



## Georgetown Pike Footpath Feasibility Study Planning Workshop #3

### MEETING MINUTES

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DATE: June 13, 2019  
TIME: 10:00 to 12:00 PM  
LOCATION: McLean Governmental Center Community Room  
1437 Balls Hill Rd., McLean, VA  
  
SUBJECT: Planning Workshop #3 – Meeting Minutes (Final Version)

MINUTES PREPARED BY: Kimley-Horn

#### ATTENDEES:

Name	Organization / Role	Phone	Email
Alazar Feleke	FHWA EFLHD – Project Manager	703-404-6319	<a href="mailto:alazar.feleke@dot.gov">alazar.feleke@dot.gov</a>
Katerina Roman	FHWA EFLHD	703-404-6291	<a href="mailto:Katarina.roman@dot.gov">Katarina.roman@dot.gov</a>
Makaya Royal	NPS NCR – FLTP Coordinator	202-619-7092	<a href="mailto:makayah_royal@nps.gov">makayah_royal@nps.gov</a>
Anne O'Neill	NPS NCR – RTCA	202-619-7154	<a href="mailto:anne_o'neill@nps.gov">anne_o'neill@nps.gov</a>
Benjamin Stinnett	NPS/GWMP	202-439-7333	<a href="mailto:Benjamin_stinnett@nps.gov">Benjamin_stinnett@nps.gov</a>
Jane Edmondson	Supervisor Foust's Office	703-356-0551	<a href="mailto:Jane.edmondson@fairfaxcounty.gov">Jane.edmondson@fairfaxcounty.gov</a>
Jenny Kaplan	Supervisor Foust's Office	703-356-0551	<a href="mailto:Jennifer.kaplan@fairfaxcounty.gov">Jennifer.kaplan@fairfaxcounty.gov</a>
Tim Hartzell	VDOT NOVA District L&D	703-259-2749	<a href="mailto:timothy.hartzell@vdot.virginia.gov">timothy.hartzell@vdot.virginia.gov</a>
Saleh A. Said	VDOT Bridge	703-259-1956	<a href="mailto:saleh.said@vdot.virginia.gov">saleh.said@vdot.virginia.gov</a>
Paul Shirey	FCPA Branch Manager	703-324-8738	<a href="mailto:paul.shirey@fairfaxcounty.gov">paul.shirey@fairfaxcounty.gov</a>
Tom McFarland	FCPA	703-324-8688	<a href="mailto:Thomas.McFarland@fairfaxcounty.gov">Thomas.McFarland@fairfaxcounty.gov</a>
Tim Hackman	FCPA Board	703-759-9154	<a href="mailto:dranesvillepab@gmail.com">dranesvillepab@gmail.com</a>
Alex Heiberger	Madeira School CFO	703-556-8241	<a href="mailto:aheiberger@madeira.org">aheiberger@madeira.org</a>
Karen Jones	PHTA/Fairfax Trails and Streams	703-638-3218	<a href="mailto:sadiqi0417@gmail.com">sadiqi0417@gmail.com</a>
Bill Niedringhaus	PHTA/Fairfax Trails and Streams	703-244-2476	<a href="mailto:wniedrin@gmail.com">wniedrin@gmail.com</a>
Josh Silverman	PHTA	703-582-3456	<a href="mailto:betula54@msn.com">betula54@msn.com</a>
Ernest Rodriguez	MORE	202-304-8675	<a href="mailto:president@more-mtb.org">president@more-mtb.org</a>
Paul Kohlenberger	McLean Citizens Association (MCA)	703-980-0885	<a href="mailto:pkohlenberger@mcleanchamber.org">pkohlenberger@mcleanchamber.org</a>
Ed Monroe	MCA Environment Parks Rec	(not provided)	<a href="mailto:ewmmonroe@gmail.com">ewmmonroe@gmail.com</a>
John Martin	Kimley-Horn Project Manager	703-674-1305	<a href="mailto:john.martin@kimley-horn.com">john.martin@kimley-horn.com</a>
Keith Aimone	Kimley-Horn Landscape Architect	703-674-1314	<a href="mailto:keith.aimone@kimley-horn.com">keith.aimone@kimley-horn.com</a>
Danielle McCray	Kimley-Horn Planner/Engineer	703-674-1381	<a href="mailto:Danielle.mccray@kimley-horn.com">Danielle.mccray@kimley-horn.com</a>
Amanda Bahrij	Kimley-Horn Engineer	703-674-1343	<a href="mailto:Amanda.Bahrij@kimley-horn.com">Amanda.Bahrij@kimley-horn.com</a>

#### Stakeholders Unable to Attend on June 13:

Debbie Spiliotopoulos	Northern Virginia Regional Commission	703-642-4631	<a href="mailto:DSpilio@novaregion.org">DSpilio@novaregion.org</a>
Corey Miles	Northern Virginia Regional Commission	703-642-4625	<a href="mailto:cmiles@novaregion.org">cmiles@novaregion.org</a>

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#### Introduction

- This 3rd Planning Workshop for the Georgetown Pike Footpath Feasibility study was held with the study's stakeholders to review refined concepts and discuss draft recommendations.

- The study is being completed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD), in coordination with the National Park Service (NPS), with assistance from Kimley-Horn through a task order under Kimley-Horn's on-call services contract with EFLHD.
- Following introductions of the participants, the discussion generally followed the agenda and the slides in the attached presentation (Attachment 1).

#### Purpose of Study

- Alazar Feleke provided a review of the scope of work and noted that the focus of this effort is to assess the feasibility of options for a trail connection in the Georgetown Pike corridor and for pedestrians or hikers to cross over Difficult Run either next to Georgetown Pike or at a location within the park.
- Using the slides from the attached presentation, John Martin provided an overview of the study area and the project limits.
- A vision or overarching theme of this project is connections, i.e., completing a connection of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) and connecting to other trails and pedestrian facilities in the region.
- The purpose of the study is to examine feasibility:
  - Feasibility of a footpath along Georgetown Pike connecting existing and planned facilities
  - Feasibility of options for a pedestrian bridge over Difficult Run to connect to the existing Difficult Run Trail
- This current study is consistent with the NPS goal of connecting people to parks.
  - The PHNST network spans the corridor between the Chesapeake Bay and the Allegheny Highlands in western PA; the current project area is heavily traveled but needs better connections.
  - Great Falls Park is one of the most visited parks in the region; similarly, Scott's Run Nature Preserve is also a busy park.
- Anne O'Neill offered an additional NPS goal of enhancing outdoor recreation access, as stated in Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3366 (April 18, 2018)
- She also suggested that the study report incorporate similar goals of Fairfax County.

#### Project Overview

- The project area includes Georgetown Pike (VA 193) from Difficult Run Trail to Towlston Road and to the west end of Madeira School public access easement.
- The scope of the feasibility study includes stakeholder outreach, GIS mapping, concept planning, environmental reviews, constructability and cost analyses, and summary report with next steps.
- An overview of the project schedule was provided:
  - Spring – Fall 2018: Planning Workshop #1 and Field Investigation (study also put on hold pending contract modification)
  - Fall 2018 – Spring 2019: Environmental review and development of draft concept designs
  - Spring 2019: Planning Workshop #2
  - Summer 2019: Concept Design/Draft Final Report
  - June 2019: Workshop #3
  - Summer/Fall 2019: Final Concept Design/Final Report
- It was noted that the study was put on hold for a few months (between dates listed above) while the study scope was modified to include the segment from Towlston Road to the Madeira School property and for several weeks during the recent federal government shutdown.

## Stakeholders

- Stakeholders engaged as part of this study are listed below.
  - Fairfax County, Dranesville District (Supervisor Foust)
  - McLean Citizens Association
  - Great Falls Citizens Association
  - Madeira School
  - FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD)
  - National Park Service (NPS):
    - National Capital Region Offices of Planning, Transportation, & RTCA (Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program)
    - George Washington Memorial Parkway
  - Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
  - Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT)
  - Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA)
  - Potomac Heritage Trail Association (PHTA)
  - Fairfax Trails and Streams
  - Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts (MORE)
  - NOVA Parks
  - Northern Virginia Regional Commission
- The group identified additional organizations to consider, such as the FFX County Health Department and local businesses that may support a footpath project.

## Efforts to Date

- The group reviewed a regional trails connections map that illustrates the greater connectivity from the project study area to trails and projects to the northwest and to the south.
  - Connections to the northwest include the Cross County Trail (CCT) and Potomac Heritage Trail to Algonkian Park
  - Connections to the south include the existing easement to the Madeira School, existing scenic trails, Scotts Run Stream Trail, VDOT-funded trail as part of I-495 Express Lanes Northern Extension Project, and the PHNST from Scotts Run Park to Roosevelt Island.
- At the April 2018 Workshop, stakeholders gathered to confirmed purpose of the project as a trail study and discuss background of the study area and project. Madeira School provided input. Stakeholders drew possible footpath alignments and discussed adding 0.3 mile-segment to scope of study (from Towlston Road to existing easement along Madeira School property).
- At the May 2019 Workshop, stakeholders reviewed preliminary findings, alignments, and concepts. The group discussed pros and cons of each alignment and cross section, accessibility, and potential funding programs to consider.

## Previous Studies

- Georgetown Pike Trail Feasibility Summary Findings
  - Completed by Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) several years ago
  - Identified issues influencing feasibility of bicycle/pedestrian trail along Georgetown Pike, between the Capital Beltway and Great Falls Park
- Field Trip Report
  - In March 2017, Alazar led group on a field trip to project site area to explore potential opportunities for an alignment to close the gap in the Potomac Heritage Trail.
  - Representatives of both FHWA EFLHD and NPS participated in the field trip.

- Report documenting the field trip was prepared and is serving as a reference for current study.
- Potomac Heritage Trail Association efforts
  - Bill Niedringhaus provided documentation of walking between Kimberwicke Road and Great Falls Park
  - PHTA continues to advocate for connections in this study area, as well as segments of PHNST to the south.

### Study Area Analysis

- The Kimley-Horn team conducted field observations in late spring 2018, then again in the fall of 2018, and in the spring of 2019. The following observations were noted during these field visits:
  - Great Falls Park property: Trail possible along ridges and some side slopes
  - Georgetown Pike: Trail possible, but challenges to overcome include:
    - Narrow shoulders, often with large drainage ditches and steep side slopes
    - Minimal available right of way, lots of utility poles and overhead utilities
    - Driveways and private properties, limited sight distance for pedestrian crossings
  - Existing Georgetown Pike bridge:
    - Existing cantilevered pedestrian facility is closed due to corrosion of structural members
    - Challenging to accommodate the trail on the existing bridge given the roadway approaches and existing guardrail
- As part of the feasibility analysis, the team assessed environmental elements including water resources, protected species, hazardous materials, environmental justice, and Section 4(f), Section 6(f), and Community Facilities.
- Virginia Cultural Resource Information System identified seven architectural resources that are listed in or are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places:
  - Georgetown Pike – Limits of disturbance (LOD) located within historic boundary
  - Great Falls Park Historic District – Northern portion of study area falls within Potomac Canal Historic District
  - Drover's Rest – Proposed alignments within 2-acre property
  - Madeira School – LOD for all alternatives ends at school property
  - Difficult Run Trail at Great Falls – not NRHP eligible, but all alignments proposed connect to the trail
  - Gauging Station at Difficult Run – adjacent to proposed bridge crossing in alignments 2, 3, and 4
  - Unnamed Archaeological Site – contains prehistoric petroglyphs (exact location unknown)
- It was noted that in completing the site analysis and environmental reviews, with respect to permitting, there do not appear to be any showstoppers to implementing a footpath in the project area. Environmental and permitting processes would need to be followed, but these processes should not be onerous.

### Conceptual Alignments

- Considering the feasibility analysis, field investigation, and variable design elements, the team identified various potential footpath alignments.
- Some alternatives were not considered to advance forward due to steep slopes exceeding 30% grade, no side street for pedestrians opposite the Madeira School easement, and areas outside park boundary.
- Initially three alignments were advanced forward for further study. At the 2nd stakeholder workshop, an additional alignment was added for consideration. The naming convention has been revised to clearly define the four alignment alternatives.

- Alignments were described as follows:
  - Alignment 1 elements include:
    - Begins at Madeira School public access easement (with no current pedestrian accommodations)
    - Remains on the north side of Georgetown Pike until Towlston Road
    - Enters Great Falls Park near Towlston Road
    - Follows natural grade through Great Falls Park to a bridge crossing well downstream from Georgetown Pike
    - Construction challenges: grading, drainage, available right of way, overhead utilities, and bridge construction
    - Pinch point at Drover's Rest along north side of Georgetown Pike would need a specific solution
    - The team noted that a pedestrian bridge would be feasible and that Alignment 1 would coincide with the old historic route of Georgetown Pike and a possible historic ford crossing.
    - Two locations were presented, and both a near-term solution of stepping stones and a longer-term construction of a pedestrian bridge were discussed.
    - This bridge could be within the floodplain and thus be shorter than the spans discussed at Workshop 2.
  - Alignment 2 elements include:
    - Begins at Madeira School public access easement
    - Remains on the north side of Georgetown Pike to Difficult Run
    - Enters Great Falls Park near Towlston Road
    - Follows natural grade through Great Falls Park to a bridge crossing either attached to the north side of the existing Georgetown Pike or just downstream of the Georgetown Pike bridge
    - Construction challenges: grading, drainage, available right of way, overhead utilities
    - Pinch point at Drover's Rest along north side of Georgetown Pike would need a solution
    - The team noted that the bridge structure may need to be lengthened depending on how it extends over the floodplain.
  - Alignment 3 elements include:
    - Begins at Madeira School public access easement
    - Proceeds on north side of Georgetown Pike to Tebbs Lane
    - Proceeds on the north side of Georgetown Pike to Difficult Run
    - Uses same bridge crossings as Alignment 2
    - Construction challenges: grading, drainage, available right of way, overhead utilities
    - Pinch point at Drover's Rest along north side of Georgetown Pike would need a solution
  - Alignment 4 elements include:
    - Begins at Madeira School public access easement
    - Proceeds on north side of Georgetown Pike to Tebbs Lane
    - Crosses Georgetown Pike at the Tebbs Lane intersection
    - Would include pedestrian crosswalk with warning signs and possibly flashing lights upon activation
    - Proceeds on south side of Georgetown Pike to Difficult Run and under vehicle bridge
    - Uses same bridge crossings as Alignments 2 and 3
    - Construction challenges: grading, drainage, available right of way, overhead utilities
    - Pinch point at Drover's Rest along north side of Georgetown Pike would need a solution

- Based on the analysis and on feedback received at previous stakeholder meetings, getting the trail into Great Falls Park sooner rather than later was recommended (i.e., Alignment 1 and 2) and appeared to be the preference of this meeting's attendees.
- A connection is needed to the Difficult Run Trail, of course, and several participants stated a preference for the Alignment 1 stream crossing upstream of the falls for a pedestrian bridge structure (vs. at the current island downstream of the falls).
- The island just downstream of the falls (a former ford) could also provide an opportunity for a crossing. Additional study is needed, including an analysis of detailed land and hydraulic survey information.

#### Cross Sections

- Cross sections will vary depending on location; sketches of potential typical sections were shown.
- Within Great Falls Park the following elements were discussed:
  - Footpath can be constructed with minimal impact to drainage, slopes, and existing vegetation
  - Multiple options for surface treatment, including crusher run, gravel, heavily compacted soil, and mulch
  - Project would need access along Difficult Run and the future Alignment 1 path for bridge construction downstream of Georgetown Pike.
  - Along VDOT Right-of-Way, for the proposed typical section, the following elements were discussed:
    - Provide for appropriate pedestrian protection from vehicles
    - Utilize VDOT design criteria for safety and accessibility
    - Asphalt pavement would help maintain width and minimize maintenance needs
- The project team showed a rendering of a possible solution for the pinch point at Drovers Rest, as well as a trail solution at the western end of the Madeira School easement. Reactions to these renderings were very positive.

#### Potential Bridge Types

- Various bridge types were discussed with the group including a sawn timber stinger bridge, glulam stinger bridge, and prefabricated steel truss bridge.
- A truss bridge would provide for longer spans (could be as long as 250 feet).
- The longest structure anticipated on this project is 180 feet in length if outside the floodplain, as little as 100 to 120 feet if within the floodplain.
- Bridge design would need to consider potential Difficult Run high water and flood; bridge would need to be engineered with a span high enough to avoid wash out from more frequent flood levels.
- A larger scale bridge would provide accessibility for more users.
- The group discussed the bridge with respect to potential flooding events.
  - A steel bridge within the floodplain should survive a most storms; however, trees and debris could cause damage.
  - Analysis would be required to assess impacts in the floodplain.
  - Relatively open structures have a better chance of success from NPS perspective.
  - Final report will include a recommendation for a land survey and detailed analysis related to the floodplain.
- Two additional ideas were presented:
  - Fiberglass and aluminum type bridges were noted; however, the group agreed steel would be better

- A clear span bridge would preclude the need for a pier in Difficult Run
- VDOT noted that the existing bridge structure on Georgetown Pike has a rating of 5 (Fair). A 4 rating would be considered structurally deficient. It is difficult to predict how long it will before the structure reach a 4 rating and need replacing. At that time, a pedestrian facility could be considered with the design of an upgraded bridge.

#### Bridge Crossings

- The group discussed option for crossing Difficult Run from between its banks.
- Adding rocks as stepping stones could be a near-term solution.
  - A rendering was shown for this type of crossing.
  - This solution doesn't provide accessibility for some potential trail users.
- For a bridge crossing, especially one with a pier in the stream, the stability of channel at crossing locations should be considered:
  - Bedrock channel bottom
  - Minimal bank erosion
- Sediment deposits should be avoided such as mid-channel "depositional" bars and bends. These river features will likely change over time
- Low-water crossings are most successful when located in a stable section of a river, such as upstream of an existing waterfall or on a bedrock outcropping.
- A location with good channel stability and a safe (bridge) crossing is preferred for long term improvements.
- Renderings were shown for a bridge crossing with a pier in the channel.
  - The group appreciated the renderings.
  - FCPA representatives suggested also showing a bridge spanning the entire stream, with no pier in the middle.
- In discussing accessibility of the stream crossing, NPS considers the Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard (ABAAS) for improving access for all users.
  - Degree of accessibility provided is proportionately related to the degree of human-made modifications in the area.
  - Consideration is given to the importance of the facility to people visiting or working in the park.
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements are typically applied for facilities in VDOT right-of-way.
- With respect to permitting a bridge crossing, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permit would be needed; the project should be covered by a current Nationwide USACE Permit.
- Permitting process would include:
  - Statement of Findings submitted to NPS with (1) Rationale for locating improvements in floodplain, (2) Disclose amount of risk associated with site, and (3) Detail floodplain mitigation plans.
  - Modelling of the floodplain with proposed improvements used to determine if flood elevation will rise with installation of new crossing and the extent of rise and impact to surrounding properties.

#### Evaluation Criteria and Scoring of Alignments

- Each alignment was evaluated using six evaluation criteria: General walking quality or the experience for walkers, Protection from traffic, Right-of-way impacts, Ease of trail construction, Ease of bridge construction, and Preliminary project cost.

- Alignment 1 ranked highest compared to other alignments due to its ease of constructability, fewer right-of-way impacts, and a good rating for preliminary cost.
- Discussion related to criteria and scoring is summarized below.
  - Construction along Georgetown Pike would require smaller equipment, one-way flagging operations, nighttime operations (if allowed by the residents), and barriers.
  - The daytime off-peak time period for this corridor is limited to about 9 am to 3 pm, given commuter traffic and school traffic.
  - The ease of bridge construction is slightly easier for Alternatives 2, 3, and 4.
  - The project team took an action to discuss bridge construction in more detail with Tom McFarland from FCPA.
  - As an addition to the evaluation criteria, it may be helpful to understand any impacts to species or natural resources. The impacts may be similar for all alternatives, as the general study corridor is the same; however, these impacts should be considered during more detailed design.
  - Visual impact was identified as an additional factor to consider. The viewshed impact should be considered, given the importance of viewsheds to the Potomac National Heritage Scenic Trail network.

#### Funding Opportunities

- Several funding opportunities were shared with the group.
- Successful funding of this type of project occurs when there is a combination of sources of funding with an overall project champion and a lot of stakeholder support.
- In addition to the sources listed on the slide, funding could include:
  - Recreational Trails Program (Federal Program through the Department of Conservation and Recreation – DCR)
  - Federal Lands Recreational Trails Program
- Related to In-Kind Services:
  - Stakeholders noted that if VDOT replaces bridge on Georgetown Pike, providing a pedestrian facility would be in-kind service.
  - Volunteers, such as REI or Scout Troops, may be considered for near term improvements such as construction of smaller trail segments in Great Falls Park and maintenance of the trail in the park.
  - Stakeholders asked if NPS would agree to volunteers putting in a trail as pre-courser to long term improvements. NPS noted that any work would require permitting.
  - Potomac Appalachian Trail Club manage a lot of trails in the area through their volunteer efforts.
  - Golden Gate National Recreation Area works with a local construction company using a new type of concrete, teaching youth and the volunteers are doing improvements in Alcatraz with donated concrete from the construction company.
  - MORE and PHTA are completing volunteer work for PHNST in Prince William County through a cost-sharing grant.
  - Any in-kind service will require a champion or group.
- Each funding source is different and vary in how hours of service may be considered as in-kind contributions
- The final report will discuss possible funding sources for moving forward with this project.
- Ultimately, a funding plan will require a variety of funding sources.

### Recommended Path Forward

- Project team's recommended path forward is to advance Alignment 1 in a phased approach.
  - Near-term phase (to build community support) would include:
    - Interim use of "ford" with smaller timber bridges to cross Difficult Run
    - Interim trail improvements in Great Falls Park
  - Longer-term phase would include:
    - Plan, program, design, and construct entire Alignment 1
    - Obtain funding from a variety of sources
    - Cross Difficult Run with 2-span timber or steel truss bridge or 1-span steel truss bridge
    - 6-ft wide trail wherever possible in Great Falls Park and along Georgetown Pike
    - Provide access for people of all abilities
  - Longer term improvements should be considered along Georgetown Pike and its vehicle bridge over Difficult Run.
- Group discussion related to the recommended path forward is summarized below.
  - Understanding that there's a need to connect to difficult run trail, having a trail from the Madeira School easement diverse off Georgetown Pike and into the Park sooner is highly desired.
  - Crossing Difficult Run with a trail further away from Georgetown Pike is also desired.
  - A more detailed study (with land survey) and permitting processes will be needed for realizing a footpath in the study area.
  - For any project in Great Falls Park or in VDOT right-of-way, "planning, programming, budgeting, designing, and constructing" will be required for any phase, near-term or longer term.
    - In the near term, the group agreed that building community support is important.
    - In the interim, a potential crossing at the old ford (island downstream of the falls) could be constructed by volunteer groups, and this activity and resulting crossing could help build momentum for support of a longer-term solution.
    - Long term improvements will require a detailed survey, and subsequently, an assessment of a single span bridge vs. a 2-span bridge.

### Discussion

- Alignment 1 generally acceptable—getting into Park quickly and crossing Difficult Run downstream of Georgetown Pike.
- VDOT is planning to restripe Georgetown Pike; Internal VDOT meeting held on 6/12 to discuss restriping.
  - VDOT will confirm the conditions of bridge after eradicating pavement markings with power washers.
  - VDOT will provide EFLHD and NPS and update regarding its striping plan.
- It's unclear how many people are currently walking across the bridge.
- Stakeholders noted that people do walk on the bridge today.
  - However, to do so, people would need to climb over the guardrail at the end of each of the bridge parapet walls and walk on the bridge deck in the existing 4-foot buffer between the parapet wall and the travel lanes.
  - PHTA representatives are asking for VDOT to restripe the bridge and create a 6-foot buffer area by shifting lane lines.

- Everyone agreed, however, that there is very little room to walk in front of the guardrail on the roadway approaching the bridge, and that walking behind the guardrail and climbing over it to get to walk on the bridge deck is generally unsafe.
- According to GIS records, there is not sufficient right-of-way along Georgetown Pike for any of the possible alignments to be built without acquiring right-of-way or easements from private property owners; a more detailed survey will better quantify amount of land needed as right-of-way or public use easement for the footpath.
- Involving businesses as stakeholders may be helpful to include in the conversation.
  - Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in DC are collaborating with NPS to help improve trail connections.
  - Potential business and professional associations could come from McLean, which is closer to the project area (Madeira School has a McLean address).
  - While the project would not complete a connection into Great Falls (which would create a more vested interest), it would still be good to engage them in the conversation.
- Nearest recreation center is Spring Hill Recreation Center (Bull Neck Run).
- Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority (now NOVA Parks) should be engaged in the conversation.
- To secure state or federal funding requires a commitment for maintenance.
- It's a heavy lift to ask NPS to take on new assets.
- Maintenance agreements currently exist between NPS National Capital Region with Rock Creek (DDOT) and Anacostia (DDOT).
- Having a VDOT or Fairfax County maintenance agreement in place would demonstrate a partnership with NPS and perhaps help to obtain grant funding.
- Other potential funding sources and approaches were discussed, including:
  - Any family foundations or non-profits in McLean or Great Falls could help.
  - Perhaps there is the potential for a charitable foundation to support environmental parks and trails.
  - Homeowners' associations could also be in the mix.
  - The representatives from McLean said that a lot of community members are interested and that it would be good to have a conversation with people in the area of Great Falls in the Dranesville District.
  - There is a lot of interest from people in McLean to get to Great Falls Park. This project will provide for future connection opportunity.
  - National Park Foundation is a possibility; however, their scholar programs tend to be more focused on science, visitor service, and historic resources.
  - Funding for on-going maintenance is often the most difficult to secure.
- This project presents an opportunity to bring in an educational component: the construction and maintenance of a trail through the woods.
  - Madeira School would be interested in education component and conversation; however, school will not support educational programs (e.g., field trips) for the segment of the trail along Georgetown Pike
  - The equestrian program is thriving at Madeira, and interest is increasing. However, the current competitive riders are doing dressage, i.e., not doing a lot of trail riding.
  - However, an equestrian friendly trail would create an opportunity for students to do trail riding.
- Trail should provide access for as many abilities as possible. The amount of work to complete a 4-foot wide vs. 6-foot wide trail is very similar.

- An interim volunteer-based effort to build a short timber bridge is feasible with approval from NPS; however, the bridge might not last more than one year with Difficult Run rising during heavy rains.
- Another crossing opportunity to the east of the island was mentioned; however, banks are much higher and the area is not as accessible from an Alignment 1 trail.
  - Placing a bridge crossing further east of identified locations would be very difficult.
  - Even further east, Difficult Run becomes a gorge as it empties into the Potomac River.
- Evolution of trails was discussed, i.e., how footpaths develop into trails.
  - Trails organically grow and become recognizable to bicyclists, hikers, and runners.
  - Some trails have grown to become paved roads and major transportation corridors.
  - NPS wants to look at planned projects that align with a purposefully planned corridor and trail network.
  - Fairfax County and NPS have “social trails” that are difficult to maintain and are not reliably accessible. (Social trails are unplanned.)
- Safety of trail crossings near driveway entrances along Georgetown Pike will need to be further evaluated with an engineering analysis

#### Schedule and Next Steps

- With the refined concept plans, Kimley-Horn will prepare preliminary cost estimates of the alternatives.
- Kimley-Horn will complete an initial draft report for review by the stakeholders (report will include estimated costs).
- The draft report will be completed in the July/August time frame.

#### Closing

FHWA, NPS, and Kimley-Horn very much appreciate the participation of the attendees at this Planning Workshop #3.

Kimley-Horn requests that the attendees review the content of these draft minutes and advise the author(s) of any necessary revisions within two weeks of receiving the draft minutes, after which time these meeting notes will be considered final.

Attachment: Workshop #3 Presentation Slides



Federal Highway Administration  
Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division

### *Georgetown Pike Footpath Feasibility Study*

#### **Planning Workshop #3**

May 2, 2019



Federal Highway Administration  
Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division

### *Georgetown Pike Footpath Feasibility Study*

#### **Planning Workshop #3**

May 2, 2019

## AGENDA

0. Welcome & Introductions
1. Introduction
  - Vision/purpose of study
  - NPS Goal: Connecting people to parks
  - Project area
  - Study scope and schedule
  - Stakeholders & Workshops
2. Context
  - History of corridor
  - Previous studies
  - Connections
3. Study Area Analysis
  - Existing conditions
  - Field Observations: Great Falls Park, Difficult Run, Georgetown Pike
  - Environmental review/cultural resources
4. Conceptual Alignments, Design Elements
  - Alignments
  - Cross sections
  - Crossing of Difficult Run
5. Analysis and Recommendations
  - Accessibility
  - Permitting
  - Evaluation Criteria and Scoring
  - Funding Opportunities
  - Recommended Path Forward



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## STUDY PRESENTATION

### 1. Introduction

- Vision/purpose of study
- NPS Goal: Connecting people to parks
- Project area
- Study scope and schedule
- Stakeholders & Workshops



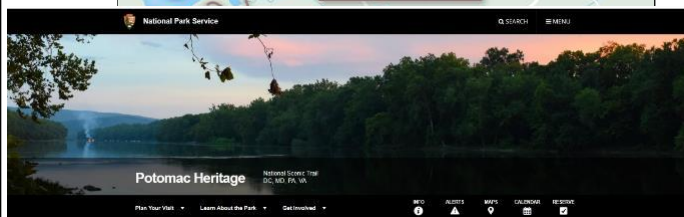
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## VISION

### Connections!

- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
- Other trails



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## PURPOSE OF STUDY

### Investigate feasibility

- Footpath or trail within Georgetown Pike corridor connecting:
  - Difficult Run Trail
  - Towlston Road
  - West end of Madeira School public access easement
- New pedestrian-only bridge over Difficult Run:
  - Within Great Falls Park
  - Within VDOT right-of-way along Georgetown Pike



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## NPS GOAL

- Study addresses the National Park Service Centennial goal of “Connecting People to Parks”
  - Footpath would link to larger network of trails known as the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
  - PHNST:
    - Connects the Potomac River at the Chesapeake Bay to the Alleghany Highlands in Western Pennsylvania
    - Incorporates both existing and planned trails managed by federal, state, local, and nonprofit entities
  - Georgetown Pike Footpath would help to close the gap between Great Falls Park and Scotts Run Nature Preserve

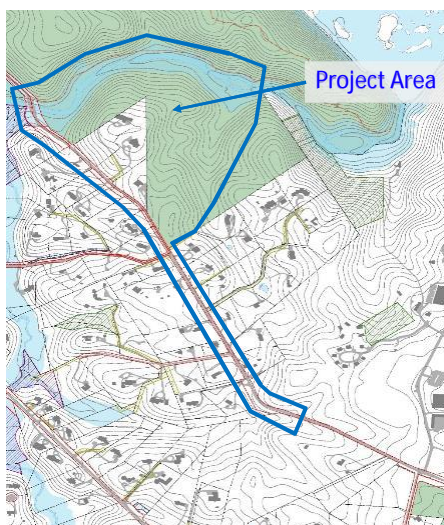


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## PROJECT AREA & SCOPE

- Great Falls Park and Georgetown Pike (VA 193)
  - from Difficult Run Trail
  - to Towlston Road
  - to west end of Madeira School public access easement
- Scope of Feasibility Study
  - Stakeholder outreach
  - GIS mapping
  - Concept planning
  - Environmental reviews
  - Constructability and cost analyses
  - Summary report with next steps



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## PROJECT SCHEDULE

### 2018

Spring Planning Workshop #1/Field investigation

Fall Field investigation of additional area

### 2019

Winter/Spring Environmental review/  
Development of draft concept designs

May 2 Planning Workshop #2  
- Review field investigation findings  
- Discuss concepts, feasibility

June 13 Workshop #3  
- Review refined concepts  
- Discuss draft recommendations

Summer Draft & Final Report/Concept Design



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## STAKEHOLDERS

- ✓ Fairfax County, Dranesville District (Supervisor Foust)
- ✓ McLean Citizens Association
- ✓ Great Falls Citizens Association
- ✓ Madeira School
- ✓ FHWA Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD)
- ✓ National Park Service (NPS)
- ✓ Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
- ✓ Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT)
- ✓ Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA)
- ✓ Potomac Heritage Trail Association (PHTA)
- ✓ Fairfax Trails and Streams
- ✓ Mid-Atlantic Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts (MORE)

*Others?*

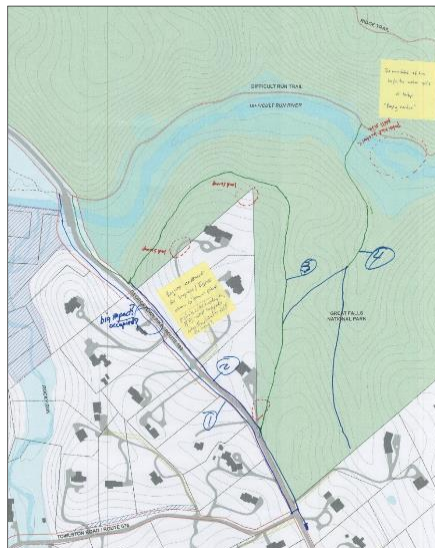


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## WORKSHOP #1 | April 3, 2018

- Gathered stakeholders
- Confirmed purpose of project as trail study
- Discussed background
- Received input from Madeira School
- Drew possible footpath alignments
- Discussed adding 0.3 mile segment to scope of study, Towlston Road to existing easement along Madeira property, "missing link"



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## WORKSHOP #2 | May 2, 2019

- Presentation of findings and concepts
  - Alignments
  - Cross sections
  - Bridges
  - Evaluation of alternatives
- Discussed...
  - Pros and cons of alignments, cross sections
  - Bridges and alternative stream crossings
  - Accessibility
  - Possible funding programs
- Added a 4th alignment



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## WORKSHOP #3 | June 13, 2019

- Presentation of study analyses, concepts, and recommendations
- *Let's discuss!*



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## STUDY PRESENTATION

### 2. Context

- History of corridor
- Previous studies
- Connections

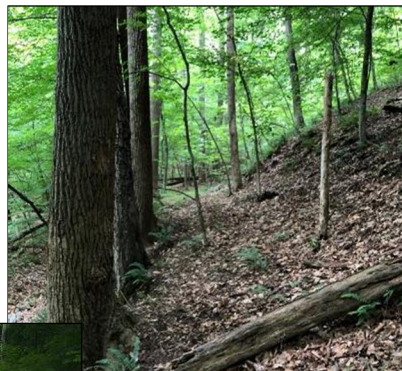


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## HISTORY OF CORRIDOR

- Old wagon trails in Great Falls Park
- Possible ford at Difficult Run circa 1764
- Remnants of an old road bed on southeast side of Difficult Run



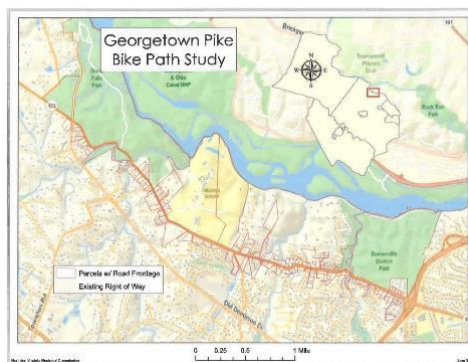
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## PREVIOUS STUDIES

- Georgetown Pike Trail Feasibility Summary Findings
  - Completed by Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC)
  - Identified issues influencing feasibility of bicycle/pedestrian trail along Georgetown Pike, between the Capital Beltway and Great Falls National Park

Map of Study Area



Graphic Source: Georgetown Pike Trail Feasibility Summary Findings, no date



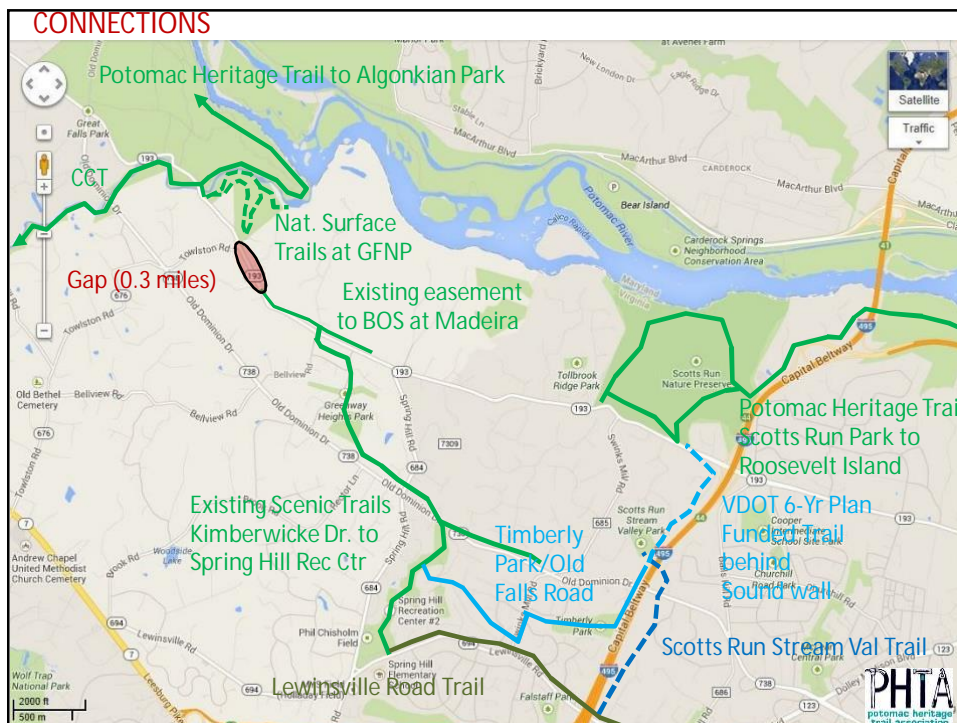
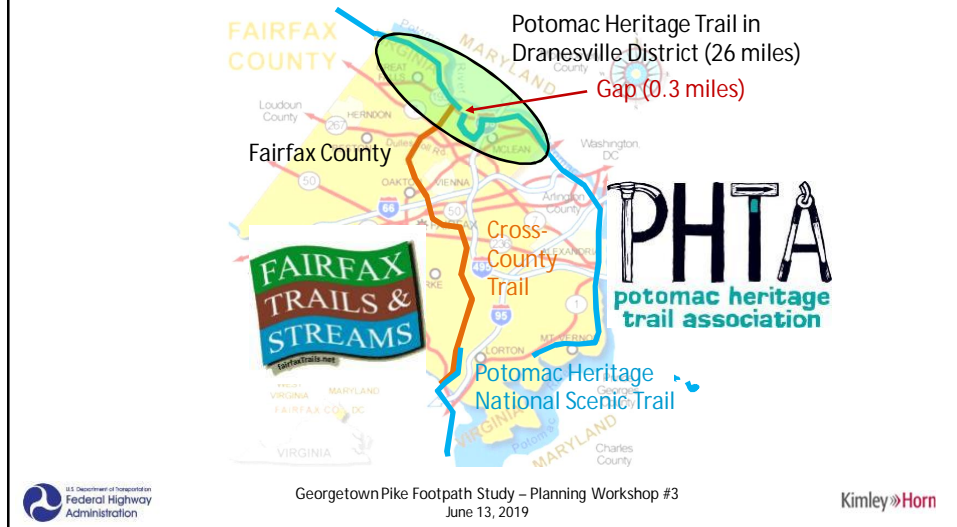
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## PREVIOUS STUDIES

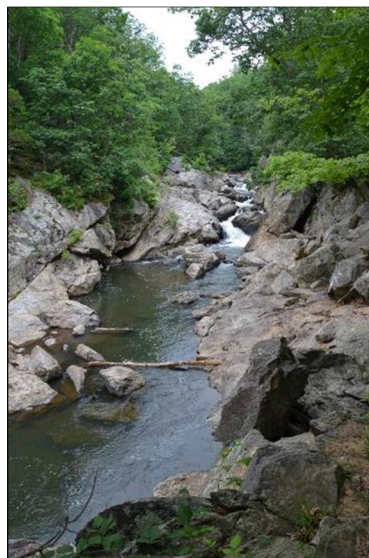
Potomac Heritage Trail Association: Filling the Gap – Great Falls Park to Scotts Run Nature Preserve



## STUDY PRESENTATION

### 3. Study Area Analysis

- Existing conditions
- Field Observations:
  - Great Falls Park
  - Difficult Run
  - Georgetown Pike
- Environmental review/  
cultural resources



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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Georgetown Pike:
  - High traffic volumes
  - Limited ROW
  - Limited horizontal and vertical sight distance
  - Narrow shoulders, deep ditches, cut and fill slopes

Route No.	Route Name	From	To	Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)	Average Annual Weekday Daily Traffic (AAWDT)
193	Georgetown Pike	Rt 683 Leigh Mill Rd	Rt 676 Towlston Rd	16,000	17,000
193	Georgetown Pike	Rt 676 Towlston Rd	Urban Boundary	15,000	17,000
676	Towlston Road	Rt 738 Old Dominion Dr	Rt 193 Georgetown Pike	650	700

Source: 2016 VDOT Daily Traffic Volume Estimates  
[http://www.virginiadot.org/info/2016\\_traffic\\_data\\_by\\_jurisdiction.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/info/2016_traffic_data_by_jurisdiction.asp)



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## FIELD OBSERVATIONS

- Difficult Run Trail: Recent repairs evident
- Difficult Run Crossing: Several candidate locations



Georgetown Pike Bridge over Difficult Run



Drovers Rest "Pinch Point"



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### FIELD OBSERVATIONS

- Great Falls Park: Trail possible along ridges and some side slopes
- Existing Georgetown Pike bridge: Challenging to accommodate a trail
- Georgetown Pike: Trail possible, but challenges to overcome include...
  - Narrow shoulders, often with large drainage ditches and steep side slopes
  - Minimal available right of way, lots of utility poles and overhead utilities
  - Driveways and private properties, limited sight distance for pedestrian crossings



Georgetown Pike Bridge over Difficult Run



Drovers Rest "Pinch Point"



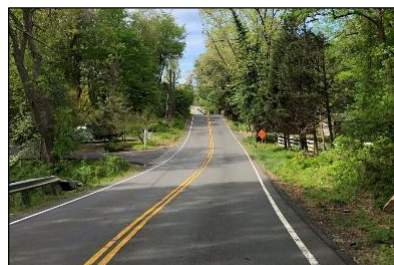
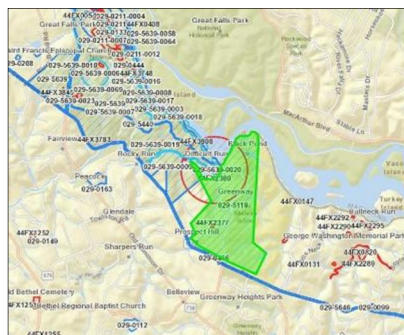
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## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

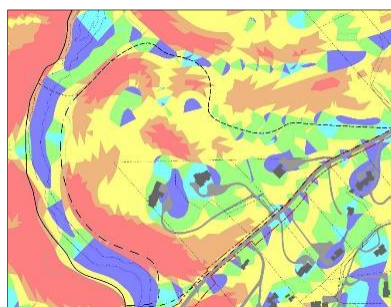
- Water Resources
- Protected Species
- Hazardous Materials
- Environmental Justice
- Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) and Community Facilities
- Cultural Resources
  - Georgetown Pike (VDHR ID 029-0466) listed on the National Register of Historic Places
  - Great Falls Park Historic District (VDHR ID 029-5639) also listed



## STUDY PRESENTATION

### 4. Conceptual Alignments, Design Elements

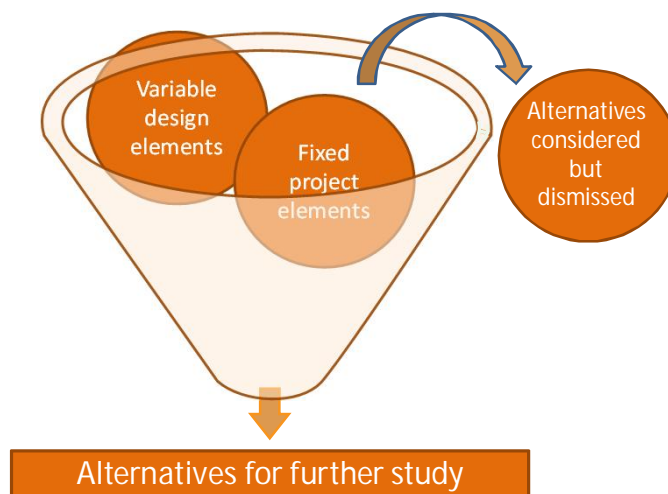
- Alternatives Considered
- Alignments
- Footpath cross sections
- Crossing of Difficult Run



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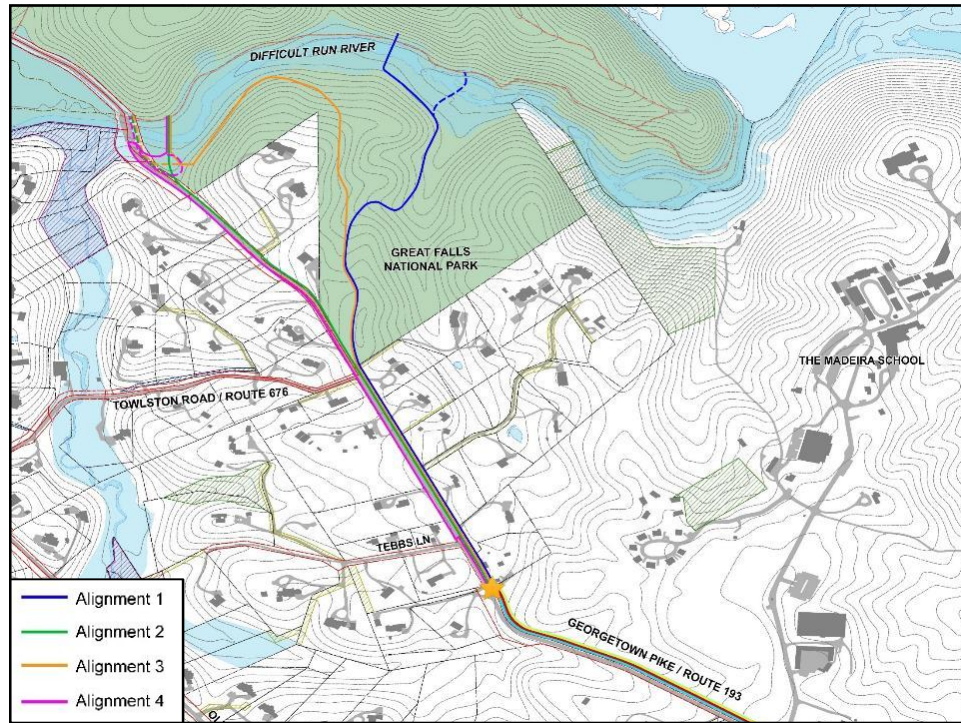
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## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

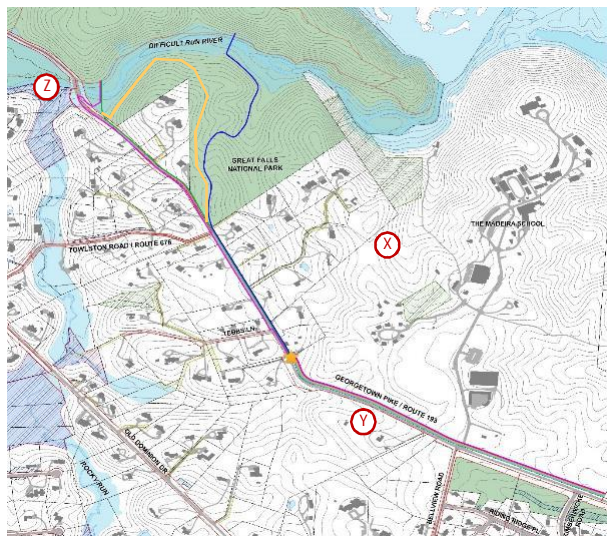


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## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED



Alignments for further study:

- Alignment 1
- Alignment 2
- Alignment 3
- Alignment 4

Alignments considered but dismissed

- (X) Outside park boundary/  
on Madeira School  
property (non-easement)
- (Y) No side street for ped +  
opposite from easement
- (Z) Outside park boundary/  
longer crossing with  
steep banks

## ALIGNMENTS | Alignment 1

- Begins at Madeira School public access easement (no current pedestrian accommodations)
- Remains on the north side of Georgetown Pike until Towlston Road
- Enters Great Falls National Park near Towlston Road
- Follows natural grade through Great Falls Park
- Bridge crossing would occur downstream from Georgetown Pike
- Construction challenges: grading, drainage, available right of way, overhead utilities + bridge construction
- Pinch point at Drover's Rest along north side of Georgetown Pike



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## ALIGNMENTS | Alignment 2

- Begins at Madeira School public access easement (no current pedestrian accommodations)
- Remains on the north side of Georgetown Pike until Towlston Road
- Enters Great Falls National Park near Towlston Road
- Follows natural grade through Great Falls Park, curving to the west and paralleling Difficult Run
- Bridge crossing would occur just downstream from Georgetown Pike (or alternatively with a reconstructed VDOT bridge)
- Construction challenges: grading, drainage, available right of way, overhead utilities + bridge construction
- Pinch point at Drover's Rest along north side of Georgetown Pike

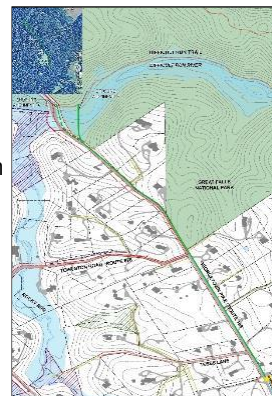


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### ALIGNMENTS | Alignment 3

- Begins at Madeira School public access easement (with no current pedestrian accommodations)
- Remains on the north side of Georgetown Pike to Difficult Run
- Bridge crossing to Difficult Run Trail would be just north of Georgetown Pike
- Construction challenges: grading, drainage, available right of way, overhead utilities
- Pinch point at Drover's Rest along north side of Georgetown Pike

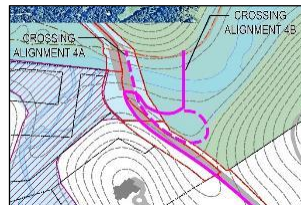
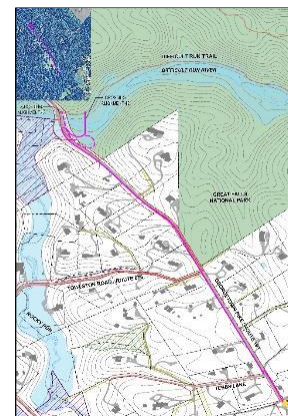


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### ALIGNMENTS | Alignment 4

- Begins at Madeira School public access easement (with no current pedestrian accommodations)
- Proceeds on north side of Georgetown Pike to Tebbs Lane
- Crosses Georgetown Pike at Tebbs Lane intersection
  - Allows for crossing at intersection
  - Would include pedestrian crosswalk with warning signs and flashing light upon activation
- Proceeds on south side of Georgetown Pike to Difficult Run and under vehicle bridge
- Uses same bridge at Alignment 1B
- Construction challenges: grading, drainage, available right of way, overhead utilities
- Pinch point at Drover's Rest along north side of Georgetown Pike

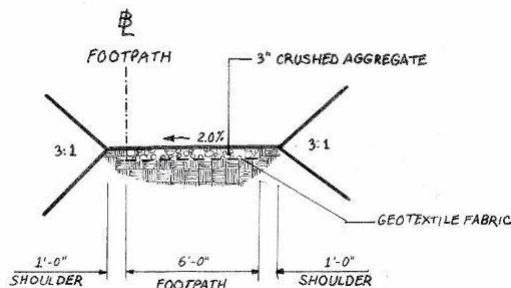


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## CROSS SECTIONS | Typical Section in Great Falls Park

- Footpath can be constructed with minimal impact to drainage, slopes, and existing vegetation
- Multiple options for surface treatment, including crusher run, gravel, heavily compacted soil, and mulch
- Would need to provide access for Alternative 1 bridge construction



Typical Footpath Section  
Within Great Falls National Park



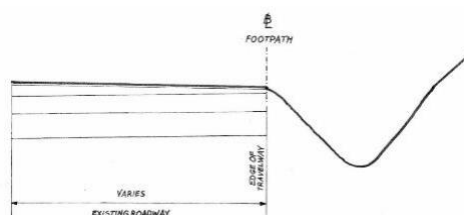
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## CROSS SECTIONS | Typical Section along VDOT ROW

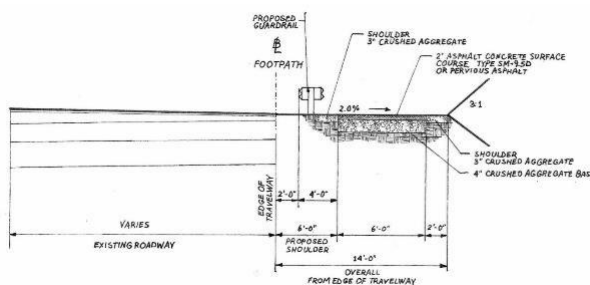
### Existing Cross Section (Varies)

- Existing cross section includes open ditches with minimal shoulder
- Steep slopes and guardrail in some locations
- Sight distance limited to due horizontal and vertical curves



### Proposed Cross Section (Varies)

- Provides for appropriate pedestrian protection from vehicles
- Utilizes VDOT design criteria for safety and accessibility
- Asphalt pavement would help maintain width and minimize maintenance needs



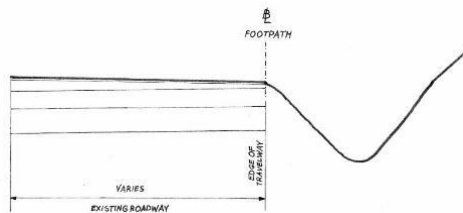
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## CROSS SECTIONS | Typical Section Along VDOT ROW

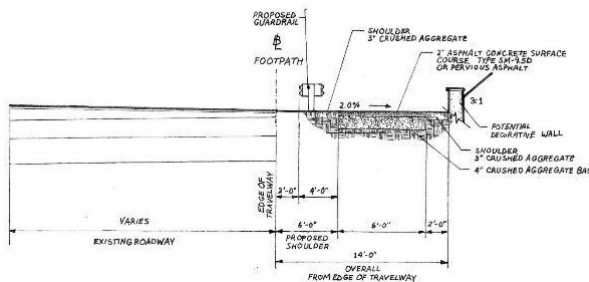
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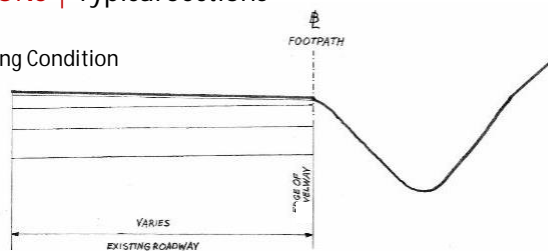


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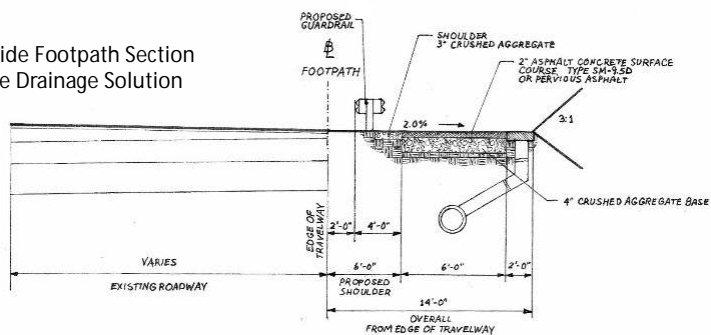
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## CROSS SECTIONS | Typical Sections

### Existing Condition



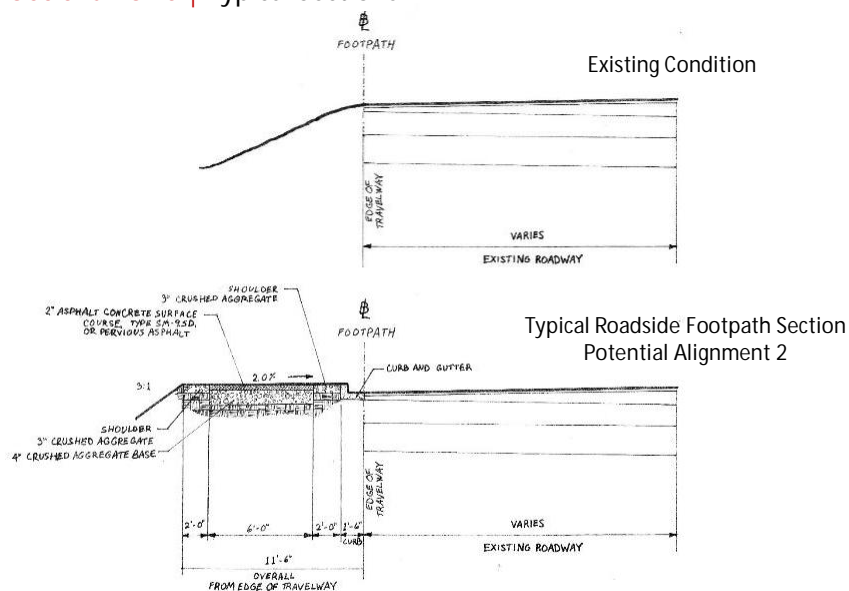
### Typical Roadside Footpath Section with Possible Drainage Solution



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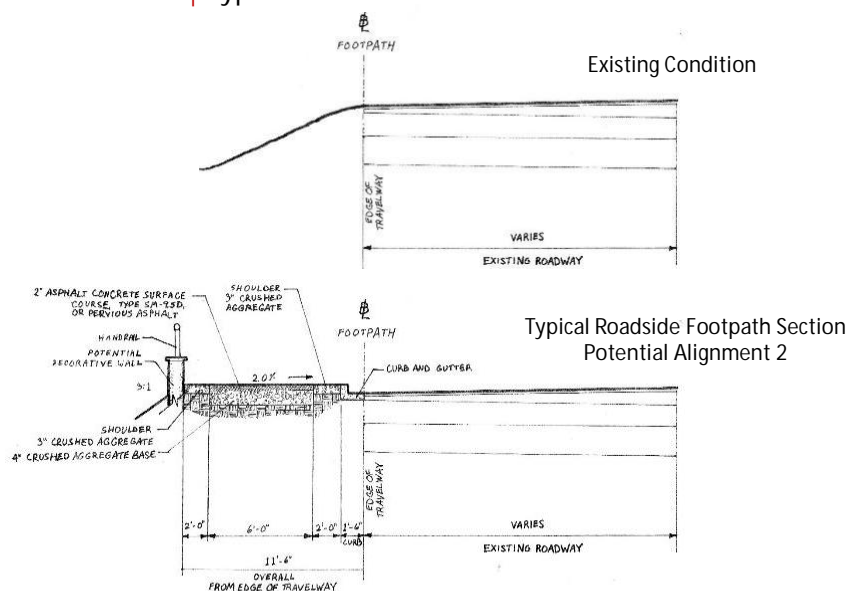
## CROSS SECTIONS | Typical Sections



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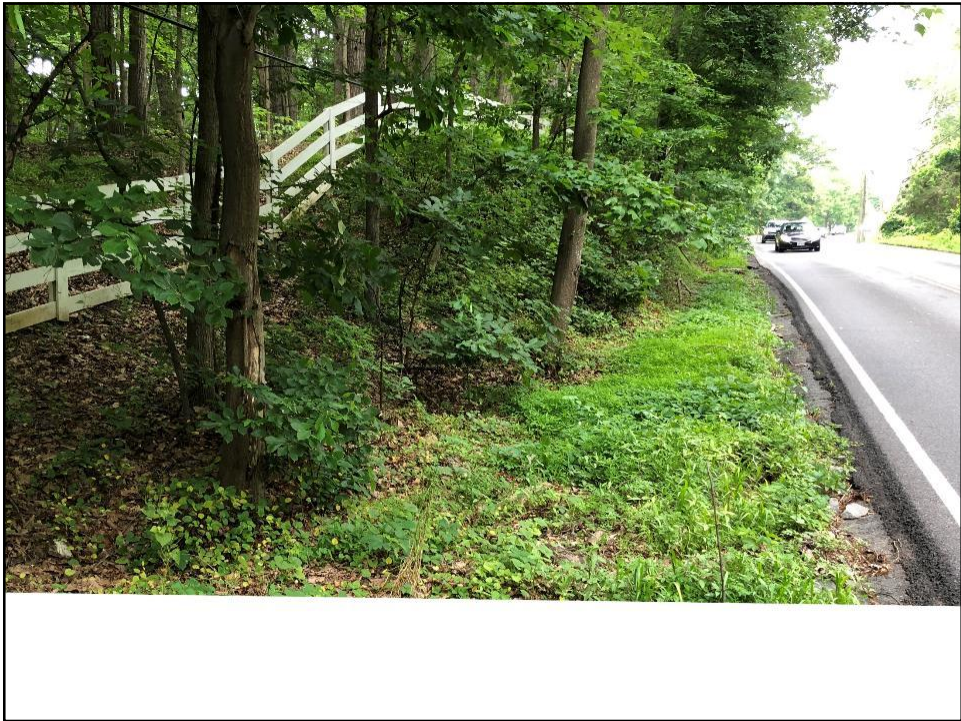
## CROSS SECTIONS | Typical Sections



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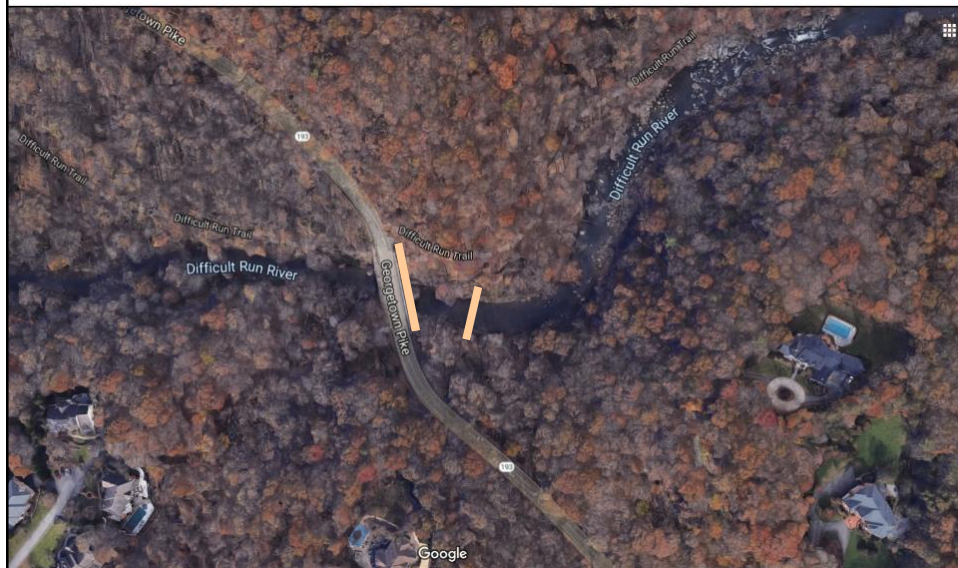
## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Locations – Alignment 1



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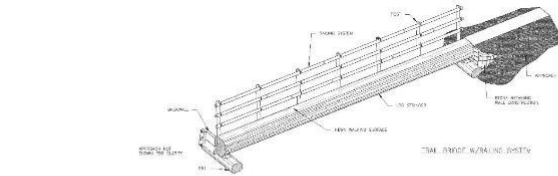
## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Locations – Alignments 2, 3, and 4



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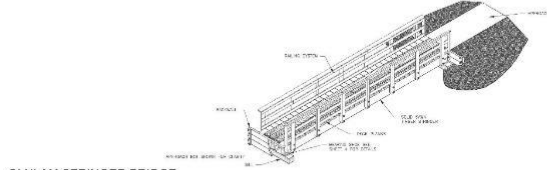
## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



SAWN TIMBER STRINGER BRIDGE



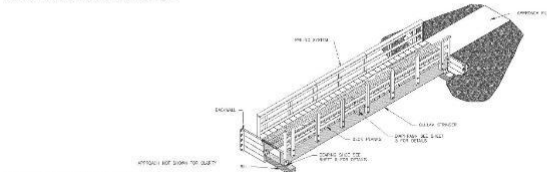
SINGLE LOG STRINGER BRIDGE



GLULAM STRINGER BRIDGE



SAWN TIMBER STRINGER BRIDGE



PREFABRICATED STEEL BRIDGE



GLULAM STRINGER BRIDGE



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



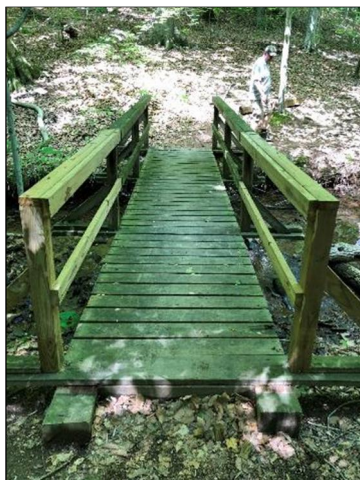
Cataloochee Creek  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



Prince William Forest Park, Virginia



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Bridge Types

Glulam Stringer Bridge



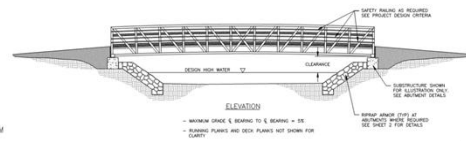
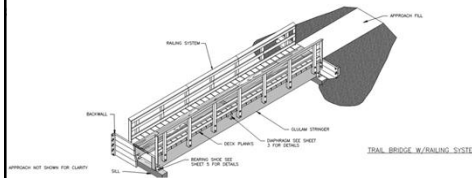
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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Bridge Type



Prefabricated Steel Truss Bridge



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Options



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## CROSSING OF DIFFICULT RUN | Site Considerations

- Accessibility to crossing from banks
- Stability of channel at crossing locations
  - Bedrock channel bottom
  - Minimal bank erosion
  - Avoid sediment deposits, mid-channel “depositional” bars, and bends—they will likely change over time
- Low-water crossings are most successful when located in a stable section of the river, such as upstream of an existing waterfall or on a bedrock outcropping



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## STUDY PRESENTATION

### 5. Analysis and Recommendations

- Accessibility
- Permitting
- Evaluation Criteria and Scoring
- Funding Opportunities
- Recommended Path Forward

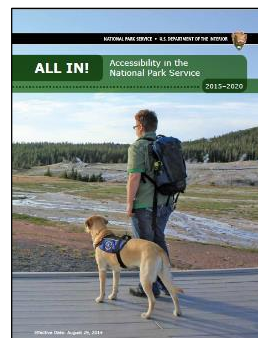


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## ACCESSIBILITY | NPS and VDOT Policies

- NPS Property
  - Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard (ABAAS)
  - Accessibility provided consistent with preserving park resources
  - Degree of accessibility provided:
    - Proportionately related to the degree of human-made modifications in the area
    - Importance of the facility to people visiting or working in the park
- VDOT Right-of-Way
  - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Requirements in the Public Right-of-Way



"National parks belong to all Americans, and the National Park Service will welcome all Americans to experience their parks."  
*NPS Management Policies 2006*



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### PERMITTING | Crossing of Difficult Run

- Statement of Findings submitted to NPS
  - Rationale for locating improvements in floodplain
  - Disclose amount of risk associated with site
  - Detail floodplain mitigation plans
- Model floodplain with proposed improvements
  - Determine if flood elevation will rise with installation of new crossing
  - Determine extent of rise and impact to surrounding properties
- USACE Permit: Covered by a Nationwide Permit



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### EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SCORING | Evaluation Criteria

- ✓ General walking quality
- ✓ Protection from vehicle traffic
- ✓ Right-of-way impacts
- ✓ Ease of trail construction
- ✓ Ease of bridge construction
- ✓ Preliminary project cost



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## EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SCORING | Comparison of Alternatives

Criteria	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
General walking quality	●	◐	●	◐
Protection from traffic	●	●	◐	○
Fewer right-of-way impacts	◐	◐	○	○
Ease of trail construction	◐	○	○	○
Ease of bridge construction	○	◐	●	◐
Preliminary project cost	◐	◐	○	○
Preliminary Scores	13	12	10	9

KEY		
●	◐	○
Best (3)	Good (2)	Fair (1)



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## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- **Federal:**
  - FHWA's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program for projects linked to vehicular trip reduction
  - FHWA's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for pedestrian and bike improvements
  - FHWA's Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) to improve access to recreational amenities
  - Federal Lands Recreation Enhance Act (Recreation Fee)
  - Centennial Challenge (50% NPS/50% partner/donor cost share)
- **State:**
  - VDOT SMART SCALE funds for pedestrian and bike projects or rail and transit projects
  - VDOT Maintenance: Roadside repairs and upgrades
- **Regional:**
  - NVTA's TransAction funds to reduce regional congestion
  - NVTC's Commuter Choice program to fund multimodal projects
- **Fairfax County:**
  - NVTA's 30% funds for local transportation projects
  - FCDOT (County CIP) funding
- **Advocacy and citizen/private groups:** Fund raising and financial support, including private contributions for construction and O&M
  - National Park Foundation
  - PHTA, MORE, and others
- **In-Kind Services by NPS, VDOT, and/or Fairfax County**
- **Volunteer groups for performing minor construction and O&M**



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## RECOMMENDED PATH FORWARD

- Move forward with Alignment 1 in phased approach
  - Near-term phase (build support):
    - Interim use of “ford” with smaller timber bridges to cross Difficult Run
    - Interim trail improvements in Great Falls Park
  - Longer-term phase:
    - Plan, program, design, and construct entire Alignment 1
    - Obtain funding from a variety of sources
    - 2-span timber truss bridge across Difficult Run
    - 6-ft wide trail wherever possible in Park and along Pike
    - Provide access for people of all abilities
- Consider longer term improvements along Georgetown Pike



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June 13, 2019

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## DISCUSSION | Workshop

- What are your thoughts on the alignments, cross sections, and bridges?
- What are *your* preferred solutions?
- Thoughts on funding opportunities and approaches?
- Feedback on recommended path forward?
- What are your thoughts on next steps, including implementation?



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## NEXT STEPS

- Finalize conceptual design
- Draft report
- Final report



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### *Georgetown Pike Footpath Feasibility Study*

#### **Planning Workshop #3**

May 2, 2019