



October 12, 2016

Gopaul Noojibail
Superintendent National Capital Parks – East
1900 Anacostia Park, SE
Washington, DC 20020

RE: Oxon Cove Hiker-Biker Trail EA

Superintendent Noojibail:

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (“WABA”), thank you for considering these comments on the proposed Oxon Cove Multi-Use Hiker-Biker Trail Environmental Assessment.

WABA, along with the National Park Service, is a leading member of the Capital Trails Coalition, a nascent but strong coalition whose vision is to create a world-class network of multi-use trails that are equitably distributed throughout the Washington D.C. metropolitan region and provide healthy, low-stress access to open space and reliable transportation for people of all ages and abilities. The regional trails network will transform public life by and providing healthy, low-stress access to open space and reliable transportation for people of all ages and abilities.

The Proposed Hiker-Biker Trail is an excellent example of the type of infrastructure that is important not just to Southeast D.C. and Prince George’s County, but to our entire region. In addition, the trail will connect to other trails, creating walking and biking opportunities beyond the scope of the project.

There is tremendous interest among Washington area residents and visitors in opportunities to bicycle in the city. Bicycling is good for the economy, for residents’ health, and for lessening the impact of automobiles on the environment. As such, WABA supports trail development throughout the region, and within Oxon Cove Park and environs specifically. We urge the selection of Alternative 2, the “Build” option, and ask that the Park Service keep the considerations below in mind as it moves forward with this project.

Most importantly, a seamless connection between the future South Capitol Street Trail and the proposed Trail will be vital to the success and popularity of the proposed trail. Trails have a greater likelihood of being used if they are intuitive, have clear signs along the route, and are easy to find and navigate. It is essential that the proposed trail segment connect to existing trails— both in D.C. and Maryland. In Figure 3 on page 12,



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the proposed trail and the existing trail are depicted, but are not touching. No one would accept a road that suddenly ended without connecting to another road, or brought the

driver of a motor vehicle to the edge of a river without providing a means of crossing. Our trail systems are crucial components of our regional transportation system, and the people that rely on them to get where they are going are entitled to the full connectivity we expect from our road network.

With that in mind, it must be noted that the Oxon Hill Farm Trail is in poor shape. The trail begins at the intersection of Audrey Lane and Oxon Run Drive in MD, off of South Capitol St, and goes south, into Oxon Cove Park. This is a vital part of the trail system, yet it is for all practical purposes unusable because the trail is poorly maintained and several bridge connections are missing entirely. Getting the Oxon Hill Farm Trail in working shape is extremely important because it provides a connection from Washington D.C. to the Wilson Bridge. Building a mile of trail, if it connects to a poorly-maintained trail that forces trail users to wade through streams because bridges are missing will not advance the goal of connectivity as it should.

The proposed trail width is 10 feet. This is the minimum width we support for this type of project. For popular multi-use recreational trails that entice not just bicyclists, but also pedestrians, families with young children in strollers or bicycle trailers, roller-skaters, skate-boarders, and other recreational activities, 12-14 feet would be ideal.

Finally, the project proposal includes a wooden ramp that traverses the steep decline down to the water and a 20x20 foot observation deck above the water. If the cost of the project is too high to be feasible, we encourage this element to be excluded to save costs, rather than any weakening of design standards for the trail itself (see page 12).

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to following the progress of this promising project.

Sincerely,

Gregory Billing
Executive Director