

MOTION:

**October 6, 2020
Regular Meeting
Res. No. 20-**

SECOND:

RE:

ENDORSE AND AUTHORIZE APPLICATIONS TO THE FEDERAL LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM FOR FEDERAL FUNDING FROM THE EASTERN FEDERAL LANDS HIGHWAY DIVISION - VARIOUS MAGISTERIAL DISTRICTS

ACTION:

WHEREAS, the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) was established by 23 U.S.C. 204 to improve transportation facilities that are located within, adjacent to, or improve access to federal lands; and

WHEREAS, the Program is funded by the Highway Trust Fund and administered by the Office of Federal Lands Highway under the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration; and

WHEREAS, the objective of FLAP is to provide safe and adequate transportation access to and through federal land for visitors, recreationists, and resource users, with an emphasis on high-recreation and economic-generator sites; and

WHEREAS, eligible projects must be located on a public road, bridge, trail, or transit network and have support from the federal land management agency and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT); and

WHEREAS, there is approximately \$4 million in funding available for projects in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Applications for projects located in Virginia are submitted to the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division; and

WHEREAS, County staff have coordinated with the National Parks Service and VDOT to identify projects that meet FLAP eligibility requirements and align with local, state, and national priorities; and

WHEREAS, as a result of this work, the Prince William Forest Park Entrance project and Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) Gap Analysis project are recommended for application to FLAP; and

WHEREAS, the Prince William Forest Park Entrance project entails the construction of an entrance off Route 234, including intersection and access road improvements, and a parking lot to improve access to Prince William Forest Park for residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, Prince William Forest Park is a high-use recreation site and economic generator, with approximately 400,000 visitors annually; and

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WHEREAS, the PHNST Gap Analysis entails exploring the feasibility of several priority PHNST connections and 30 percent design for the Powell's Creek trail connection from Powell's Landing Park to Potomac Shores; and

WHEREAS, the PHNST is a federally designated national scenic trail that supports recreation and tourism in the County; and

WHEREAS, these projects support outcomes and policies of the Prince William Strategic and Comprehensive Plans, and will provide recreation and economic benefits to the County; and

WHEREAS, the County is not appropriating funding at this time, however, if the project(s) are selected for FLAP funding, the local match will be provided through in kind contributions from the National Park Service and Federal Regional Surface Transportation Program funds;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Prince William Board of County Supervisors hereby authorizes the County Executive, or his designee, to submit the applications and to execute all other documents necessary to secure federal funding through the Federal Lands Access Program, administered by the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division, for the projects identified herein by the Department of Transportation staff.

Votes:

Ayes:

Nays:

Absent from Vote:

Absent from Meeting:

For Information:

Transportation Director

ATTEST: _____
Clerk to the Board



STAFF REPORT

Board Meeting Date:	October 6, 2020
Agenda Title:	Endorse and Authorize Applications to the Federal Lands Access Program for Federal Funding from the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division
District Impact:	Various Magisterial Districts
Requested Action:	Authorize submission of grant applications.
Department / Agency Lead:	Department of Transportation
Staff Lead:	Ricardo Canizales, Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) is a competitive grant funding program for projects that provide safe and adequate transportation to and through federal lands. The Program emphasizes improving access to sites that have a high recreation use and/or are economic generators. In Virginia, FLAP is managed by the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division. There is approximately \$4 million available for projects in Virginia. Projects must be on a public road, trail or transit network that is located on, adjacent to or provides access to federally owned land. Projects must have support from the Federal Land Management Agency and Virginia Department of Transportation.

County staff from the Department of Transportation, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism and the Planning Office have worked closely with staff from the National Park Service (NPS) to identify projects that align with local, state and federal priorities, meet FLAP eligibility requirements and will be competitive based on established scoring criteria. Two projects are recommended for application to FLAP for federal funding.

The first project is a new entrance to and parking lot for Prince William Forest Park. Adding an entrance to Prince William Forest Park on Rt 234, is a current planned project of the NPS and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with significant planning and environmental analysis work already completed. The application would request funding for a phased approach to completing this project. The second project is a Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) gap analysis. This analysis would explore the feasibility of several PHNST connections on the eastern end of the County and include 30 percent designs for a segment at Powell's Creek that would connect Powell's Landing Park to Potomac Shores. Both projects support County goals and policies to improve mobility and access to recreation for Prince William residents and visitors.

It is the recommendation of County staff that the Prince William Board of County Supervisors (Board) endorse and authorize applications to the Federal Lands Access Program for federal funding from the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division.

BACKGROUND

FLAP was established by 23 U.S.C. 204 to improve transportation facilities that are located within, adjacent to or improve access to, federal lands. The Program is administered by the Office of Federal Lands Highway under the U.S. Department of Transportation's FHWA. The Eastern Land Highway Division is responsible for management and oversight of FLAP in Virginia and 30 other states along the Eastern Coast, as well as Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. The Program is funded by the Highway Trust Fund and FLAP funding for each state is allocated by a formula based on factors including state road mileage, federal land area and visitors. There is approximately \$4 million in FLAP funding available for the Commonwealth of Virginia for Fiscal Years (FY) 2020-2022.

The objective of FLAP is to provide safe and adequate transportation access to and through federal lands for visitors, recreationists and resource users, with an emphasis on high-recreation and economic-generator sites. To be eligible, the project must be located on a public road, bridge, trail or transit system that is on, adjacent to or provides access to, federal land. The applicant must have ownership or maintenance responsibility for the facility, or have a letter indicating the application is submitted on behalf of the entity that owns the facility. Eligible projects include feasibility studies, environmental sustainability research, capital improvements for roads, trails and sidewalks, bike and pedestrian facilities and safety improvements. Highway Safety Improvement Projects that are consistent with the State Strategic Highway Plan and performance-based goals for reducing roadway fatalities and injuries are eligible for 100 percent funding.

County staff from the Department of Transportation, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism and the Planning Office have coordinated efforts to identify potential projects for submission. Projects considered for application meet FLAP eligibility requirements, are included in long-range plans, and have funding needs that can be reasonably addressed with available funding. Potential projects were discussed with NPS staff, who provided feedback on the level of support from the federal land management agency responsible for the respective federal lands. This support is a primary screening criterion for applications. Based on this planning work, two projects are recommended for application.

The first project is the Prince William Forest Park Entrance project. This project would construct a new entrance off Route 234, across from Waterway Drive, and includes the construction of an access road, new 100 spaces parking area and paved trail to connect to the national park. NPS and FHWA have invested significantly into the planning and environmental analyses for this project. This includes an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Assessment of Effects for the Park Entrance (2006), a project scoping report (2015) and Comprehensive Trails Plan EA (2019), which resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact. The scoping report included a cost estimate and preliminary design concepts for three different access configurations. Based on this work, NPS and FHWA have identified a preferred access alternative and have committed funding for the preliminary engineering of the trail and an archeological survey for the project area. The total estimated cost of the project is approximately \$8,500,000. Funding is being requested for the preliminary engineering of the project, which is currently estimated at approximately \$1.3 million. The required 20% local match is approximately \$260,000. The value of the preliminary engineering of the trail and archeological survey is \$117,000 and will be applied towards the match. If the project is selected, the County can use federal Regional Surface Transportation Program funds for the remainder of the local match. The project will be managed by the Department of Transportation in partnership with NPS and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. Prince William Forest Park is a high-use recreation site and economic generator for the County, with approximately 400,000 visitors annually.

The second project is a PHNST gap analysis to explore the feasibility of multiple planned trail connections in the eastern end of the County. The application would also include funding for 30 percent design for a trail connection between Powell's Landing Park and Potomac Shores. The PHNST is a federally designated national scenic trail and projects that improve access to this trail are eligible for FLAP funding. Additionally, segments of the PHNST connect directly to federal land. The connections included in the application are part of the long-range plan developed by the PHNST Work Group. This work group was established by a 2010 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and includes Prince William Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, NPS, the Prince William Trails and Blueways Council, nonprofits (including Sierra Club) and private partners (including REI). Members of this Work Group are also part of a regional PHNST MOU facilitated by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission. In 2019, REI grant funding was received the PHNST Work Group to conduct a feasibility study for the Powell's Creek PHNST connection. The total cost of the gap analysis is approximately one million dollars. \$300,000 is requested to analyze three key PHNST gaps in Eastern Prince William: North Woodbridge, Town of Dumfries to Prince William Forest Park and Locust Shade to Prince William Forest Park through the Marine Corps Museum. \$700,000 is requested for 30 percent design of the Powell's Creek boardwalk, which includes NEPA documentation. NPS has applied for \$200,000 in grant funding from the Connect Trails to Parks Program for PHNST in the County which, if awarded, can be applied as the match. The local match may also be met using federal Regional Surface Transportation Program funds which have been allocated to the County as a flexible funding source for transportation projects. PHNST is a high-use recreation site and economic generator for the County and is an established priority in the Comprehensive Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of County staff that the Board endorse and authorize the applications to the Federal Lands Access Program for federal funding from the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division.

Service Level / Policy Impact

These projects will further the County's Mobility Strategic Plan that "the community will have an accessible, comprehensive, multi-modal network of transportation infrastructure that supports local and regional mobility." The projects also support Comprehensive Plan Park, Recreation and Tourism policies to promote recreation opportunities for residents and visitors and enhancing PHNST connectivity is included in the North Woodbridge Small Area Plan.

Fiscal Impact

No costs will be incurred by the County by authorizing submission of the applications. Authorizing submission will provide an opportunity for the County to secure funds to improve multimodal transportation infrastructure. FLAP funding requires a 20 percent local match. Federal funds, excluding FLAP funding, may be used for the local match. If selected for FLAP funding, the local match will be provided using contributions from the NPS, detailed in this report, and federal Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds which have been allocated to the County for past and/or future fiscal years. Board authorization will be sought to approve the transfer of RSTP funds.

Legal Impact

The Board has the legal authority to authorize submission of applications to the Federal Highway Division to secure state funding. However, it is not required to do so. The application, however, cannot be submitted without Board approval and the adopted Resolution.

Timing Impact

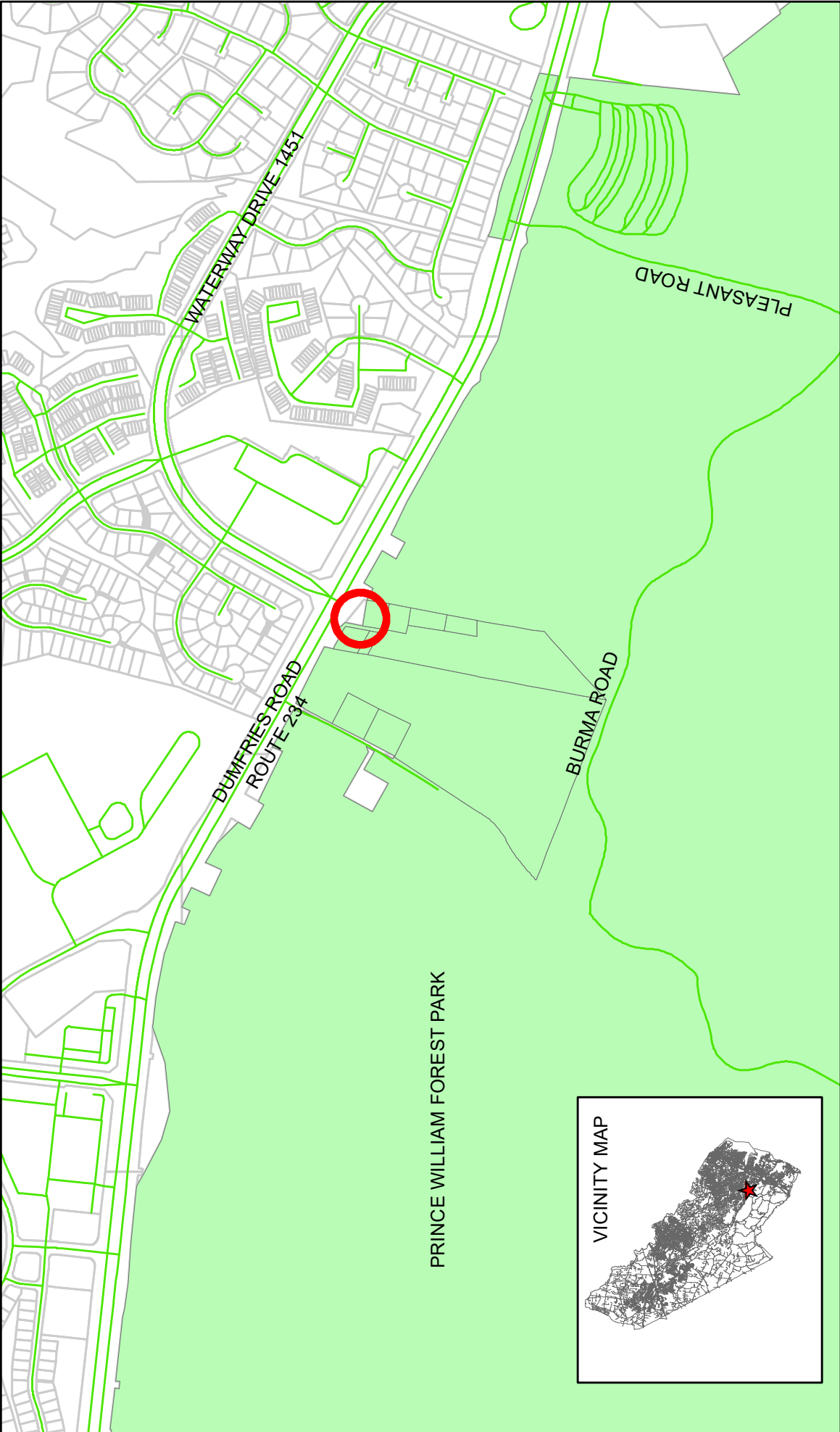
Applications are due October 15, 2020 for FY 2020-2022 funding.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

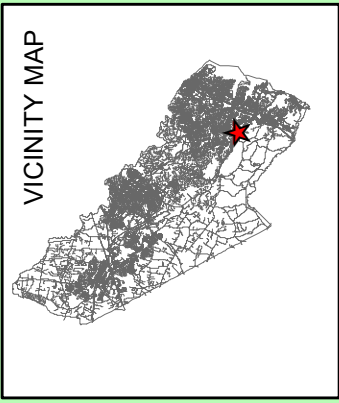
Paolo Belita | (703) 792-6273
pbelita@pwcgov.org

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map – Prince William Forest Park Entrance
2. Vicinity Map – PHNST Gap Analysis
3. Map-PHNST Gap Analysis



PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST PARK



VICINITY MAP

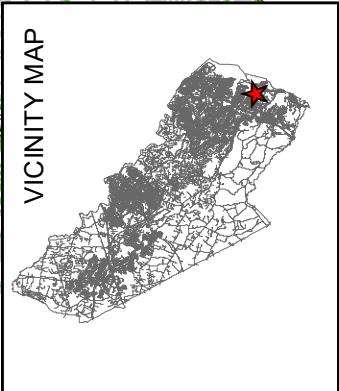
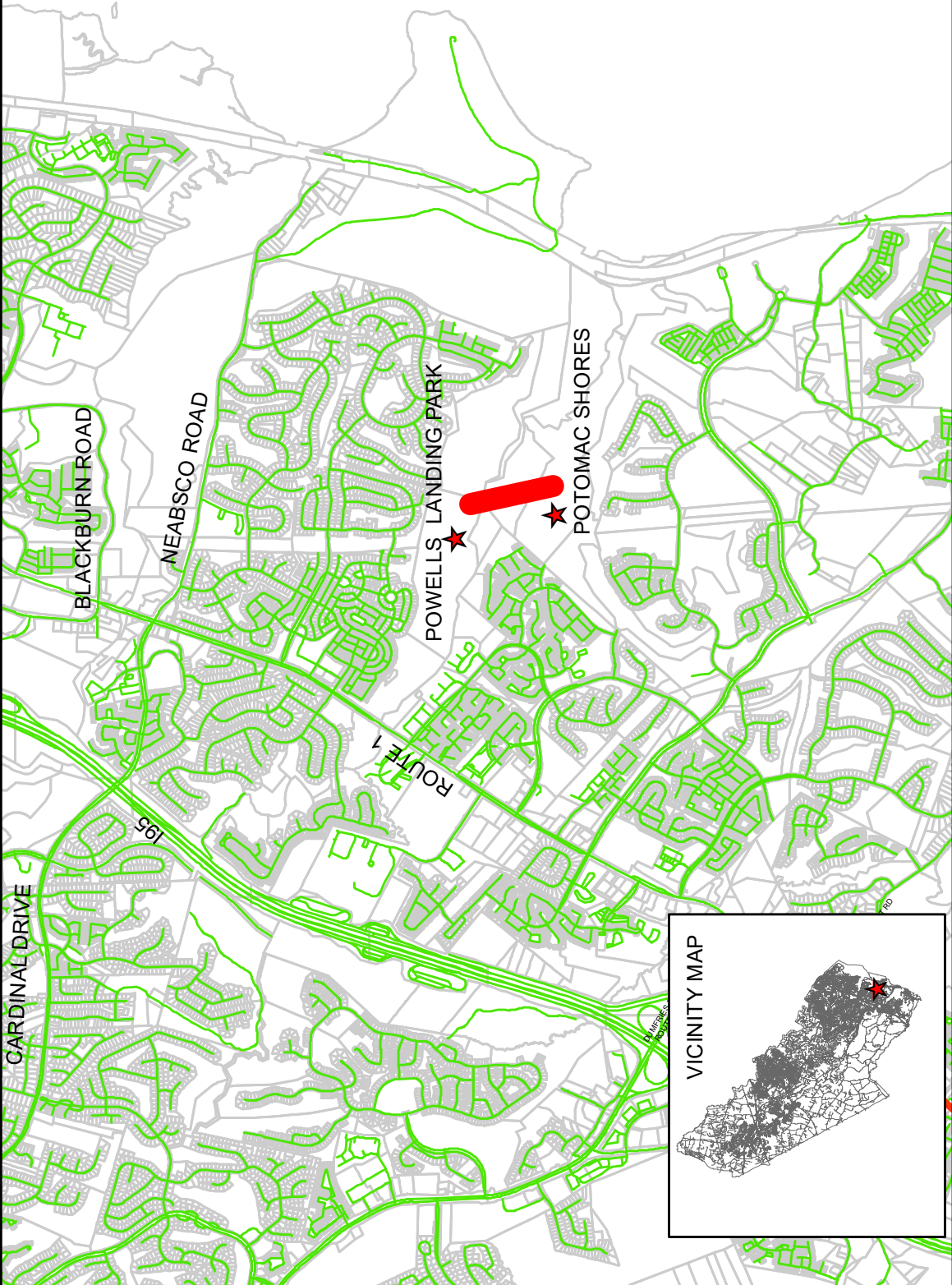


NORTH



PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST PARK
NEW ENTRANCE AND PARKING LOT

OCTOBER 6, 2020



NORTH



POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL
GAP ANALYSIS

OCTOBER 6, 2020



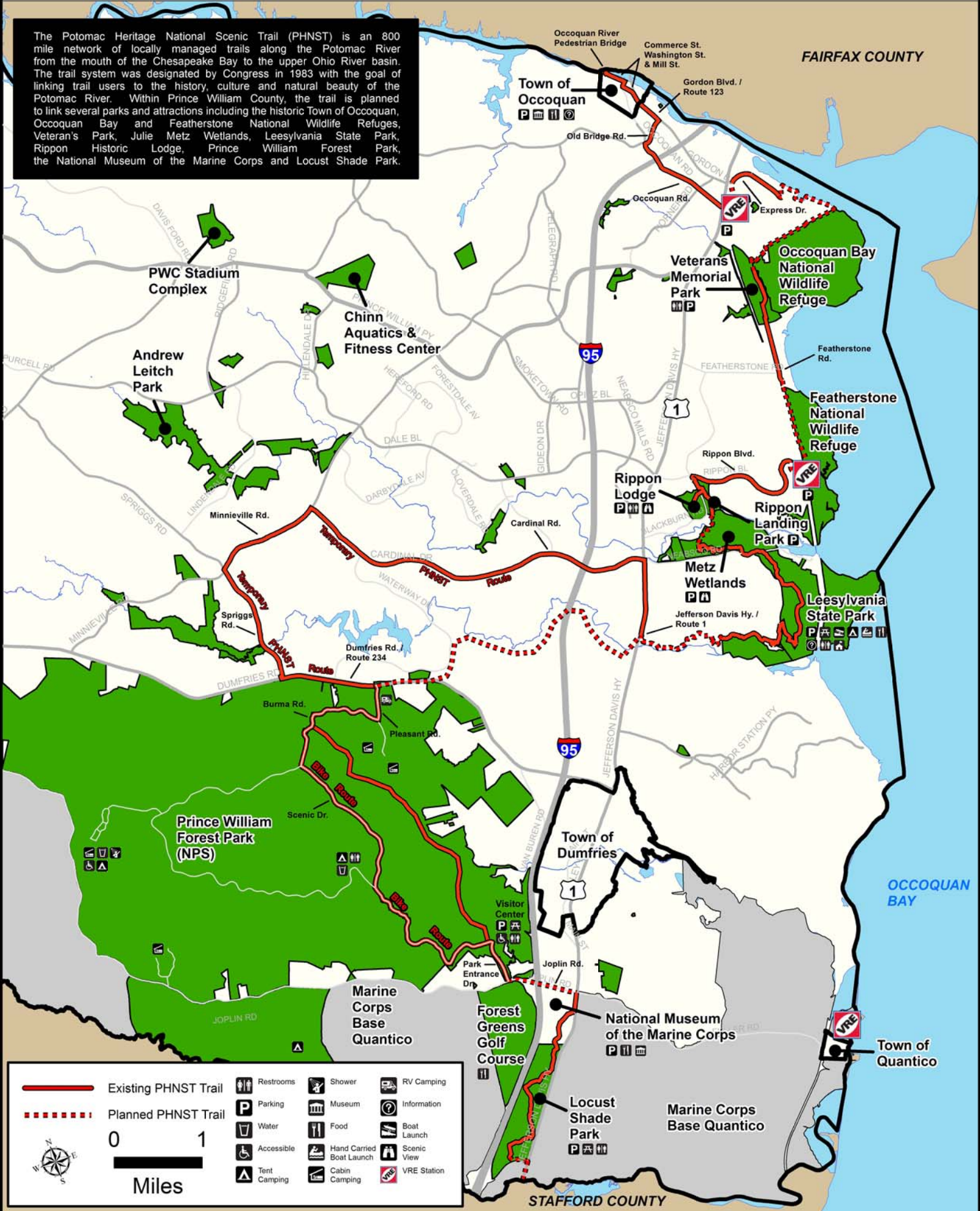


POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

Prince William County, Virginia



The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) is an 800 mile network of locally managed trails along the Potomac River from the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay to the upper Ohio River basin. The trail system was designated by Congress in 1983 with the goal of linking trail users to the history, culture and natural beauty of the Potomac River. Within Prince William County, the trail is planned to link several parks and attractions including the historic Town of Occoquan, Occoquan Bay and Featherstone National Wildlife Refuges, Veterans Park, Julie Metz Wetlands, Leesylvania State Park, Rippon Historic Lodge, Prince William Forest Park, the National Museum of the Marine Corps and Locust Shade Park.



— Existing PHNST Trail
- - - Planned PHNST Trail

0 1
 Miles

	Restrooms		Shower		RV Camping
	Parking		Museum		Information
	Water		Food		Boat Launch
	Accessible		Hand Carried Boat Launch		Scenic View
	Tent Camping		Cabin Camping		VRE Station