

MT VERNON | EASTERN LEE OPEN HOUSE

NOVEMBER 17, 2011

MEETING SUMMARY

Approximately 40 residents and community stakeholders from the Eastern Lee District, Mt Vernon District and Ft Belvoir area attended the open house held at the South County Government Center. In attendance were residents, local cycling advocates, members of the Master Plan Bicycle Advisory Committee, as well as, Joan Clark from Supervisor McKay's office. FCDOT Bicycle Program staff, Charlie Strunk, and project consultants from Toole Design Group, Robert Patten, Nina Liggett and Mauricio Hernandez, facilitated the meeting.

OVERVIEW

At the outset of the meeting attendees were given the opportunity to review maps and other material in an open house format. The project team then provided an overview of the project, recent work, and desired outcomes for the public comment section of the meeting. After the presentation, there were a series of small group discussions. Extensive feedback was provided on the hard copy maps, which has been digitized in GIS and will be used in the planning/analysis process moving forward. The following is a summary of those shared opinions and recommendations.

REGIONAL COMMENTS

- Ft Hunt Road is a preferred connection for bicycle commuters. Bike Lanes, a adequate and consistent paved shoulder width, and/or shared roadway signs are desired to increase safety and visibility of cyclists.
- Residential streets parallel to the GW Memorial Parkway serve as an alternative route to the very busy Mt Vernon Trail, especially when it is crowded.
- Short neighborhood connecting paths through parks and school grounds exist but need signage.
- An off-road path along Ft Hunt from Westgrove Rd, past the Library towards Belle View Road needs to be resurfaced and widened and would improve safety for young people bicycling to/from the library and a school across the street.
- Conflicts with high speed vehicular traffic, during AM/PM rush hours especially, make it difficult to connect to shopping destinations along the entire Route 1 corridor. Two choke points make it difficult to travel on parallel side streets: one at Route 1 and Buckman Road and one at Beacon

Hill Road and Route 1. Crossing Route 1 is also challenging at these and most other intersections.

ROSE HILL AREA COMMENTS

(This area includes Hybla Valley, Kingstown, Rose Hill and Huntley Meadows Park)

- The existing preferred routes shown on the Fairfax Bike Map are rideable and convenient but need significant signage to help cyclists navigate because there are a lot of turns and if you turn on the wrong road you may have to double back.
- If South Kings Hwy had bike lanes it would be an ideal east/west connection through the area, as of right now it is uncomfortable to ride on due to high speed traffic and narrow to no existing paved shoulders. There is a gap in the shoulder between Mulligan Rd and Beulah Rd.
- A connection on Backlick Road from Barta Rd to the Franconia-Springfield Metro is needed.
- The segment from Bush Hill Rd to Leewood Rd on Franconia is difficult to ride on, needs more shoulder.
- Telegraph Road needs bike lanes. Old Telegraph Road is a car cut-thru and not convenient for cyclists to use.
- Pine Brook Road is also a cut thru for cars from Telegraph Rd to Franconia Avenue. No facilities are recommended.
- A short cut from South Kings Hwy to Route one by way of Harrison Rd is doable, needs signage and on road facilities – connect to Beacon Hill Rd intersection.
- South Van Dorn from Kingstown to S. Kings Hwy has pieces of a side path but needs to be formally connected.

MT VERNON AREA COMMENTS

(This area includes Huntington, Mt. Vernon, and Fort Hunt)

- Crossing the GW Parkway to and from the Mt. Vernon trail is difficult due to the lack of signals that would stop traffic.
- Improved access to the Huntington Metro Station along the Quander Road route would be helpful.
- It would be useful to sign the residential streets that are parallel to the Mt. Vernon trail, so make that option available to more than local cyclists who know the neighborhood.
- Access south from Mt. Vernon to and through the Ft. Belvoir base is critical.
- Local cyclists know which streets lead from neighborhoods east and west of Route 1 to signalized locations at Route 1, which are key to reaching shopping and commercial destinations that may be on the other side from one's approach.
- Lack of an alternative to Route 1 between Huntley Meadows Park and the neighborhoods south and west of Little Hunting Creek is a major barrier.
- A trail along Cameron Run between Telegraph Road and Route 1 is in existing master plans and should be built with any type of redevelopment or flood control work taking place in that area.

- The intersections at Ft. Hunt and Route 1, a commercial parking lot and Route 1, and Huntington Avenue and Route 1 need safety improvements for cyclists coming and going from the bikeway on the Wilson Bridge. Northbound, right turning motor vehicles on Ft. Hunt do not yield to cyclists on the sidewalk.
- Pole Road is an important link to Ft. Belvoir, but does not accommodate bicyclists well for its whole length. It was repaved and restriped in 2009 from Leaf Rd to Old Mill Rd, not a road diet but better than before. From Frye St to Cooper St is difficult to ride, there is no shoulder.
- Sherwood Hall Lane, Beacon Hill Road and Collingwood Road are some of the most important east west links across Mt. Vernon.
- The east west link using Bedford Drive near Huntley Meadows needs further improvements, especially in crossing S. Kings Hwy and entering Lee District Park.
- Neighborhood streets in the Franconia area (mapped on the County Bike Map) provide good east –west bike routes, but wayfinding signage is need as they are hard to follow. The Clermont Ave. cut through to get into Alexandria needs better signage.
- In central Mt. Vernon, the library, government center, hospital, middle school and Hollin Hall shopping centers are popular destinations that need to be served from all directions.

FT. BELVOIR AREA COMMENTS

(This area includes Ft. Belvoir and Mason Neck)

- Comments for this area concentrated on the Ft Belvoir North Area development which will bring an influx of over 8,000 new commuters. Better connection to the Franconia-Springfield Metro is desired as well as a connection to the Mt. Vernon trail.
- Gunston Road lacks an adequate paved shoulder.
- Boat trailers accessing the River have precedence of causing collisions with cyclists, they have significant blind spots.
- Sharrows are desired on Old Chester Road and Furnace Road.
- The side path along Mt Vernon Memorial Hwy from Mount Vernon Hwy to Route 1 is unridable and needs to be resurfaced.

PROGRAM COMMENTS

- Safety is a big concern. Driver education, law enforcement and share-the road awareness is needed.

PRESENTATION COMMENTS

- An attendee identified himself as a liaison to the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation which is currently working on Route 1 development. He offered to facilitate a meeting in order to identify any opportunities along the Route 1 corridor.
- Question: Is this a vision plan or a policy plan?
Answer: It is both. The county hopes to set forth a vision for making the county bicycle friendly.

It is also a policy plan, as the intention is to prepare a documents and map that can be adopted to be part of the Comprehensive Plan for the County. This plan will have a large amount of specific bicycle facility recommendations for roads and streets throughout the County. These will be shown on a series of maps and will provide direction for VDOT, developers, County agencies and others who may be involved with implementing road and park improvements.

- Question: When will a draft of the plan be available for review?

Answer: There will be one or two final centrally located public meetings to review and comment on the draft plan in May or June 2012. The location and time of the countywide public meetings will be posted on the project website as soon as it is scheduled.

FEEDBACK PROVIDED ON COMMENT FORMS

The following comments were provided on comment forms by attendees at the open. Attendees who provided feedback in this form include: Tony Fontana, Philip F. Lewis, Mark Murphy, Joe Tedino, and Dan Twomey; three comments were anonymous.

Thanks for holding this meeting, very valuable and informative. Representing Marlan Forest, my concern has to do with repaving a vital section of an existing trail along Ft. Hunt Road (West Side) from Westgrove Blvd to the Martha Washington Library.

The FCDOT must coordinate internally to add bicycle lanes on Richmond Highway conjunction with the previously approved Richmond Highway Transportation Initiative.

On-Street Bicycling facilities are preferable. The problems with off-road facilities are 1) they tend to get neglected regarding maintenance (cleaning and pavement upkeep) and 2) they create safety issues at crossings.

I enjoy biking on roads in Mt Vernon area because vehicle drivers (cars, trucks, buses) are courteous and safe. I emphasize bikers to wear bright clothing or signs, a rear view mirror on their helmet, and watch what is behind (more than in front) and wave with arm to following vehicles.

Please consider an appropriate accommodation for bicyclists along Backlick Road between the bike bridge over I-95 and Barta Road. This would encourage more of the 8,500 people that work at Fort Belvoir North Area to use a bike to get to/from the Franconia/Springfield Metro Station.

Most bike trails are shared use with pedestrians and are not wide enough to accommodate this. Shared use trails are fraught with peril: dogs, kids, walkers and

joggers do not mix with cyclists - especially commuting riders. Follow [the] example of Portland or [the] Twin Cities, MN and factor in a trail system that offers separate trails for pedestrians and cyclists. Not that I am holding my breath.

Paths don't seem to be good a good solution when they are narrow and shared with foot traffic or when they are not in a straight line. [I] cannot stand Mt Vernon Parkway Path for cycling.

Recent vehicular assaults on cyclist have made me afraid to cycle on roads, although I think cycling should be accommodated on roadways.

Motorists need education on how to share the road.

Much better education for all on rights and responsibilities of bikes & cars.

Much more enforcement of traffic laws (bikes and cars)