



HUNTINGTON STREAM VALLEY TRAIL PROPOSAL

Cameron Run, Fairfax County, Virginia
August 2001

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I. INTRODUCTION

Huntington residents, after examining proposed residential development plans, recent zoning changes, and design for the Wilson Bridge reconstruction, have determined that the community can greatly benefit from construction of a new off-road trail. This report describes the existing conditions in Huntington as well as other factors influencing the community's conviction. It also presents design guidelines and uses envisioned for the trail. Finally, it outlines the justification for the trail and the proposed design.

Huntington is a high-density neighborhood where over 6,000 people reside in one square mile, but it contains few recreational facilities. Huntington Park provides open space, but little else for adults and adolescents in the community. An off-road trail would provide needed recreational opportunities to the area. Because of Huntington Avenue traffic, biking, jogging, and walking are not easily accommodated as in other residential communities. Its design and width also preclude adding any trail or walkways.

The Wilson Bridge reconstruction project has offered some new exciting opportunities for connecting Huntington to neighboring recreation. Two pedestrian bike paths will be constructed over the Beltway Interstate 95 which will connect to the regional trail system. A trail through Huntington connecting each terminus of these trails will open the regional trail system to Huntington residents and to the adjacent communities.

The Policy Plan of the Comprehensive Plan for Fairfax County lists several objectives, including providing "...a comprehensive network of trails and sidewalks as a integral element of the overall transportation network." The requirement is that plans for new trails be in accordance with the Countywide Trails Plan. This report, therefore, is a request to recognize the Huntington Trail as a component within the countywide trail system.

II. CONTEXT

Existing Neighborhood

The Huntington community is located along mile-long Huntington Avenue, and is physically separated from surrounding neighborhoods. It is bordered by Cameron Run and the Beltway Interstate 95 on its north, 6 lanes of Telegraph Road on the west, and 6 lanes of Route 1 Richmond Highway on the east. In addition, a Metrorail station, gated condominiums, and steep hillside slope enclose it on the south.

The community is mostly residential with a small number of retail stores serving the neighborhood. Counting new residential development recently approved, the residential population accessed by Huntington Avenue approaches 6,000 people. The county's Comprehensive Plan and recent zoning changes near the Metrorail station could add another 1,500 residents in the future as vacant land is developed. The proposed trail would directly benefit this population.

Residential Population with Direct Access to the Proposed Trail

group	units	residents
Huntington houses	600	1,300
Huntington Club Condominiums	364	430
Farrington Place Condominiums	66	100
Glendale Terrace Apartments	48	200
Berkshire Townhomes	93	200
Hunting Creek Club	216	320
Huntington Gateway Apartments	520	600
Riverside Park Apartments	1200	1,500
Huntington Station Townhomes*	48	120
Westmoreland House Apartments*	400	800
total residential population		5,570**

*numbers based on current development proposals

**additional 1,500 residents possible when vacant land is developed

For recreation, the community is served by Huntington Park. This 10 acre park contains a baseball field, open grass area, and benches for seating. The Park Authority recently acquired the wooded undeveloped parcel to the east of the park from the Water Authority. However, the Park Authority has indicated that funds are not available for development of this land.

About 70% of the residents live in apartment buildings or condominiums with no outdoor yards. For them, Huntington Park with its limited facilities functions as the only outdoor recreation available within their community.

Current Conditions

Cameron Run is a drainage stream which flows eastward to Hunting Creek and eventually into the Potomac River. It is part of the tidal Potomac River and is approximately 100 feet wide at Huntington, with its depth varying from a few inches at low tide to 3 feet. As part of the tidal Potomac water system, a riparian buffer is required. This buffer filters runoff from Interstate 95 on the north, and residential development on the south.

The Cameron Run stream close to the Potomac and Hunting Creek is also a haven for birds. Feeding and nesting ducks, egrets, and gulls are common sights in the waterway, as well as an occasional heron. The Wilson Bridge reconstruction project has recognized this and has taken design measures to preserve this habitat.



Cameron Run stream at low tide

Most of the property along Cameron Run is not developed, and consists of heavily wooded land forming a buffer between Interstate 95 and residential Huntington. The land is mostly flat at

the top of the bank along the stream, sloping only at the bank down to the water. Only at Riverside Park Apartments is the bank developed with surface parking.

The trail route as proposed would generally follow the south bank of Cameron Run stream behind several commercial and residential properties. Approximately one-third of its route would run across Fairfax County Park Authority land along the north side of Huntington Park, which is partially open field and partially wooded. It would also run along the north side of the Riverside Apartment complex on existing landscaped area between the parking lot and a retaining wall.

Property acquisition along the route of the trail should pose no serious problem. Except for the apartment complex, the route would bypass all existing and planned buildings, and runs in an area currently designated as flood plain. A large portion of the proposed trail would run on land owned by the Park Authority.

Some of the properties consist of several acres, while few are as small as several hundred square feet. All of the properties can be found on standard Fairfax County maps, sections 83-1 and 83-2. The following list identifies each property the trail would cross along with its zoning classification.

Zoning of Parcels Along Trails Route

tax map number	zoning classification
83-1-1-45A	Commercial
83-1-1-45	Commercial
83-1-1-33	Commercial
83-1-1-34C	Commercial
83-1-1-42	Commercial
83-1-16-19A	Residential
83-1-16-13A	Residential
83-1-14-C	County Park Authority
83-1-14-56	Residential
83-2-1-2C	Commercial

Planned Development

Significant development is proposed along Huntington Avenue. A 400 unit apartment high rise is planned for parcel 53A and a 48 unit townhouse development is planned for parcel 53B. These projects will add approximately 920 new residents to the

Huntington population, and except for a private swimming pool, will provide no onsite recreation, yards, or open public space. There are no plans for parcel 42, although the Comprehensive Plan has been revised to permit high density residential development on all undeveloped land on the north side of Huntington Avenue.

Plans for the reconstruction of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge present opportunities for the proposed trail. A bike and pedestrian trail is planned for Ramp E, starting from Richmond Highway on the south and following the east side of the entrance ramp across the Beltway. This will connect to Old Town Alexandria on the north side of the Beltway.

Around year 2006, the Telegraph Road interchange is scheduled for reconstruction. Its Ramp A2 will provide a bike and pedestrian path from Huntington Avenue northward across the stream and the Beltway to the junction of Stovall Street and Eisenhower Avenue.

The Eisenhower Avenue off-road stream valley trail in the City of Alexandria runs eastward along the north bank of Cameron Run and ends in the vicinity of Telegraph Road. The Eisenhower Avenue trail connects to the Holmes Run stream valley trail to the west and eventually to Fairfax County's trail system near Lake Barcroft. There are no plans for extending this off-road trail eastward to Richmond Highway because of existing development in the Eisenhower Avenue corridor and because of Interstate 95 expansion plans. The city has instead delineated a continuation using sidewalks and on-road routes.

III. DESCRIPTION

Route

The proposed route of the Huntington Trail runs east-west along the south bank of Cameron Run stream between Route 1 and Telegraph Road. The total distance is measured at 6900 feet, or about 1-1/3 mile.

The eastern end of the trail would tie into the planned north-south trail being constructed as part of the Wilson Bridge reconstruction project over the Beltway. From this point, the proposed trail would run under Route 1 at a point where the road begins bridging over Interstate 95 and Cameron Run. It would continue west along the top of the existing Cameron Run bank. It is not anticipated that any part of the trail would run to the Cameron Run stream bed or associated wetlands.



Trail under a bridge provides a safe crossing of a busy highway, as the Four Mile Run Trail crosses under the GW Parkway

At the western end, the trail would tie into the planned north-south trail being constructed across the Beltway along Telegraph

Road. This is also part of the Wilson Bridge reconstruction project.

The trail would have several entrances along its 1.3 mile length. Access points to the trail are envisioned at the ends of Mount Vernon Drive, Fenwick Drive, and Metroview Parkway, and at Huntington Park. Metroview Parkway leads directly to the Huntington Metrorail station, a major transportation hub. Private access could also be encouraged at Riverside Park Apartments. Multiple entry points invite use and increase personal safety by making access and exit convenient.

Design

The trail is proposed as a paved surface about 8 feet in width. Bicycles, roller skating, walking, and jogging are the primary activities envisioned. A wide trail with access points at street ends could invite motorized vehicles which are not desired. Relatively long straight runs with gentle curves would be proposed to promote personal safety by minimizing blind spots and allowing maximum observation by users.

The trail route would be constructed on grade, on level land, and would require no major inclines. The bank of Cameron Run slopes gently to the stream, thereby eliminating the need for guard railings where the trail is on grade. Minor streams run into Cameron Run from the south and would require bridged crossings. These may be accomplished by a small drainage pipe or small wood bridge.

Retaining the trees and plant growth is important to maintain the buffer, to protect and filter runoff to the stream, and to provide habitat and food sources for the stream's wildlife. The trail would disrupt as little of this growth as possible.

At Riverside Park Apartments, a portion of the property edge is supported by a retaining wall to the stream. A vegetation buffer strip is planted between the edge of the parking and the retaining wall. It is hoped that the retaining wall would remain in place and that the trail would be constructed in acquired right-of-way between the pavement and the retaining wall.

Alternately, a trail beside the wall could be raised above the stream. It could also be suspended and supported along the retaining wall as the Mt. Vernon Trail is along the power generating plant in Old Town Alexandria.



Example of a trail supported along a retaining wall on Mt. Vernon Trail at the Alexandria Power Plant

Costs

The costs associated with the trail design and construction should be small in comparison with other off-road trails due of several factors. The stream bank top is relatively flat, eliminating the need for extensive cutting and filling. Access for construction is easily provided along the trail from public streets in addition to its ends.

Right-of-way acquisition costs should be small. One third of the property needed is currently owned by the county Park Authority. In addition, existing commercial parcels 45 and 45A at the western end of the trail will be acquired by the government for reconstruction of the Telegraph Road interchange.

Except for the Riverside Park Apartments and office building parcel, the remaining land is undeveloped and within the Cameron Run flood plain. It is believed that in order to satisfy the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, most of this land must

remain undeveloped to preserve the required riparian buffer to the stream.

The Wilson Bridge design was recently completed and construction has begun. As part of the bridge design process, necessary studies have already been performed on Cameron Run. Studies for identifying flood plains, stormwater drainage runoff, wetlands, water quality, and wildlife have already been completed. It is believed that this information can be reused, or at the least can be consulted for environmental assessment of the trail design to save time and costs.

As part of the proffers for the planned high-rise apartment building along Huntington Avenue, money has been set aside for the trail by LCOR Development. This indicates the developer's belief that additional recreational opportunities within Huntington for its residents are needed, and that an accessible bicycle trail can help satisfy these needs.

IV. RATIONALE

Recreation

The main purpose of the proposed Huntington Trail is to provide direct recreational opportunities to its residents, as well as to the hotel guests staying along Richmond Highway. It would also open the regional trail system to residents of the high-density neighborhood, and provide a missing linkage to major off-road trails with this system.

A small tot lot at Farrington Avenue and a few equipment pieces in Huntington Park provide some play areas for children. Only a baseball field exists in Huntington Park for teens and adults. With a projection of over 7,000 residents after available land is developed with high-density use, added recreational facilities should be provided.

A trail through Huntington would not only help satisfy this need, but would also serve to connect the community via pedestrian and bicycle access to nearby recreation facilities such as Cameron Run Regional Park, Jones Point, and the Mount Vernon Trail. Existing physical barriers serve to isolate Huntington from facilities in surrounding neighborhoods. Residents must drive outside the community to take advantage of nearby recreational activities. The trail would eliminate these vehicle trips by local residents with bikes strapped to their cars going to and from other trails.

Safety

The proposed Huntington Trail would help provide a safe way for residents to enjoy biking and jogging within the community. The trail would also provide a safe alternative means for accessing nearby recreational opportunities in adjacent communities without using cars. Presently bikers and pedestrians cross the Beltway by using the center median of Route 1 because there is no safe pedestrian or bicycle access from Huntington to Alexandria.

Bicycling, jogging, and rollerblading are not easily accommodated in Huntington because of the volume and speed of traffic on Huntington Avenue. Sidewalks are standard 4 foot widths, and are located 18 inches from the street. These factors make it inappropriate for use as an on-road trail. In fact, with

existing buildings no more than 20 feet from the curb, widening the road or existing sidewalks to trail width is not considered feasible.

An investigation in 2000 found that the *average* speed along this street was 45 miles per hour. This is 15 mph over the speed limit, and is equal to the current speed limit on Richmond Highway. VDOT officials have validated how dangerous Huntington Avenue



Narrow sidewalk close to four lanes of traffic on Huntington Avenue

is by agreeing to conduct a traffic and safety study of the entire Huntington area.

Natural Ecology

Fairfax County's Stream Protection Strategy Baseline Study identified the watershed as requiring restoration. Indeed, Cameron Run and Hunting Creek were listed as "impaired". Several strategies were outlined in the study which was prompted by the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. One of the study's recommendations calls for increasing citizen involvement and

education as strategies in restoring and maintaining streams in the county. It also recommends low-impact development and ecological friendly design techniques around the streams.

A stream valley trail would accomplish both objectives. As a recreational feature, the trail would provide access to the stream with all its wildlife and bird populations, promoting its appreciation by residents. The study understands that this translates into awareness for conservation and good management practices by the public.

In addition, the trail would fit into the county's recommendations for low-impact development along streams, and for conservation of the riparian buffer and flood plain. Recreational trails along stream valleys are recognized as appropriate uses.

Connections

The proposed trail would be an important addition to the region's existing and planned trail system. The short trail through Huntington would provide a greatly needed east-west off-road connection of trail systems west and south of Telegraph Road to the Potomac River's Mt. Vernon Trail. This would benefit residents in Clermont, Burgundy Hills, and Virginia Hills areas of the Lee District, as well as those in Huntington. It would also do the same for the Eisenhower Avenue and Holmes Run stream valley trails in Alexandria.

The Huntington Trail could connect to the trail planned along Fort Hunt Road terminating at Richmond Highway. The Huntington Trail's connection to the Route 1 ramp over the Beltway would be a sensible place to terminate the planned Fort Hunt Road Trail. This trail is already constructed in several locations, but the northernmost segment is not yet designed.

The Comprehensive Plan requires the establishment of trails and/or sidewalks in conjunction with roads, stream valleys, and transportation centers as indicated on the Countywide Trails Plan. The Huntington Trail follows this requirement by connecting the bike and passenger trails planned for the Wilson Bridge at both Telegraph Road and Route 1, and the nearby Metrorail station.

The new trail can provide a pleasant path along Cameron Run, the scenic beauty of which has not been fully appreciated and

utilized because of its lack of accessibility. And, for the first time, this trail will permit the isolated Huntington bicycle and walking community safe access to Old Town Alexandria, the Mt. Vernon Trail, and the entire regional trail system beyond.

REFERENCES

Policy Plan, Comprehensive Plan for Fairfax County

Planning Division,
Department of Planning and Zoning

Countywide Trails Plan

Countywide Non-Motorized Transportation Committee,
Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning, 2000

Fairfax County Stream Protection Strategy Baseline Study

Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, January 2001

Zoning Maps for Fairfax County, 2-5-99

Recreation Facilities and Trails Map, Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Drafting Company, 1997

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Section 4(f) Evaluation

Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project, April 2000

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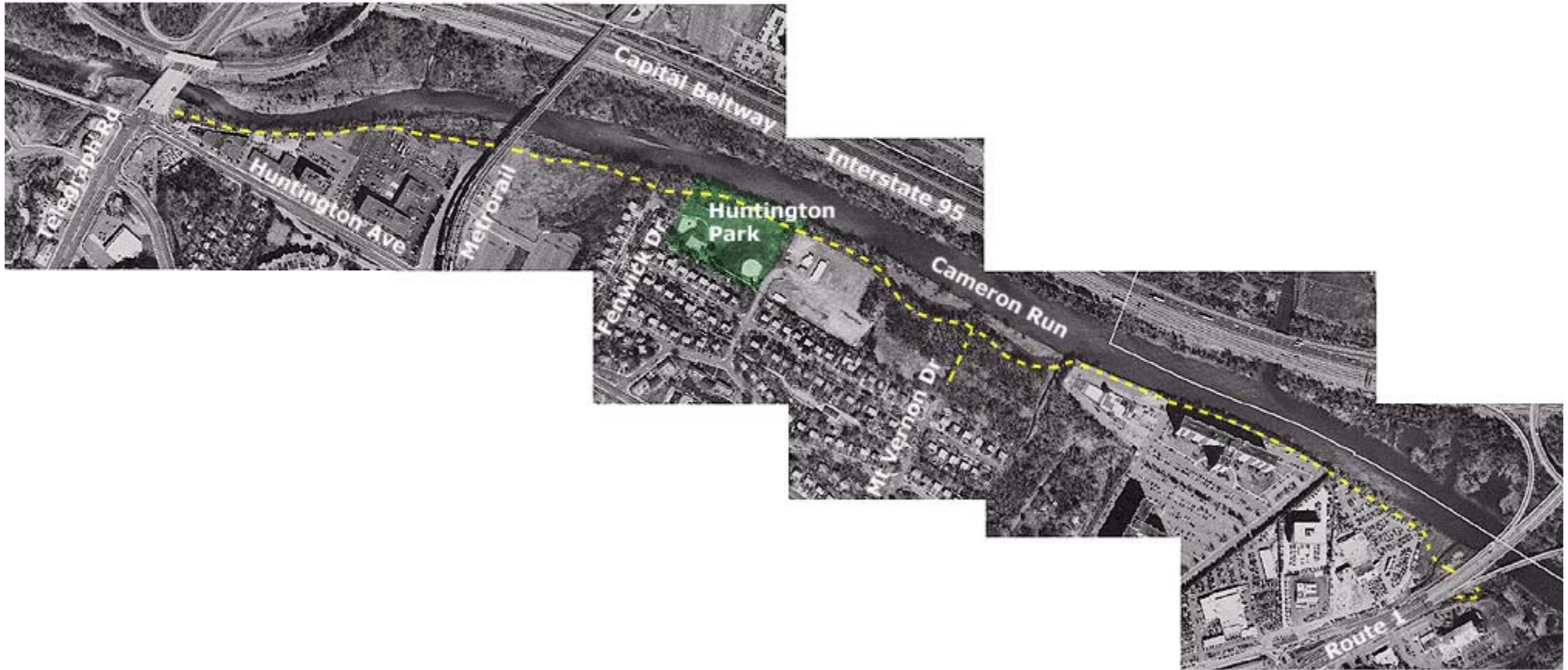
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AERIAL VIEW OF PROPOSED ROUTE
