

Summary of Public Input Sessions for Improved Access to Claude Moore Park

On October 12th and 13th, the Claude Moore Park Access Committee held two public input sessions on the proposed options for improving the access to Claude Moore Park for the communities surrounding the park. The citizens who provided input and the discussions that took place were very valuable in helping the committee formulate a recommendation for the Transportation and Land Use Committee's consideration.

The staff committee originally identified seven options. Upon further review, the committee determined three of the seven options appear to not be viable options at this time. The seven options were:

- a. Construction of a Multi Use Trail from Juniper Avenue to the Claude Moore Park football field parking lot
- b. Crosswalk at Church Road and N. Aspen Avenue with pavement markings, signage and flashing beacons as well as a trail improvement along the Claude Moore Park water/sewer easement and the Claude Moore Park blue trail to the rear of the Recreation Center
- c. Construction of a Multi Use trail from the Foltz Field Parking Lot at Sterling Elementary to the Claude Moore Recreation Center
- d. Construction of a Multi Use trail along the access drive and eastern side of Sterling Elementary to Foltz Field
- e. Construction of a Multi Use trail along Cascades Parkway either on Claude Moore Park or within the right of way along the park from Loudoun Park Lane to Old Vestal's Gap Road
- f. Construction of a multi Use trail from the Claude Moore Park nature side entrance at Old Vestal's Gap Road to Potomac View Road
- g. Installation of Bike Lanes on both sides of Loudoun Park Lane in Claude Moore Park from Cascades Parkway to the Football Field Parking Lot

What the committee concluded is that due to security concerns of public trails bisecting or crossing Loudoun County school property, Loudoun County Public School personnel were not comfortable with options C or D. The committee felt Option F would be not be a viable option to pursue at this time since the trail would simply terminate at that intersection because there currently is not any sidewalk or trail infrastructure in place beyond the Nokes Boulevard/Potomac View/Cascades Intersection. In addition, it was determined that typically, VDOT does not support a crosswalk that does not connect to a continuation of a trail or sidewalk beyond the intersection.

The focus of the presentations to the public on October 12th and 13th outlining possible solutions to the access issues were Options A, B (listed as B1 and B2 on the map), E and G. The committee did however have questions and discussions about all seven options.

Option A

Construction of a multi-use trail along the access road from W. Juniper Avenue to the Football Field Parking Lot. This would include a redesign and improvement of the gate at W. Juniper Ave. and the Park View High School access road as well as new signage.

Attendees expressed support for improved access from the Juniper Avenue gate entrance into Claude Moore Park to the football field parking lot. The discussion surrounding this option focused on better signage of this entrance as you enter the park, and to identify where bicycles should ride. A multi use trail was also discussed for this area as well as the need for more directional signs within the surrounding community giving clear direction to the park entrance.

Option B (1 and 2)

Installation of a crosswalk at the intersection of Church Road and Aspen Avenue N. This also would include improvement to the trail from Church Road to the Recreation Center with a packed surface that is accessible however not paved. This option also includes a multi use trail from this park entrance over to the sidewalk system in front of Sterling Elementary School as well as new signage.

During the discussion concerning the access option along Church Road at the intersection of Aspen Avenue (Option B1) there were various opinions on what should be done at this site. Some felt that this option should not be further pursued since it was never intended to be an entrance, however after further discussion, it was agreed that this is a major crossing the public is using to access the park. Aside from fencing the Church Road property line, stopping access would be nearly impossible. That said, it was discussed that a crosswalk with pavement markings, signage and flashing beacons, not something that would stop traffic but merely warn drivers of pedestrians, should be installed. However, inside the park (Option B2) was discussed and there was no desire expressed to have the trail paved and actually the only real question about improving this section of the trail system dealt with signage and perhaps some better surface for walking/biking. Several bicyclist asked for clarification on whether or not they would be allowed to ride their bicycles on this stretch of trail and if not, could the trail be improved to a bicycle/pedestrian style trail. Staff discussed that this section of the trail, could be designated as a bike trail if it were improved with some sort of surface appropriate for bicycles.

Option E and F

Construction of a multi use trail along the entire length of Cascades Parkway from Loudoun Park Lane to Old Vestal's Gap Road.

Construction of a multi use trail from Old Vestal's Gap Road to the intersection of Potomac View Rd. and Cascades Parkway.

There was significant discussion about option E which is proposed to be a multi use trail along the east side of Cascades Parkway as well as discussions surrounding a requested potential new trail along the west side of Cascades Parkway. Discussions about this option led into a much larger discussion, both nights, on the lack of trail infrastructure that allows citizens on the north side of Rt. 7 to safely connect to areas to the south and vice versa. Everyone shared that Rt. 7 is a major barrier for pedestrians and bicyclists when trying to travel north or south in the Potomac/Sterling areas. When asked whether or not the footpaths

on both sides of Cascades Parkway were being used to access the park, the answer was very little if at all. Most in attendance tended to believe that currently, the “trails” are actually being used by citizens either going to work in the warehouses along Nokes Boulevard or continuing up to the shopping centers such as Target and Costco. This does, however, highlight a much larger issue than just the access to the park. There is an obvious need in this area for safe pedestrian/bicycle travel along Cascades Parkway and up and over Rt. 7 into the Cascades community. The citizens in attendance seemed to believe that although the need for a trail that connects the north and south sides of Rt. 7 was important for getting those citizens north of Rt. 7 to the park; they seem to understand that this project was much larger than the current scope of work for this committee. That said, the citizens did say that they would use a trail to access the park if it safely got them across Rt. 7 and down Cascades Parkway. When asked if they would prefer to see a trail on the east or west side of the park, the answer was that it did not matter where it was as long as it was a contiguous trail across what the citizens referred to as the wall that is Rt. 7. There was a request from a citizen to have Option F (Old Vestal’s Gap Rd. to Nokes Blvd/Potomac View Rd. Intersection) be done at the same time as Option E. What was shared by this citizen was even if there is not a crosswalk at the Nokes Blvd./Potomac View intersection, completing Option E and F together would provide a contiguous trail stretching the entire park boundary along Cascades Parkway which would provide a safe corridor for the citizens who already are using this path. This citizen understood that going beyond this point may be outside of our intended scope of work however, completing this would provide safe travel for citizens once they reach this point.

Option G

Installation of bike lanes on both sides of Loudoun Park Lane from the intersection of Cascades Parkway to the Football Field Parking Lot.

In general, those present also supported the concept of some form of a trail along Loudoun Park Lane (Option G). There did not seem to be consensus or a dominant opinion as to whether it should be bike lanes or a multi use trail. The discussion surrounded the concern that there is currently no way for citizens from the west entrance along Cascades Parkway to safely walk or bike into the park. There was agreement however, that if a trail or bike lane was installed, it should be wide enough for both bicyclists and pedestrians to safely use it at the same time.

Lastly, there were some general questions such as whether or not there could be streetlights installed along Cascades Parkway to illuminate the trail. It was discussed that depending on whether or not the trail would be in VDOT right of way would dictate this to some extent as well as needing to discuss the implications of lighting a trail all night. Another question dealt with the idea of connecting option B2 with Option G somewhere behind the Recreation Center. We discussed the idea of utilizing the existing parking lot to identify a walking path through striping but in the end decided that we should wait to determine the final layout of option G, if pursued, to see about ancillary connections.

In conclusion, Options A, B1, and G were the options that people felt would most meet the needs of providing access to the park with the priority being Option G then Option A followed by Option B1. Option E (which for discussion includes option F) was also seen as a needed addition to the Bicycle/Pedestrian infrastructure however, it was part of a much larger

overall transportation need than an access to Claude Moore Park issue. That said, all in attendance agreed that finding a way to cross Rt. 7 is something that needs to be accomplished and if done, more citizens would walk and bike not only to the stores, schools and warehouses, but also to Claude Moore Park.

Based on these discussions, the committee would like to first, pursue the design and installation of a trail along Loudoun Park Lane from Cascades Parkway all the way through the park to the Juniper Avenue gate (Options A and G). This would provide a paved, Multi Use trail for pedestrians bicyclists from the east side of the park to the west. Along with this option is the design and installation of a small portion of sidewalk along the access road to Park View High School that would tie into the existing sidewalk system along Laurel Avenue. Secondly, the committee would like to pursue the option of installing a midsection crosswalk at the intersection of Church Road and N. Aspen Avenue (Option B1). The second part of this option would be to install a short stretch of paved trail that ties into the trail along Church Road in front of Sterling Elementary School. Also, the committee would recommend that the trail from Church Road to the rear of the Claude Moore Recreation Center be improved with drainage and stone dust or another pervious material, and be identified as a corridor for bicyclists (Option B2).

If agreed, the next step will be to identify funding for the design and the engineering analysis to determine the actual costs. At that time, we would be pursuing funding options such as grants and/or requests to the Board of Supervisors as a part of the budget process.

