

June 5, 2023

Dear Mayor Read and Councilmembers Bates, Doyle Feingold, Greenfield, Lim, Ross, and Stehle,

We are writing to express serious concern about the City's impending vote on whether or not to move a section of the George Snyder Trail from Stafford Drive and Cardinal Road into the nearby woods behind the Mosby Woods Condos and the Cambridge Station Park.

As a resident of Cambridge Station, I oppose this plan on environmental, reputational, practical, and fiscal grounds. While the proposed trail ostensibly serves as a new connector to the Willcoxon Trail, the existing neighborway is far more ecologically friendly (it will not destroy trees and wildlife habitats) and is a direct, well-established route, via Stafford Drive and Cardinal Road, through Draper Drive Park, and down to the crossing at Draper and Fairfax Blvd. The City's proposal is to cut and pave with asphalt a 10-foot wide path, with a 3- to 5-foot clearance on either side, through the woods, replacing the existing 3 foot dirt path that pedestrians use. To visualize the width and impact of the proposed path, use this link: [George Snyder Trail Visual Impacts](#)

First, **environmentally and ecologically**, the project risks irreversible damages. There has been no coordination with the Accotink Creek Stream Restoration project as to the net impact of the additional stormwater runoff into the soon-to-be restored creek. While hundreds of trees will be removed for that project, that project has not taken into account the impact of the additional hundreds that will be removed for the Snyder Trail project. In addition to the damaging impact of the additional pollutants on the creek and fragile flora and fauna, the project also undermines the goals of the creek restoration project to reduce the silt that collects downstream in Lake Accotink.

There would seem to be significant flood risks, including specific flood risks to our neighborhood association park.

Next, **reputationally**, the project risks significant damage to Fairfax City, whose moniker of "Tree City" is increasingly threatened. The loss of trees that remove carbon emissions from our air and absorb noise pollution from Fairfax Boulevard cannot be reversed. Planting young trees to replace old-growth is scarcely a compensation, with decades required to approach the status quo. Moreover, destruction of old growth forest that is home to wildlife and rare native plants, thereby undermining the City of Fairfax's claim to be a Tree City.

**Practically** speaking, Stafford Drive and Cardinal Road already provide the current George Snyder Trail with an ADA-compliant, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly walkway. Why destroy the woodlands to move the trail? Far more useful for pedestrians and cyclists would be creation of a safe throughway for pedestrians and cyclists linking the current end of the Syder Trail at Draper Drive park to the Willcoxon trail. Currently, there is no through sidewalk, no bike lane, and no signage to remind motorists of the speed limit and to watch for pedestrians and cyclists. Having traversed this path numerous times on foot and by bicycle, I've had too many near misses. Worse, so has my son.

**Fiscally**, spending tax dollars (whether city, state, or federal) merely because they have been appropriated is ill-advised. A small fraction of those funds could be used to create a sidewalk and bike lane on Draper Drive. Over the medium and longer terms, creating safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists will continue to attract young families to the city, while decimating remaining swaths of forest will do the opposite.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote NO on the proposed change to the George Snyder Trail and to direct the City's planners to avoid additional threats to our dwindling swaths of nature. It is in our short-, medium-, and long-term interest to do so in order to maintain the quality of life for which Fairfax City is known.

Thank you,