GEORGE SNYDER TRAIL

Current plan

The current George Snyder Trail project will complete construction of a 2-mile east/west trail to connect the proposed VDOT shared use path along Route 123 with the City's Wilcoxon Trail. The 30% design plans show a 10-foot-wide asphalt trail, (yellow and black lines in map below), built to VDOT Road and Bridge Standards to accommodate commuters, running through forests, floodplains, and riparian Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) along Accotink Creek.

But…environmental goals are being sacrificed for multimodal goals

Paving a wide path through a forested floodplain ignores the natural environment goals to "Preserve, promote, and enhance a healthy environment" specified in the Comprehensive Plan. As designed, the current version of the George Snyder Trail will result in:

- Negative ecological impacts in riparian areas
- Loss of native tree canopy and wildlife habitat
- Greater stormwater runoff
- Increased vulnerability to invasive plants
- Long-term, increased trail maintenance costs

The City's goals of more bicycle connectivity, ecological preservation, stream protection and fiscal responsibility are laudable, but the current plan falls short of meeting all but the first of those goals.

Can we achieve both connectivity and environmental goals? Yes!

A dual-path alternative of a pedestrian woodland path (following the current sewer line cut) and a multimodal route using lightly traveled secondary roads would avoid the negative impacts while realizing the original vision of the George Snyder Trail.

By adding short connectors and adding share-the-road techniques (such as painted lane markers or sharrows as on Norman Ave.) on Ranger Rd. and Draper Dr. (purple line in map below), the City would leverage existing road infrastructure. Doing so would maximize usage by commuters and recreational cyclists in all seasons while minimizing the long-term maintenance cost to the city. Connection to the Draper/Fairfax Blvd controlled intersection via Draper Drive ensures a safer bicycle route than adding two-way bicycle traffic to the existing sidewalk along Fairfax Boulevard. Work along the B1/C1 section should be coordinated with the proposed stream restoration in the area to minimize tree loss.

An unpaved woodland trail for pedestrians on the *north* side of the creek between the A2 marker and Plantation Pkwy, following the sewer line cut, would provide recreational use with minimal tree loss to preserve the area's ecological benefits.

For more info, contact: Philip Latasa (Friends of Accotink Creek; steward@accotink.org) or Judy Fraser (EcoLogics Design and Consulting LLC; jrobbfraser@gmail.com)

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Left: Originally asphalt, this section of Fairfax County's Cross County Trail washed away and had to be replaced with more durable concrete (twice as expensive as asphalt). New gabion reinforcements have now been added to prevent it eroding into Accotink Creek, adding more maintenance issues.

The costs of all future repairs of the George Snyder Trail will be borne by the City. *(Photo: Friends of Accotink Creek)*

Right: Construction of Fairfax County's Cross County Trail resulted in damage to tributary crossings left unprotected from construction traffic and culverting of others, despite application of VDOT specifications, Erosion and Sediment inspections, and the use of specialized engineering design and construction firms. *(Photo: Friends of Accotink Creek)*

Left: In under 3 years, asphalt paving of this section of Fairfax County's Cross County Trail was physically displaced by flowing waters. (Also note the wide right of way cleared for this approximately 8' wide path)

(Photo: Friends of Accotink Creek)

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