



Re: Letter of Support for the Mount Vernon Trail North Enhancements Project

Dear Chairwoman Garvey and members of the Board:

We are writing to you, on behalf of the over 60 organizations that comprise the Capital Trails Coalition, to urge you to apply to fund the Mount Vernon Trail North Enhancements Project from the Round Four SMART SCALE program.

The Capital Trails Coalition (the “Coalition”) is a collaboration of over 60 public and private organizations, agencies, and citizen volunteers, across six jurisdictions, working to complete a nearly 900-mile interconnected network of multi-use trails in the National Capital Region. The Coalition includes Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), Friends of the Mt. Vernon Trail, National Landing BID, and advisory members, including the National Park Service and the District Department of Transportation.

This project is extremely important to us as the Mount Vernon Trail is a key transportation asset in our region. The 18-mile paved trail has approximately 1 million users annually. In addition to serving as a key artery between Northern Virginia and Washington, DC, the Mount Vernon Trail has become a critical recreation resource for people during the pandemic.

The National Park Service originally constructed the MVT in the 1970s and 1980s. During this period, there were no commonly held industry engineering standards, guidelines, or best practices for multi-use trails. The section of the trail between Arlington and Washington, DC averages between 8-9 feet, while today’s standard is at least 11 feet wide for a trail that sees this level of use. The recent Mount Vernon Trail Corridor Study found that trail crowding is acute throughout this section during peak periods, particularly given high bicyclist usage during summer weekdays and weekends. Moreover, the data used in this study was taken from 20016-2018, and we know that trail use has grown tremendously in the past two years and exponentially since April of this year. Widening the trail to the industry standard is not only critical in order to reduce the number of crashes along the trail, but is also extremely important to be able to maintain proper social distance during the remainder of the pandemic.

This investment will drastically improve safety for cyclists, rollers, runners, and pedestrians. We hope that you will consider voting for this project.

Sincerely,

Liz Thorstensen

Liz Thorstensen
Chair, Capital Trails Coalition
Vice President, Trail Development at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy