is gaining in popularity amongst commuters because it provides connectivity.

Explore the feasibility of a cycling path that parallels the Norfolk Southern train track.

Nelson Kile has mapped out several trail maps of local trails. This is accessible online at [www.nelsonkile.com](http://www.nelsonkile.com). These trails should be added to maps as existing trails.

## IDEAS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Consider making the City [Town] of Clifton a stop on the Virginia Railway Express (VRE). Since the Town of Clifton does not want to provide [motor vehicle] parking, make this stop accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists by: a) not providing vehicular parking and b) providing long-term bicycle parking options such as cages or lockers. It may be necessary to implement a residential parking permit system for the neighborhoods around downtown to prevent commuters from parking cars in the neighborhood, which can be a nuisance to residents.

Where feasible, [in the uphill direction of narrow roads,] construct a segment of shoulder for bicyclists to use, which allows them to ride outside of the travel lane and then merge in again. This treatment was suggested for roads in Clifton that have steep climbs, blind curves and no existing shoulder. This was suggested as a compromise for those roads that cannot support adding shoulders for the entire length of road. These were called “turnout spots” for bicyclist during the workshop discussion.

Consider reaching out to Bikes Belong. They may be able to extend the outreach of this project.

## ADDITIONAL PARTICIPATION

Six comment forms were collected from the following participants:

Nelson Kile; Ursula Fritz; Martin Hyatt; Kyle Murphy; Fred Verdi; and Marilyn Stoney.

One comment was also emailed to the Consultant Team and County staff. This person’s feedback is included below:

“One idea I would like to have forwarded to Supervisor Herrity is develop a bicycle route connecting the Fairfax county Parks.

I would like to see a loop built starting from Burke Lake Park going down Clifton Rd to Clifton and connecting Hemlock Overlook, Bull Run, and Fountain Head Parks. There already exists a sidewalk recreational trail extending from Fairfax to Lorton. Completion of this park loop would put these wonderful parks within reach of many whose only access right now is to drive.

One thing I would not want to see is bike routes on some of the Virginia Byways throughout the county on streets. The construction and expansion of any Virginia Scenic Byways such as Clifton Rd would destroy the esthetic value of these places. Instead I would suggest that the county consider partnering with the holders of the utility right of ways throughout the county. I noticed recently that there is almost a complete network of right of ways that run the along the roads that would be part of the park loop I proposed. One of the benefits to using the utility right of ways is that the need for tree maintenance would be reduced. Tree overgrowth is the cause of so many electrical failures in the area.

Another suggestion would be to allow a limited number of vendors to set up shop along the bike path described above. This would provide riders a place to stop, rest, cool off, and get a drink.

In general, I do not think designated bike routes are safe or efficient. I would only consider them in extremely congested urban areas.

Finally, I would suggest that the park loop described above be connected to the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park bike route. This would make commuting via bicycle a possibility for many.”

Rachel Leonard, a writer for the local Patch, was present for the first part of the meeting. A link to her article is here: <http://fairfaxstation.patch.com/articles/county-seeks-input-on-bike-paths-in-clifton>

PUBLIC COMMENTS: CLIFTON AREA MAP

