



WABA

WASHINGTON AREA
BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

Good evening Chair Hewlett and Members of the Planning Board,

My name is Stephanie Piperno and I am here on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association.

On behalf of WABA's over 6,500 members, we would like to thank MNCPPC's Department of Parks and Recreation for their regional leadership in multi-use trail development and maintenance. Off-street trails provide places for people to exercise, provide reliable transportation routes, and support local business and tourism. In 2013, a survey of citizens countywide showed that walking, hiking and biking trails are the single-most visited recreation facilities that DPR manages.

DPR has taken the lead on big and complex projects like the Central Avenue Connector Trail and the Little Paint Branch Trail all while being responsible for maintaining 164 miles of existing trails. Although the county has a robust system of existing trails, the trails are not equitably distributed, and the County has over 240 miles of planned trails left to build to complete the Capital Trails Network. DPR has thought creatively about how to fund these trail projects. In July, DPR submitted a 23 million dollar dual-County RAISE grant application with Montgomery County Parks and the National Park Service. This bi-county approach will help make the application more attractive for this very competitive national funding program. DPR has also applied, and successfully won, trail design funds through MWCOG's Land-Use Connections program. We are very pleased to see DPR applying for and winning regionally competitive funding!

More federal funding, however, comes with a large administrative burden that the department is not yet staffed to meet. We urge DPR to hire a new, full-time Trails Planner to bring the trail projects that already have funding across the finish line as well as focus on trail development in the southern part of the County. They can also assist with implementing the projects outlined in the County's RAISE grant should the County be selected.

In addition, WABA would like to see more funds allocated for trail maintenance. It is no secret that trails have seen a drastic increase in use and with increased use comes additional wear and tear. Furthermore, we are seeing more frequent flooding events across the County. These flooding events are washing out portions of trail and trail bridges and money needs to be allocated to repair these key connections.

We are very grateful that the County Council has acknowledged the importance of this trail network through the passage of the Capital Trails Resolution this summer. If you are wondering why the Planning Board should make this investment, I urge you to review the Economic Impact Report that we released in April (which can be found on capitaltrailscoalition.org). We know that completing the trail network will bring 190 million dollars worth of economic impacts to the

County each year and save the County \$435 million annually. Trails are worth the investment, and we hope you will seriously consider these two funding requests.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

