



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

2599 ONTARIO RD NW | WASHINGTON, DC 20009 | (202) 518-0524 | WABA.ORG

May 24, 2016

Libby Garvey, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd. Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

To the Members of the Arlington County Board,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and our 21,000 members and supporters in Virginia about the recent decision by Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe to allow the widening of Interstate 66.

The approved widening of I-66 inside the Beltway will burden Arlington's bicycle-oriented and smart-growth-oriented county with even more car traffic from sprawling jurisdictions to the west. The general consensus of political observers is that the "compromise" went lopsidedly against Arlington – the County is losing more from it than it's gaining. We would like to see it made fairer.

As a partial mitigation of the damage of the highway widening, the state of Virginia should reconstruct and upgrade the very popular Custis Trail from the Beltway to the Potomac River. Specifically, the State of Virginia should take two important steps that would stimulate more bicycle commuting and remove a percentage of automobiles from the corridor.

(1) The state should reroute the Custis Trail at the crossing of Sycamore Street so as to be a cantilevered facility directly alongside the I-66 bridge over that road. This would shorten and flatten a circuitous section of the trail and increase the number of commuting bicyclists.

(2) The state should remove all trail grades in excess of five percent, as mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Although the Custis Trail is a good non-motorized transportation route, its extreme hilliness reduces the number of people who use it. On pleasant days, it may get between 1,000 and 2,000 bicyclists, but that number could likely be doubled – or more – if the steep hills were leveled out. Use of the Custis Trail already aids in reducing congestion in Arlington, but a doubled level of use would do much more.



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WABA is a leading member of the Capital Trails Coalition, a nascent but strong coalition whose vision it to create a world-class network of multi-use trails that are equitably distributed throughout the Washington DC metropolitan region and provide healthy, low-stress access to open space and reliable transportation for people of all ages and abilities. The regional trails network will transform public life by providing healthy, low-stress access to open space and reliable transportation for people of all ages and abilities. The Custis Trail is an excellent example of the type of infrastructure that is important not just to Arlington County, but to our entire region.

We respectfully ask the County Board to request that Virginia Department of Transportation undertake this trail mitigation effort as part of the I-66 widening project.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a thin black rectangular border. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Gregory Billing".

Gregory Billing
Executive Director