

FABB Supports the 495 Parallel Trail

1 message

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To: Virginia Department of Transportation <495northernextension@vdot.virginia.gov>

I am commenting on behalf of the Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling (FABB) on the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT's) 495 Express Lanes Northern Extension Project. FABB is not taking a position on the HOT lanes, but writes to offer support for the planned parallel trail included in the proposed project. We appreciate that VDOT included the parallel shared-use trail in the plan from the outset.

We recognize that 495 NEXT has become a controversial project because of questions about the likely benefits of extending the High Occupancy Toll lanes, uncertainty of Maryland's plans, the lack of transit funding, and the significant impacts on the environment.

As the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) pointed out in a recent presentation to the Board of Supervisors, the planned trail alone has value because it will promote active transportation connections in and around Tysons. If built, the trail will help provide much needed connectivity between Tysons, McLean and across the American Legion Bridge when it is improved.

Regardless of the final decision on the projected express lanes, FABB urges VDOT and Fairfax County to construct this parallel trail and needed connections into nearby communities, transit, and activity centers.

To make a safe, comfortable, and well used trail, VDOT should:

- Place the bicycle and pedestrian trail behind the noise wall along the three-mile corridor.
- Provide improved bike facilities on Tyco Road, Jones Branch Drive, and Spring Hill Road on south of International Drive.
- Improve access from Lewinsville Road along Spring Hill Road underneath the Dulles Toll Road and into Tysons. Currently, there is a narrow and rough paved path and sidewalk from Lewinsville to the Toll Road and then up to the intersection with Jones Branch Road that needs to be widened and improved.

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In the sections of the bicycle and pedestrian adjacent to I-495, the trail is being proposed to be constructed behind the sound wall.

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These suggestions are outside the project area. As a separate initiative, Fairfax County in coordination with VDOT has been enhancing the pedestrian and bicycling facilities within Tysons. These bicycle and pedestrian enhancements have been implemented through VDOT restriping projects, development contributions and Fairfax County programs. VDOT will continue to coordinate with Fairfax County on the implementation of future bicycle and pedestrian enhancements.

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- Upgrade traffic signals in these areas should be upgraded to account for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Ensure that adequate wayfinding signage is included to get riders and pedestrians from the I-495 shared use path along Lewinsville Road to Tysons and then to Reston and Gallows Road.

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The new traffic signals that would be installed as a result of the project construction would incorporate pedestrian crossings, handicap ramps, and state of the art pedestrian signals. The signal timings would be set up to take into account the bicycle and pedestrian movements through the intersections.

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The signage plan for 495 NEXT would be coordinated with FCDOT to support the county's bicycle network.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this project.

Sincerely,

Sonya Breehey
President, Fairfax Alliance for Better Bicycling

Sent from [Outlook](#)