

The Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail conducted a survey of trail users from 9/11/19 through 9/23/19 to solicit feedback on National Park Service Memorandum 19-01, which permits use of e-bikes where traditional bicycles are allowed within the National Park System.

The George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail share mutual goals of improving trail accessibility, improving health, conserving ecological resources and providing a safe trail experience.

Detailed information about the survey and responses are below.

Advertising the Survey

The survey received 244 responses. The Friends attempted to capture as wide of a variety of trail users as possible by distributing the survey through the following methods:

1. Friends of the Mount Vernon Trail social media
2. Conducting surveys on the trail on 9/22/19 at Dangerfield Island
3. The Washington Area Bicyclist Association Women & Bicycles Facebook Page
4. The Bike Arlington online bulletin board
5. The Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
6. Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling
7. The Connection Newspapers
8. Multiple running groups (Pacers, Potomac Runners and Run Washington)

How Respondents Use the Trail

Respondents used the trail for three primary activities: transportation (67.5%), recreation (74.1%) and exercise (70.8%).

Frequency of Use:

Nearly 50% of trail users indicated they used the trail daily or multiple times per week.

How the Trail Is Used:

The majority of the respondents (85%) indicated that they ride a traditional bike on the trail. About 36% indicated that they walk on the trail, and 31.4% indicated they run on the trail. Some 18.5% of respondents indicated that they ride an e-bike on the trail.

Policy Agreement

Over 57% of respondents indicated agreement with the policy change to allow e-bikes on NPS facilities, with another 16% unsure. Respondents who disagreed with the policy change accounted for 23%.

Trail Use

68% of respondents indicated the policy would not impact their frequency of use. 18% indicated that they would use the trail more.

Access to the Trail

Over 57% of respondents indicated e-bikes would increase access to the trail, with another 21% being unsure.

Limiting Classes

Over 55% of respondents thought that e-bikes should be limited to Class 1 bikes only. 35% indicated that all classes should be allowed.

Top Concerns About E-Bikes

1. Speeding - 59.8%
2. Unsafe Passing - 57.3%
3. Trail Congestion - 31.8%
4. Following Too Closely - 27.2%

Summary of Additional Comments

Respondents were allowed to leave free text comments. A few strong themes emerged from the comments:

1. Comments about E-bikes increasing access to the trail

- A respondent commented that use of an e -bike enabled her husband to continue commuting daily while undergoing radiation and chemotherapy treatment.
- A cyclist indicated that he has multiple 80+ year old friends who ride e -bikes
- A respondent indicated that they ride an e-bike because of a disability
- Several respondents indicated that they use an e -bike to transport their kids and would not be able to do so without the assist
- A cyclist with a 21 mile round trip commute indicated that without an e -bike he would only use the trail for transportation 1 day a week instead of 5

2. Use of a throttle

- Multiple respondents indicated that the throttle on Class 2 e -bikes is essential for them to be able to put their bike in motion either because of a physical condition or because they were transporting children
- Many respondents said that banning certain classes of e-bikes is impractical because it would be nearly impossible to enforce

3. Trail Conditions

Multiple respondents provided feedback that e -bikes were not an issue but that trail conditions including the following were an issue:

- Trail is too narrow
- Trail is too crowded
- Better signage is needed about the speed limit
- Riders of traditional bikes ride too fast or aggressively
- Separate facilities are needed for walkers and bikers
- GWMP should convert a lane of the Parkway into a cycling facility

4. Policy Disagreement

Multiple respondents were critical of the policy or indicated that it would cause safety issues. Responses included:

- e-bike riders are unskilled or inexperienced
- e-bikes allow people to ride too fast
- Anything with a motor belongs on the road, not on the trail