

City of Falls Church
Planning Commission

Meeting Date: 07-01-2019	Title: W&OD Trail Crossings Project	Agenda No.: 9C
Proposed Motion: N/A Work Session Item		
Originating Dept. Head: Gary Fuller, AICP, Acting Planning Director 703-248-5041 GHF 06-26-2019		Report Prepared By: Jeffrey Sikes, Senior Planner JPS 6-21-19

REQUEST:

Planning Commission is requested to hold a work session to discuss the preliminary design (30 percent plans) of four W&OD trail crossings to be built within the City.

The work session is intended to inform the Planning Commission of the grant funded project and to provide the Commission an opportunity to provide feedback and advice on the design of the individual trail crossings prior to final design.

RECOMMENDATION: None. Work session discussion only. As part of the work session, staff requests the Planning Commission’s input on the following specific items:

1. Design concepts for the crossings
2. Assignment of vehicular and cyclists right of way at the crossings at North Spring and North Oak Streets – Where “STOP” signs are for vehicular traffic and bike/pedestrian traffic given the right-of-way when crossing the street. At the other two crossings at Great Falls and Little Falls Streets the “STOP “ signs are for the W&OD Trail users and the vehicles have the right-of-way.

APPLICATION:

The W&OD Trail Crossings Project is a City initiated project identified in the adopted Capital Improvement Program (CIP). In 2017, the City was awarded a federal Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant in the amount of \$622,000 to design and construct improved trail crossings of the W&OD trail at four locations in the City. The crossing locations are at N Spring St, N Oak St, Great Falls St and Little Falls St.

The W&OD Park, a former railroad right of way, is owned by the Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority (NOVA Parks) and the City has easements for roadway crossings at six locations in the City. The W&OD Park is a linear park with a width of 100-feet that runs the length of the City and beyond. There are 16 acres of W&OD parkland in the City. The entire W&OD Park runs from Shirlington in Arlington to Purcellville, a distance of 45 miles.

The current roadway crossings are conflict points for persons traveling along the W&OD trail and persons crossing the W&OD trail. The existing design of the crossings downplays the prominence of the W&OD Park and causes confusion about the expected behavior on the part of

38 trail and roadway users. Changes to the trail crossings should reinforce the importance of the
39 W&OD Park.

40

41 The W&OD Park Trails Crossing Project consists of four crossing locations:

- 42 • North Spring Street – at N. Spring Street and Fulton Avenue
- 43 • North Oak Street - adjacent to the Walter L. Mess Plaza Memorial
- 44 • Great Falls Street - at Great Falls Street and Pennsylvania Avenue
- 45 • Little Falls Street – at the existing fire station driveway/Veterans Common Memorial

46

47 Each of the four proposed W&OD trail crossings share the following elements:

- 48 • Narrowed roadway cross-section to 25 feet
- 49 • Raised crossing where possible for traffic calming
- 50 • Traffic control for roadway and trail users
- 51 • Lighting of the intersection
- 52 • Special Paving
- 53 • Use of the entire 100-foot right of way for the crossing project

54

55 Design plans for the project are at the 30% stage and will be completed before the
56 end of 2019, with construction to begin in 2020 once the necessary VDOT approvals have been
57 achieved.

58

59 A companion project to reconstruct the existing trail with separate pedestrian and bicyclist paths
60 is being developed by NOVA Parks with a grant from the Northern Virginia Transportation
61 Authority (NVTA). The dual-paths project alignment runs from Little Falls Street to N. West St
62 in the City. City staff, NOVA Parks and their consultants are working closely to coordinate
63 design efforts for both projects.

64

65 **BACKGROUND:**

66 In April 2016, the City Council adopted the “W&OD Park Master Plan-The City’s Greenest
67 Street” which provides the guidelines for development of the W&OD Park within the City as a
68 transportation and recreational facility and providing connections to its commercial and
69 residential neighborhoods.

70

71 Included in the W&OD Park Master Plan are concepts for the trail crossing at six locations in the
72 City. Two locations (N West St and Grove Ave crossings) are being constructed by the
73 developer of the Founder’s Row project which is currently under construction. The remaining
74 four crossings will be constructed as elements of this project.

75

76 The assignment of vehicular and cyclists right of way at the crossings is a pending issue of
77 discussion. The consultant (Toole Design Group) for the city has recommended right of way
78 preference for vehicles and trail users in a report dated February 19, 2019 (Attachment 2). The
79 city’s DPW has reviewed and commented on the assignment of users and their recommendations
80 are provide in a memorandum dated March 22, 2019 (See Attachment 3). This issue is a
81 continuing discussion and includes NOVA Parks.

82

83 Further Comprehensive Plan guidance can be found in “Mobility for All Modes”, the
84 Transportation Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, which identifies the W&OD as one of the
85 City’s Great Civic Streets. The Chapter calls for the construction of trail side plazas and the
86 expansion of the existing trail or provision for separate walking and biking paths.

87
88 The “Bicycle Master Plan” references treating the W&OD as a great street, providing separate
89 trail for pedestrians and biking with plazas and special crossings,

90

91 **LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:**

- 92 1. Site Plans of Individual W&OD Park Trail Crossings
- 93 2. Memorandum from Toole Design Group-Stop Sign Placement at Crossings
- 94 3. Memorandum from DPW on W&OD Crossing Stop Sign Placement

95

96