



May 6, 2025

Globally Rare/Locally Hidden

How to save habitats before paving over them



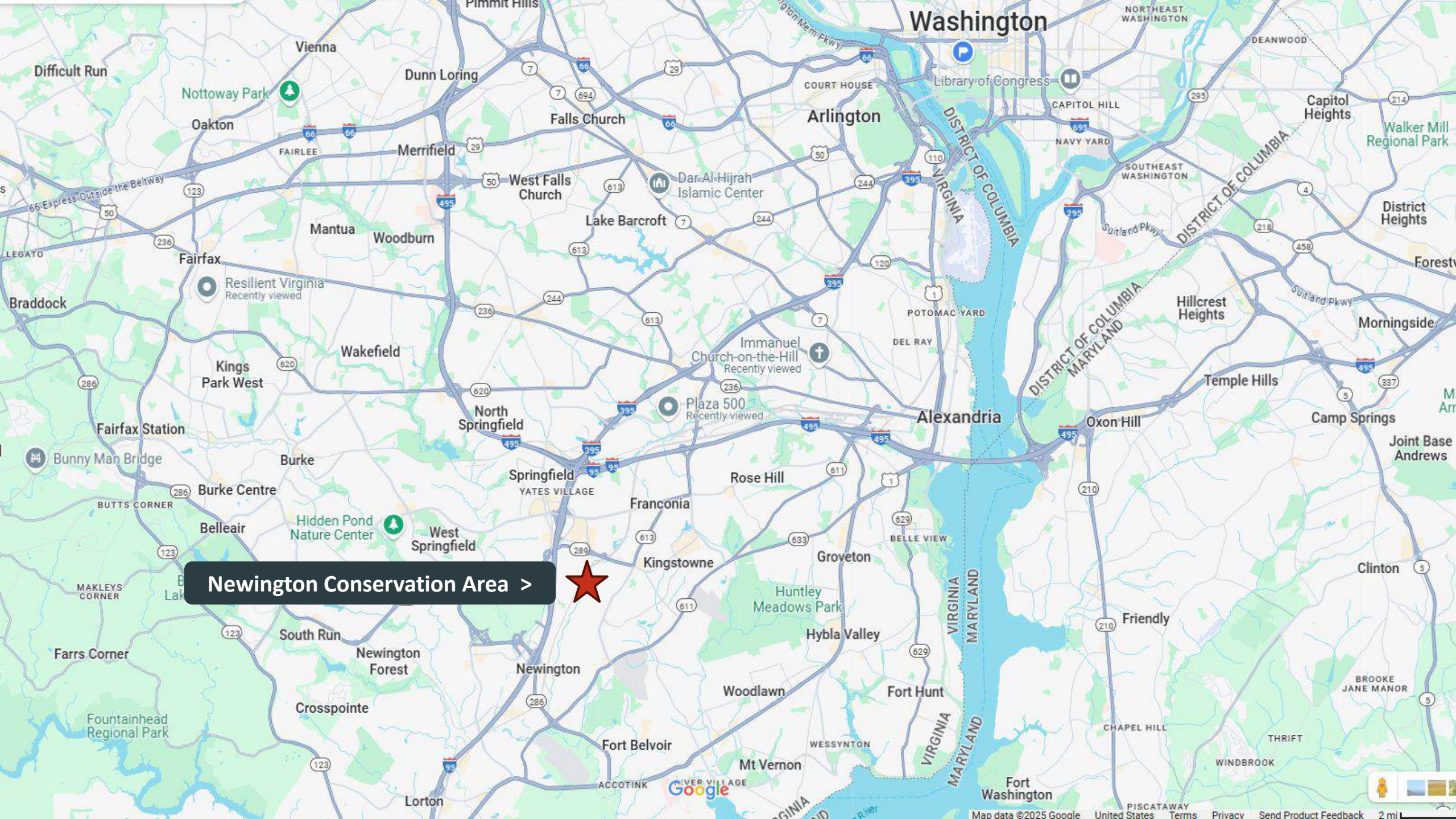
Webinar group norms

- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Practice active listening
- Be open to ideas and suggestions
- Step up /step back
- Respect time





There's a special place in Fairfax County...



Newington Conservation Area >





We began learning the details in 2021.



We need your help and your voice to help save this area.

The Cinder Bed Road Bikeway
proposal threatens to undermine the
Newington Conservation Site.



Planned: Cinder Bed Road Bikeway

Purpose (2016):

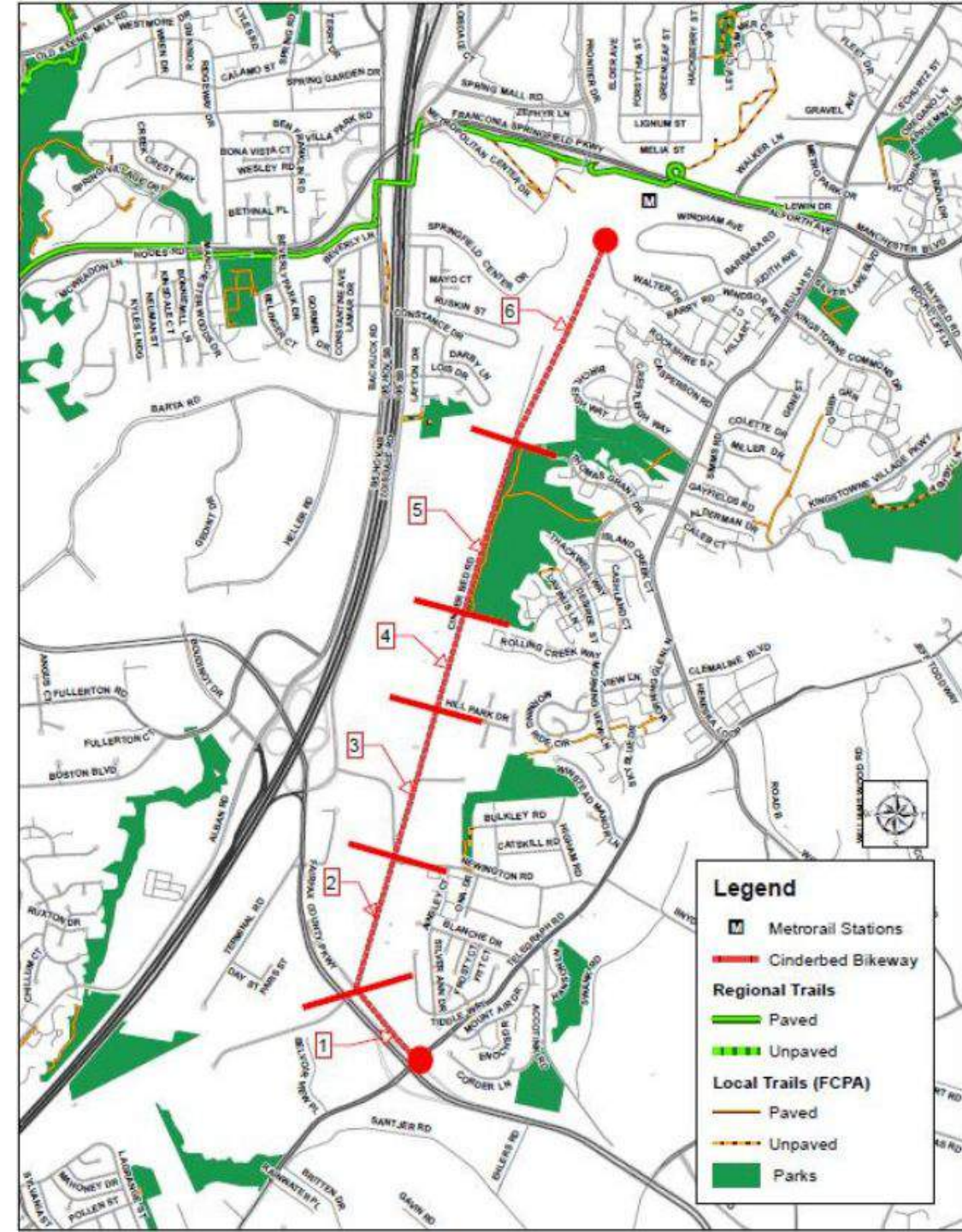
Provide a continuous shared use path between Fairfax County Parkway near Telegraph Road to the Franconia-Springfield Metro Station entrance at Barry Road. (3 miles)

Project page:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/projects/cinder-bed-road-bikeway>

2016 Final Report:

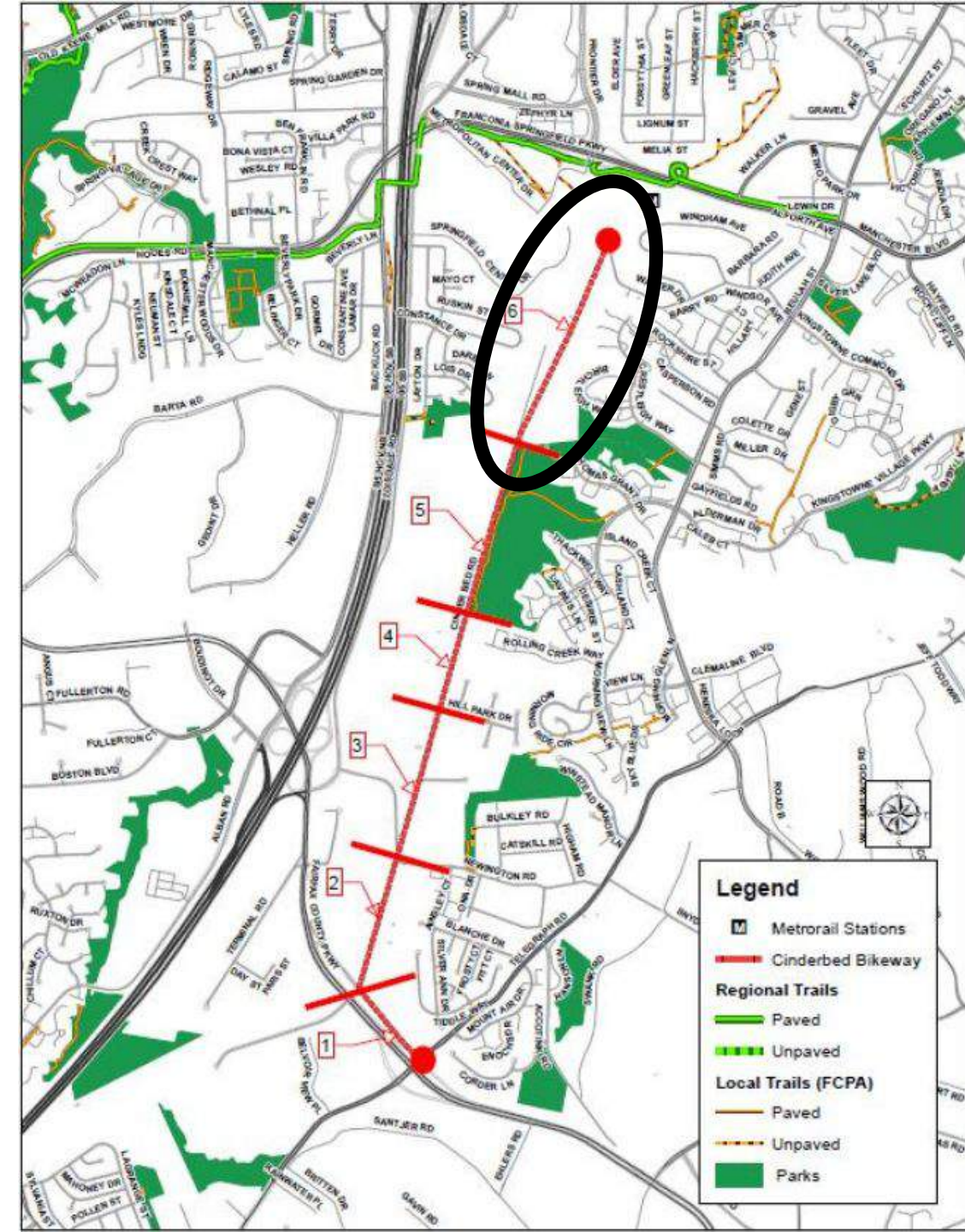
https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/sites/transportation/files/assets/documents/pdf/transportation%20projects,%20studies%20and%20plans/cinder%20bed%20road/cinder-bed-road-bikeway_final-report.pdf

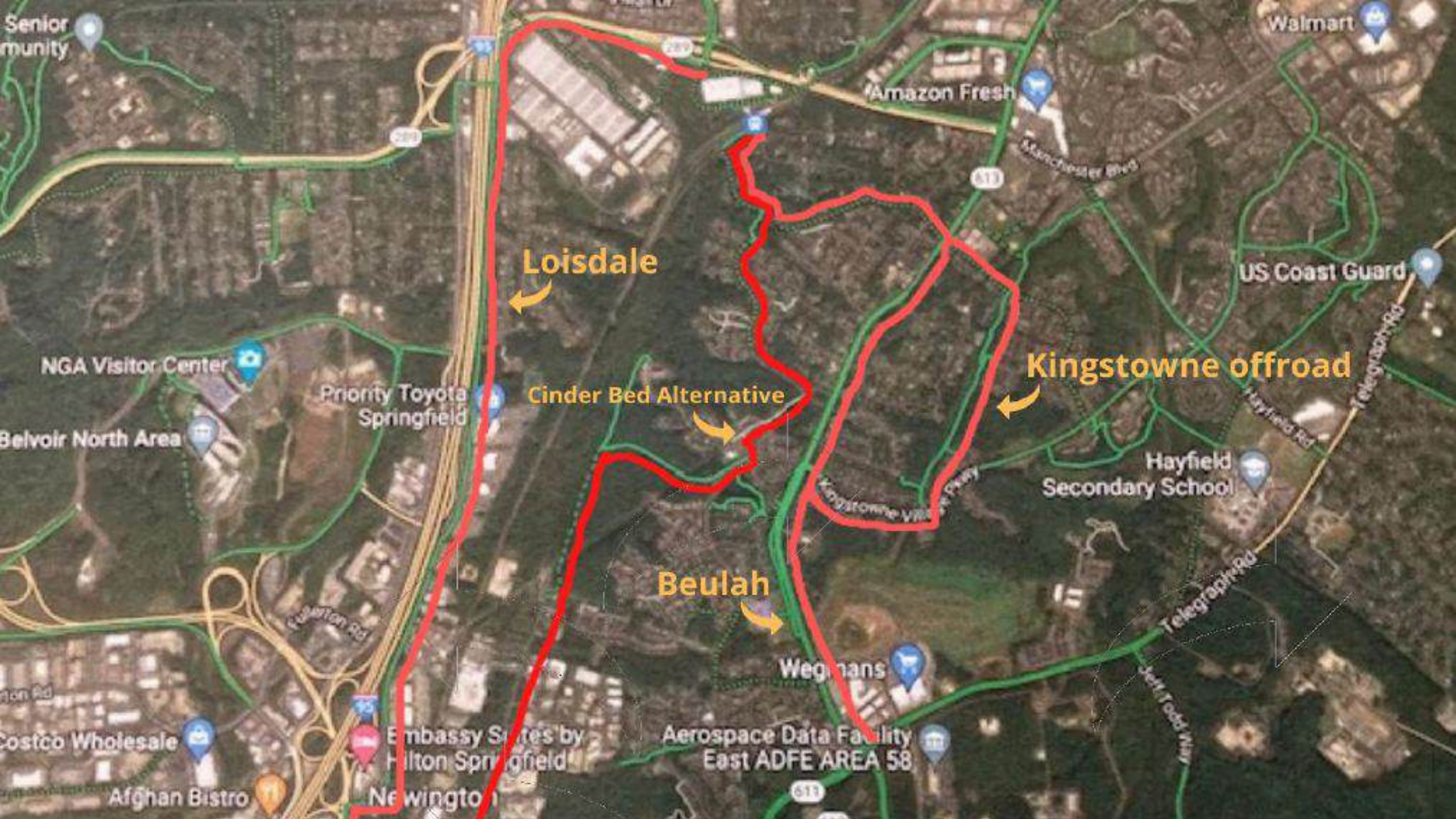


Planned: Cinder Bed Road Bikeway

“Segment 6” is planned through a forested, private HOA property

- 7/10 of a mile are not yet built.



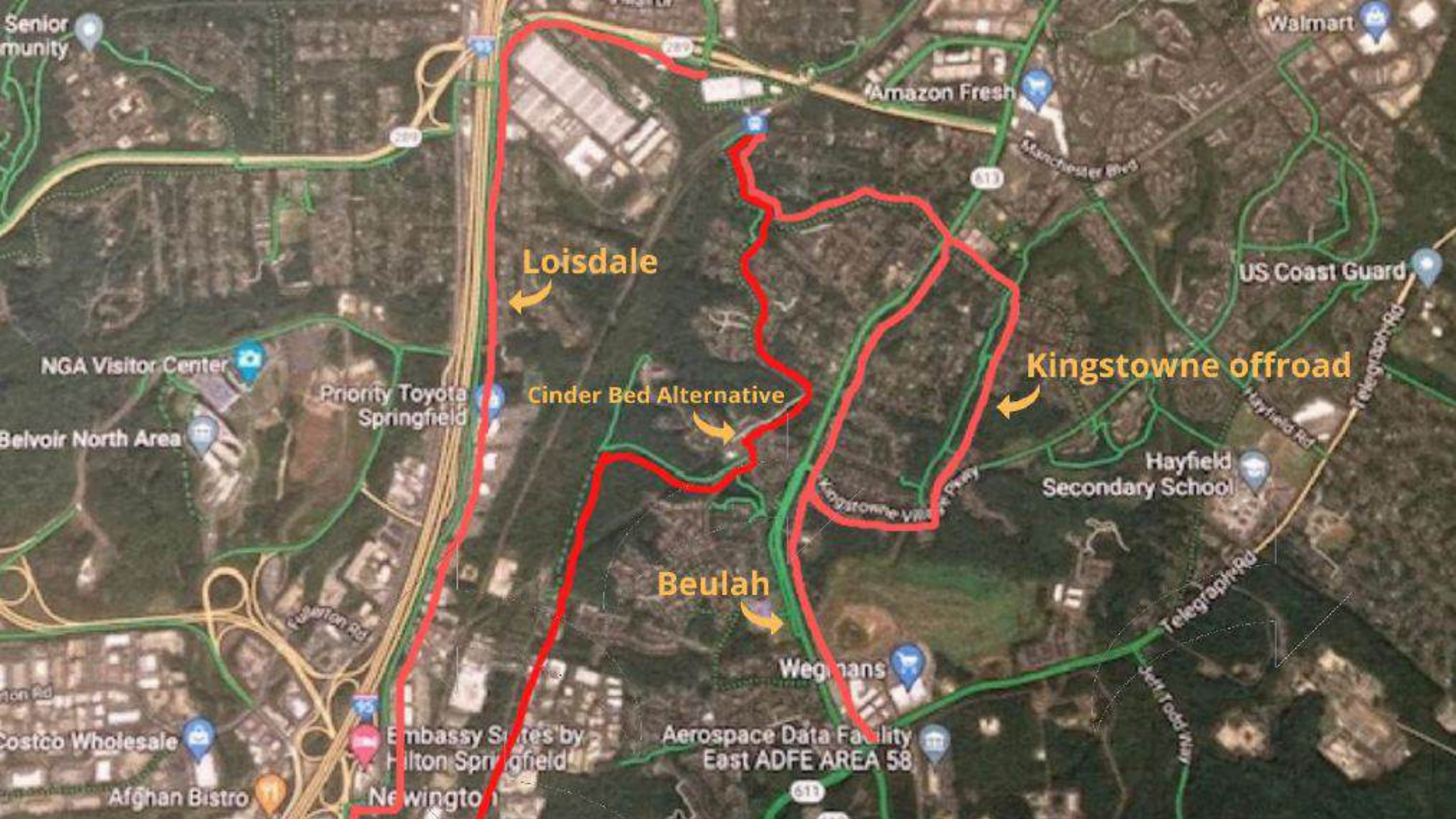


Loisdale

Cinder Bed Alternative

Beulah

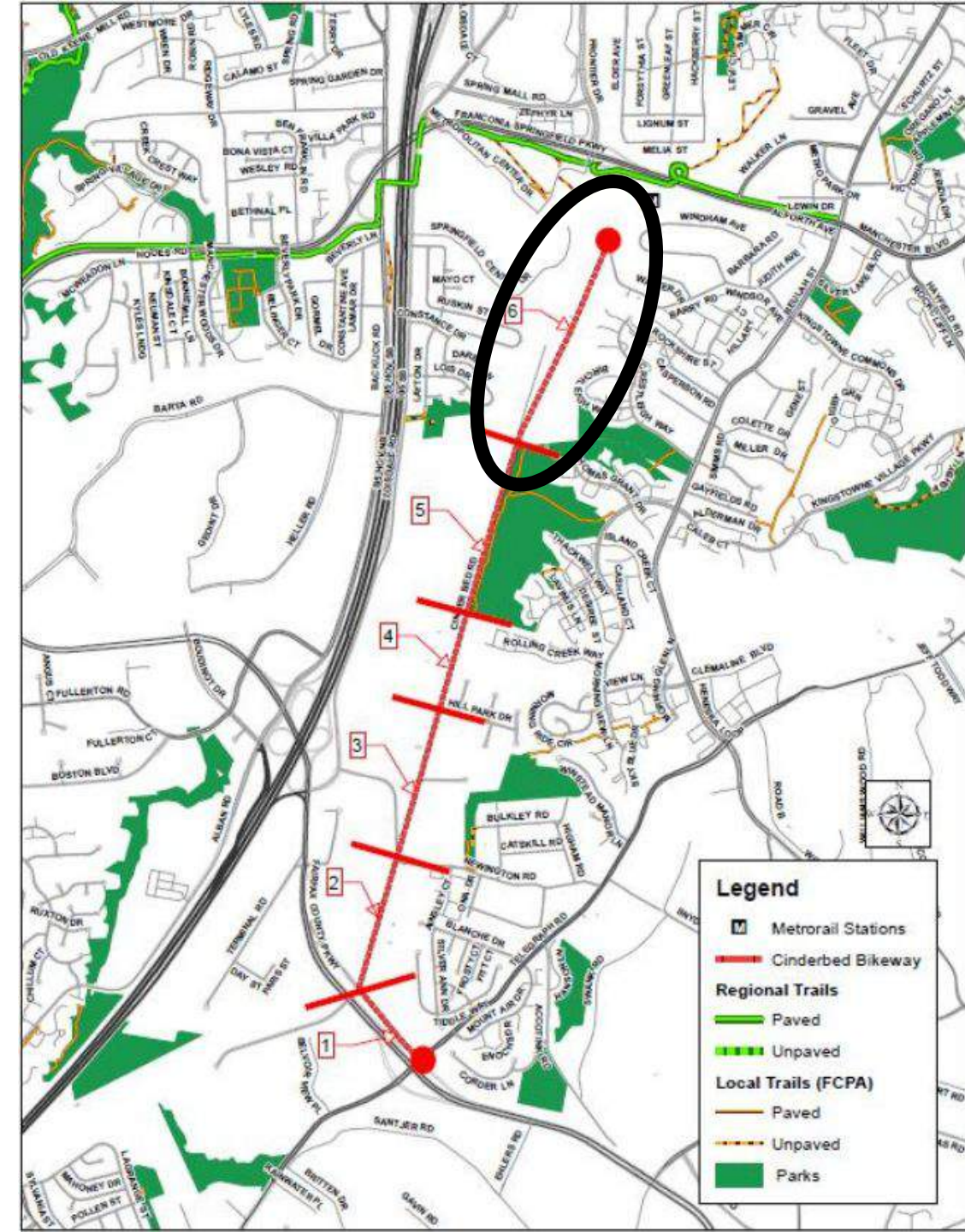
Kingstowne offroad

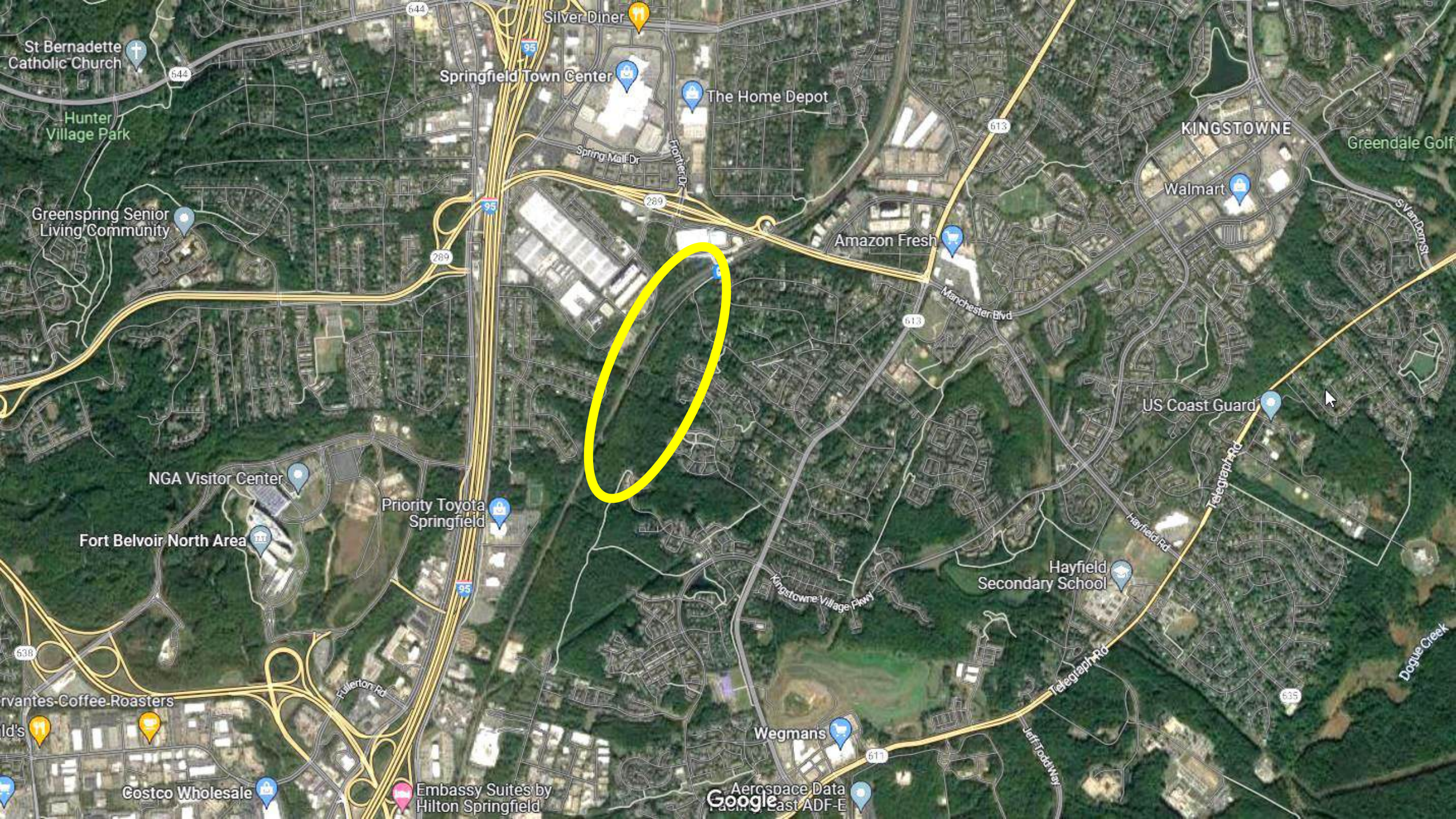


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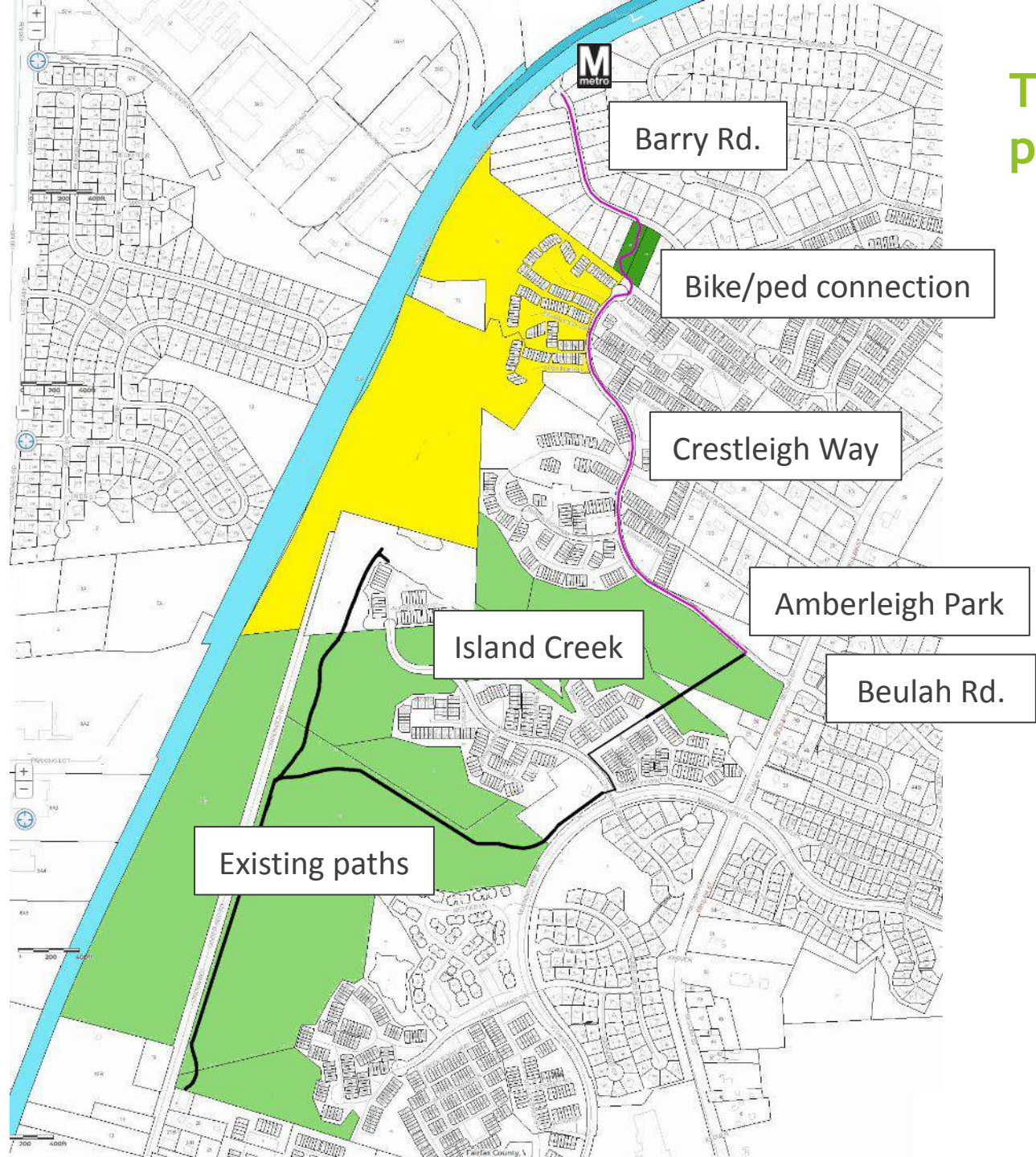
“Segment 6” is planned through a forested, private HOA property

- 7/10 of a mile are not yet built.
- No demand study done.
- Two major bridges are now proposed to cross Long Branch, a tributary of Accotink Creek, and its wetlands.





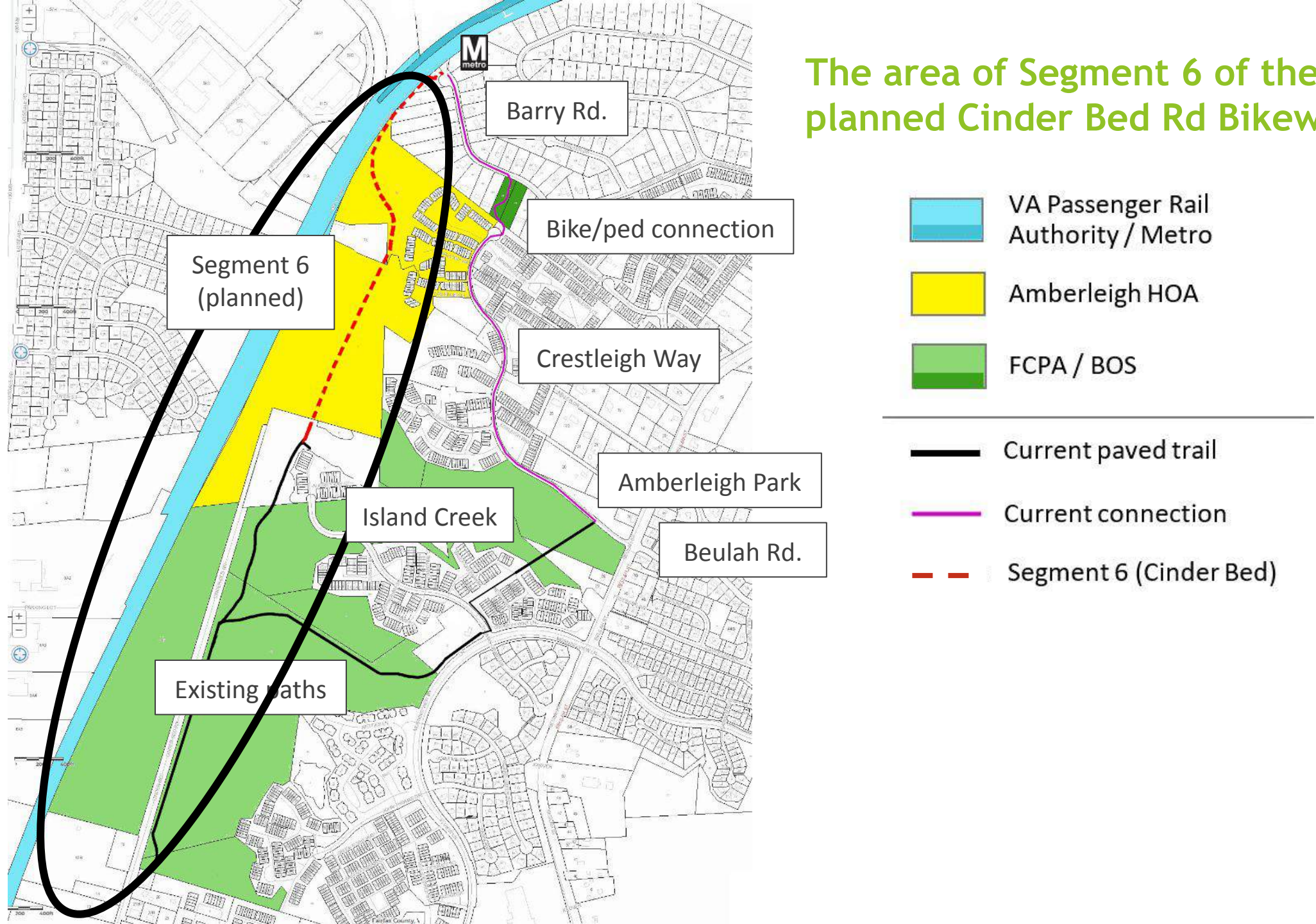
The area of Segment 6 of the planned Cinder Bed Rd Bikeway



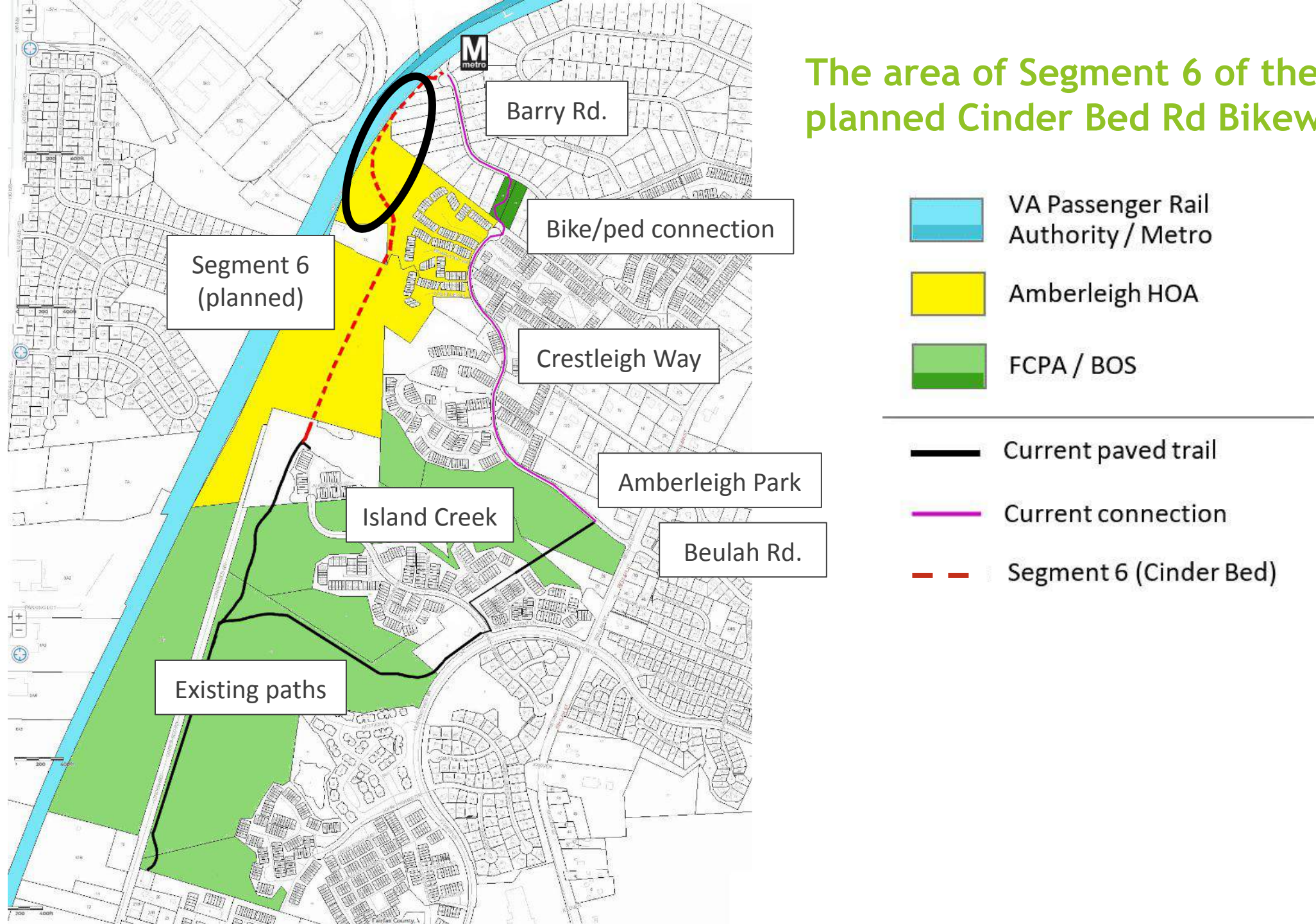
- VA Passenger Rail Authority / Metro
- Amberleigh HOA
- FCPA / BOS

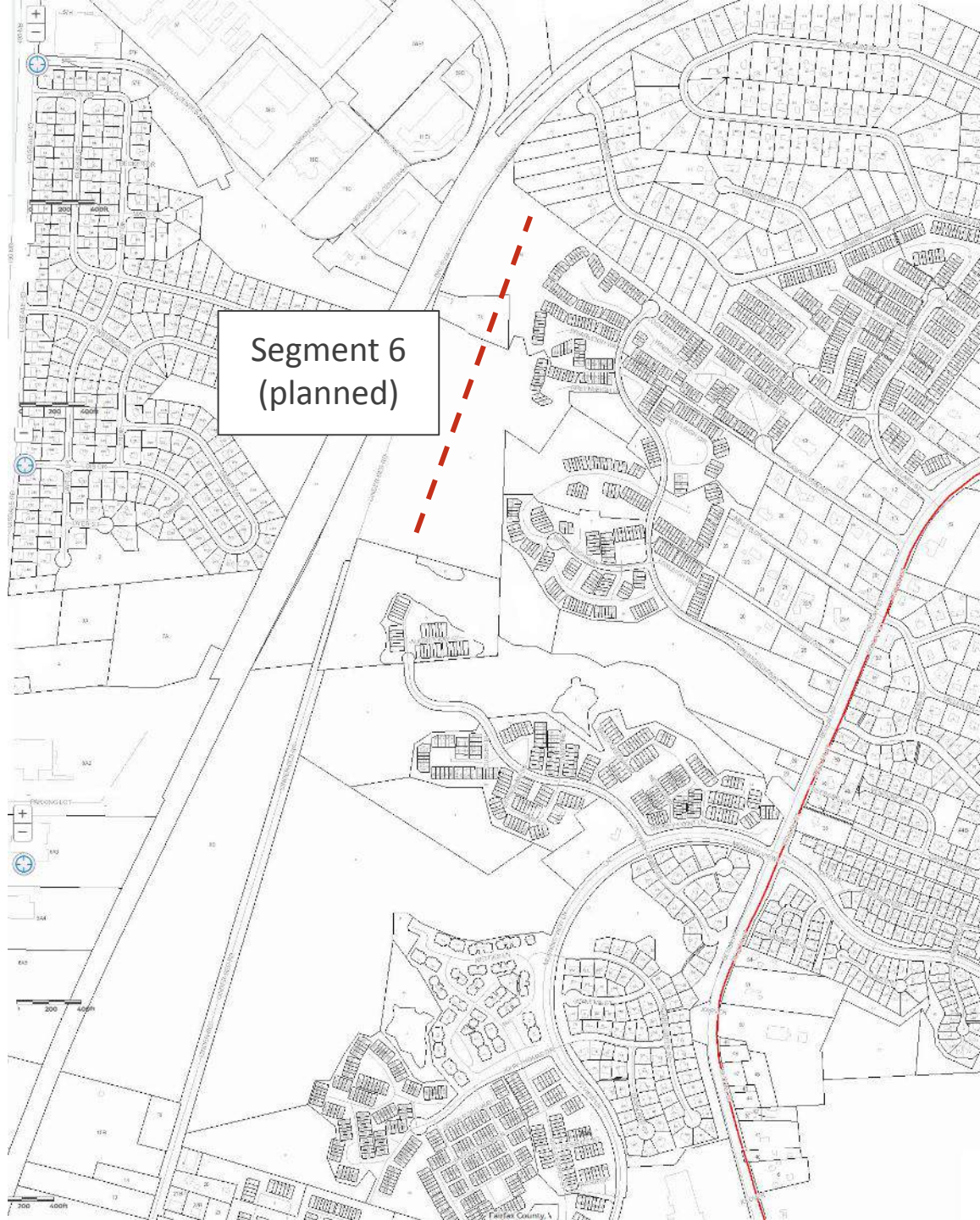
- Current paved trail
- Current connection

The area of Segment 6 of the planned Cinder Bed Rd Bikeway



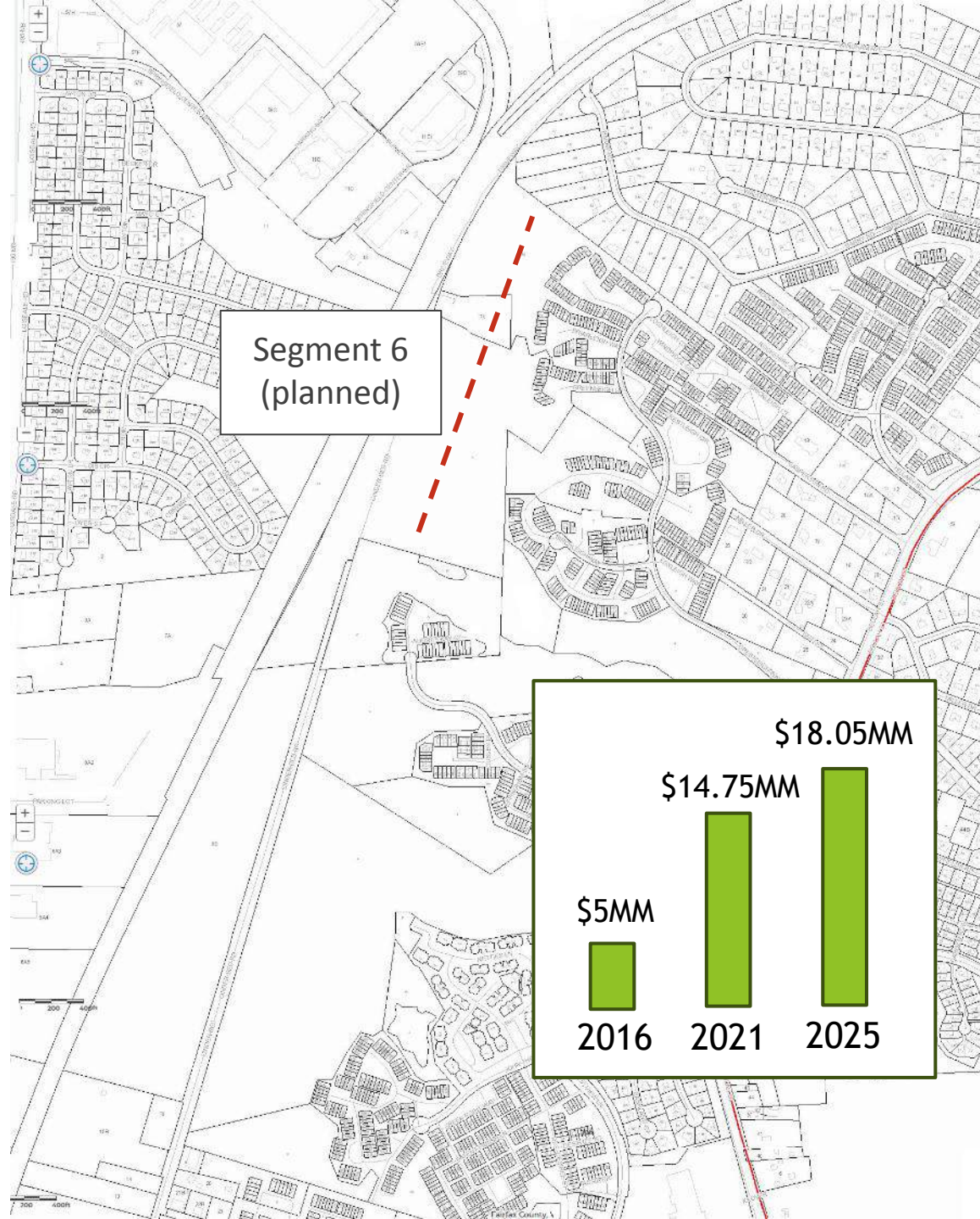
The area of Segment 6 of the planned Cinder Bed Rd Bikeway





When this line was drawn on a map in 2014, no one knew what was here.

- ▶ No *up-front* environmental assessment (and they are hidden)
- ▶ Trails are exempt from standard environmental regulations
- ▶ Only once the trail was *funded* was an environmental review completed
- ▶ Environmental review = mitigation, not avoidance of sensitive area.



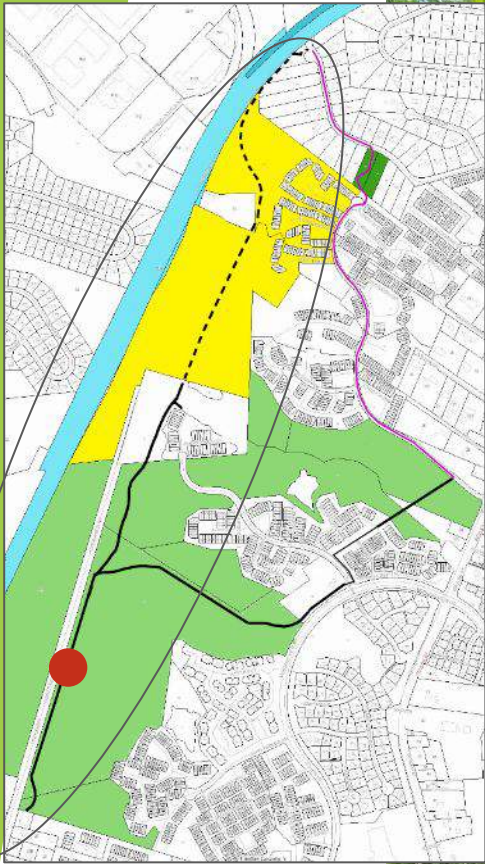
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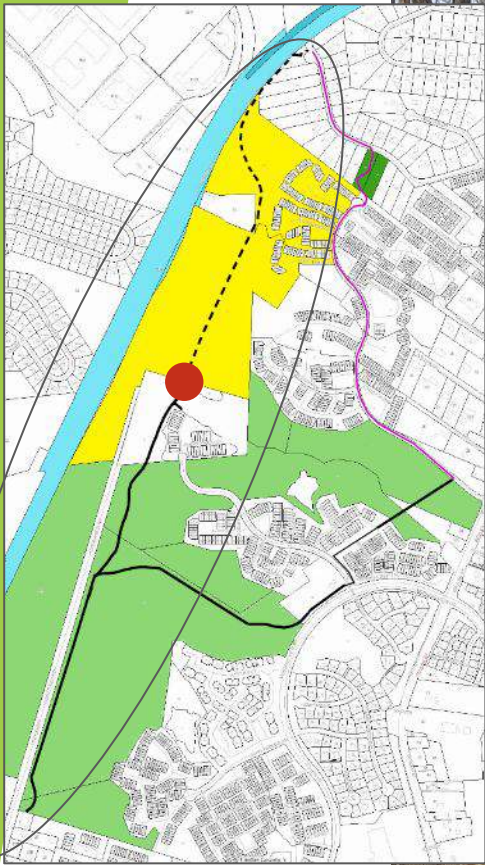
- ▶ The original cost estimate was \$5MM
- ▶ The extent of the wetlands necessitated changes.
- ▶ By 2021, costs had ballooned to \$14.75MM with the need for two bridges in this area.
- ▶ As of 2025, costs have further escalated to \$18.05MM.

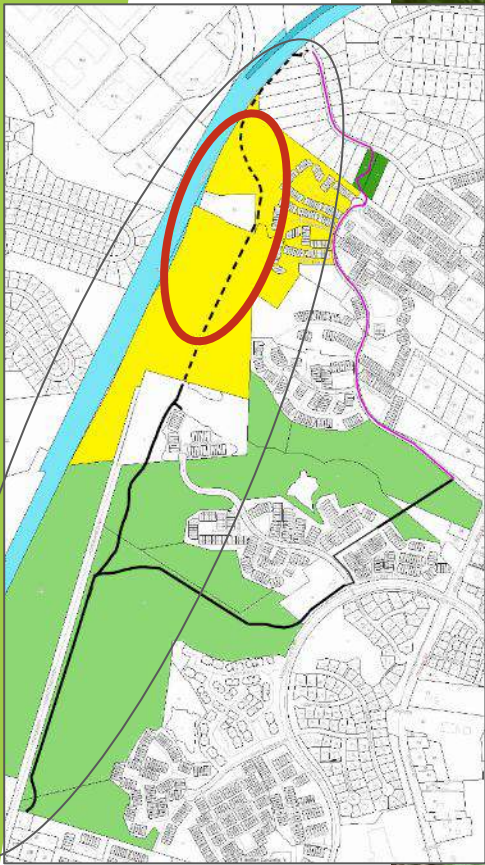
350% increase in cost

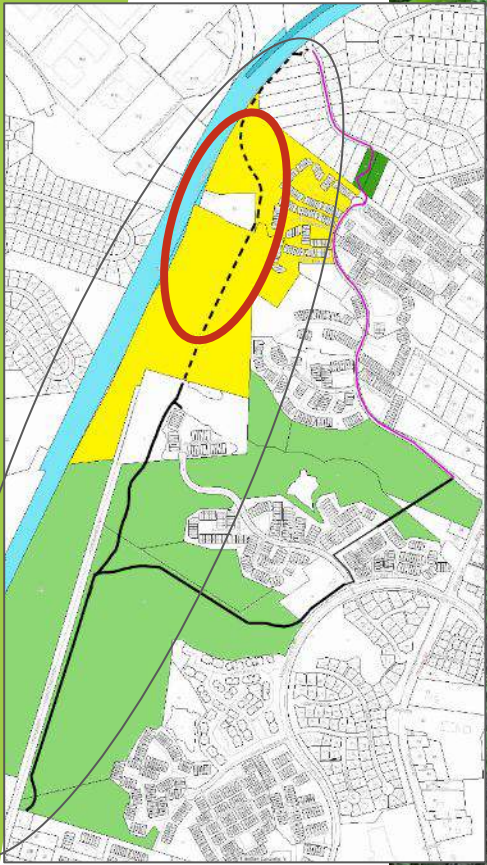
Newington Conservation Site

What's there?

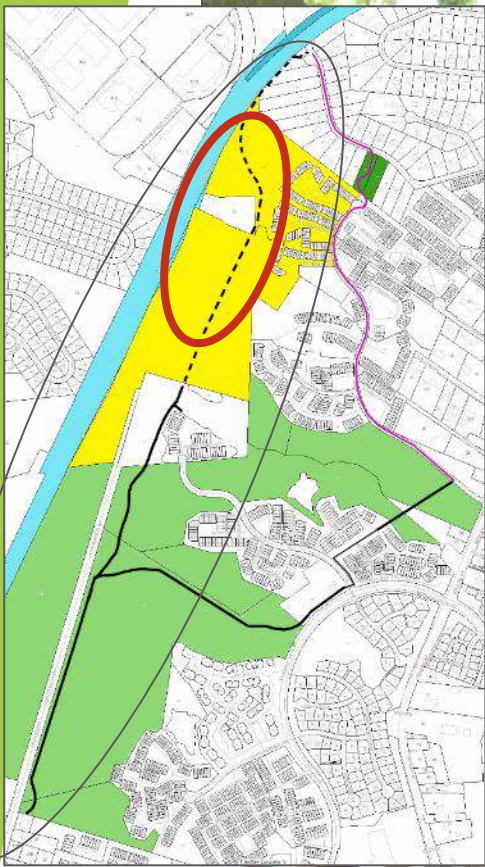


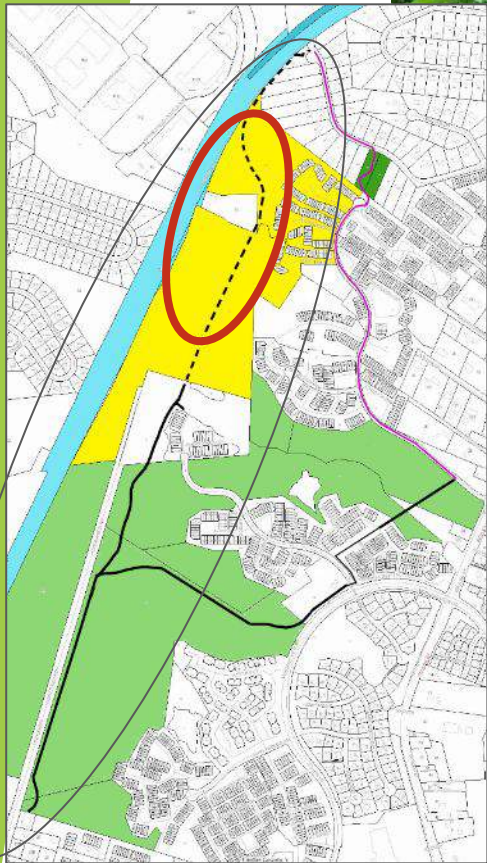




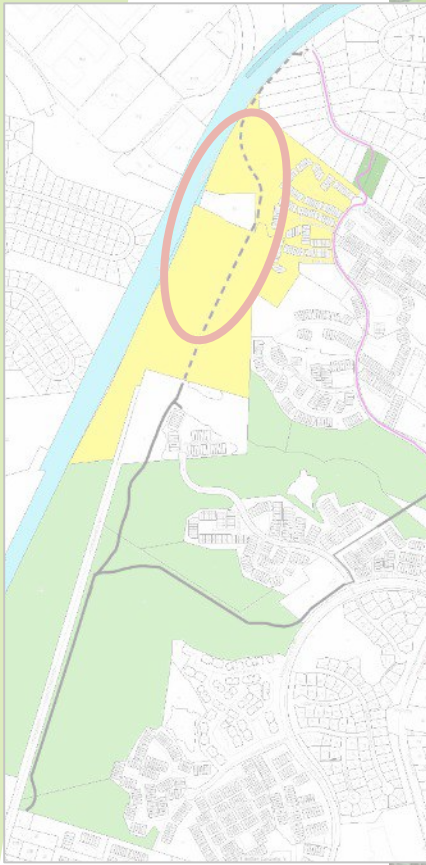


Acidic seepage swamp





Acidic seepage swamp



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

Nathan Burrell
Deputy Director of
Government and Community Relations

Thomas L. Smith
Deputy Director of
Operations

July 29, 2020

David Kwasniewski
Whitman, Requardt & Associates
9030 Stony Point Parkway, Suite 220
Richmond, VA 23235

Re: Cinder Bed Road Bikeway-Revised

Dear Mr. Kwasniewski:

The Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage (DCR) has searched its Biotics Data System for occurrences of natural heritage resources from the area outlined on the submitted map. Natural heritage resources are defined as the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, unique or exemplary natural communities, and significant geologic formations.

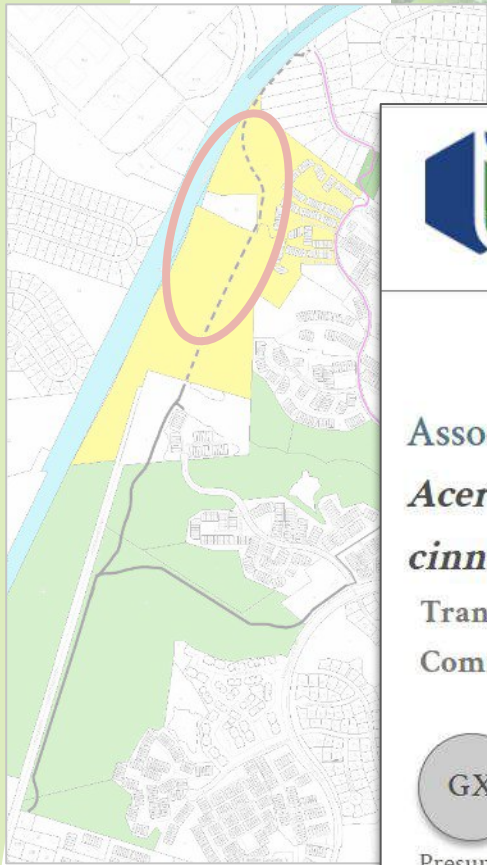
According to the information currently in our files, the Newington Conservation Site is located within the project site (Figure 1). Conservation sites are tools for representing key areas of the landscape that warrant further review for possible conservation action because of the natural heritage resources and habitat they support. Conservation sites are polygons built around one or more rare plant, animal, or natural community designed to include the element and, where possible, its associated habitat, and buffer or other adjacent land thought necessary for the element's conservation. Conservation sites are given a biodiversity significance ranking based on the rarity, quality, and number of element occurrences they contain; on a scale of 1-5, 1 being most significant. Newington Conservation Site has been given a biodiversity significance ranking of B4, which represents a site of moderate significance. The natural heritage resource of concern at this site is:

Coastal Plain / Outer Piedmont Acidic Seepage Swamp

G3?/S3/NL/NL

The Coastal Plain / Outer Piedmont Acidic Seepage Swamp (*Acer rubrum* – *Nyssa sylvatica* – *Magnolia virginiana* – *Viburnum nudum* – *Osmunda cinnamomea* – *Woodwardia areolata* Forest) is an acidic groundwater saturated swamp forest that ranges from southeastern New York and New Jersey to southeastern Virginia, primarily on the Coastal Plain. In Virginia, it occurs mostly in the inner (western) portion of the Coastal Plain.



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English

[↻ New Search](#)

Association

Acer rubrum - *Nyssa sylvatica* - *Magnolia virginiana* / *Viburnum nudum* var. *nudum* / *Osmunda cinnamomea* Swamp Forest

Translated Name: Red Maple - Blackgum - Sweetbay / Possumhaw / Cinnamon Fern Swamp Forest

Common Name: Southern Red Maple - Blackgum Swamp Forest



Presumed
Collapsed



Possibly
Collapsed



Critically
Imperiled



Imperiled



G3
Vulnerable



Apparently
Secure



Secure



No
Status
Rank

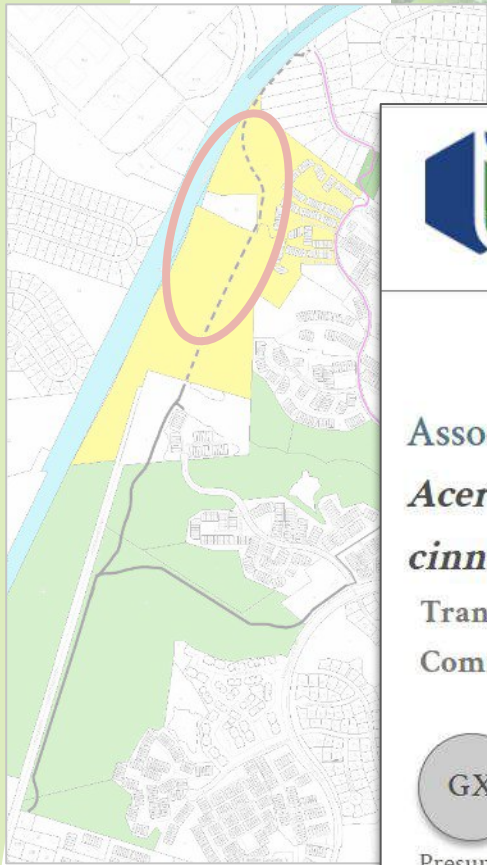


NatureServe Element Code: C EGL006238

Summary:

This acidic swamp forest of the eastern middle-latitude states is a nutrient-poor wetland forest occurring in groundwater-saturated stream bottoms and poorly drained depressions. Soils are typically moderately deep to deep muck over mineral soil, with pools of standing water at the surface. Acidic waters originate from groundwater seepage, with little to no overland seasonal flooding. Most sites can be characterized as "groundwater slope wetlands" (*sensu* Golet et al. 1993) with a flow-through hydrology. This community is characterized by *Acer rubrum*

https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT_GLOBAL.2.686944/Acer_rubrum_-_Nyssa_sylvatica_-_Magnolia_virginiana_-_Viburnum_nudum_var_nudum_-_Osmunda_cinnamomea_Swamp_Forest

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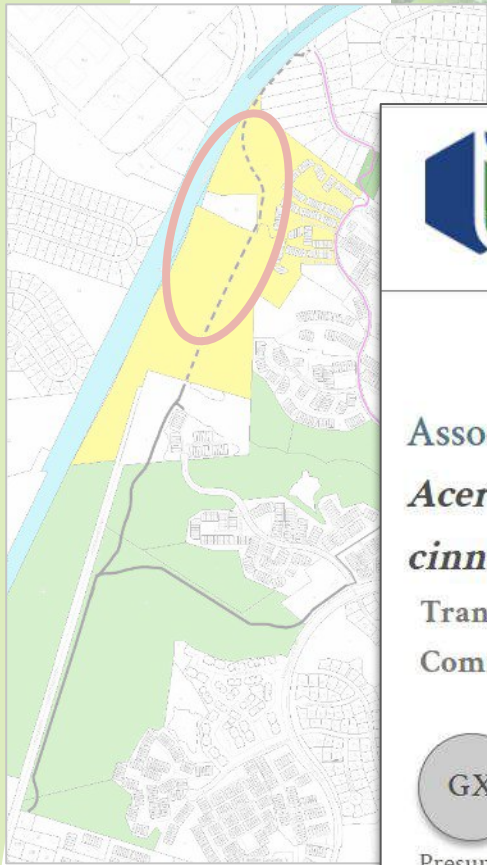


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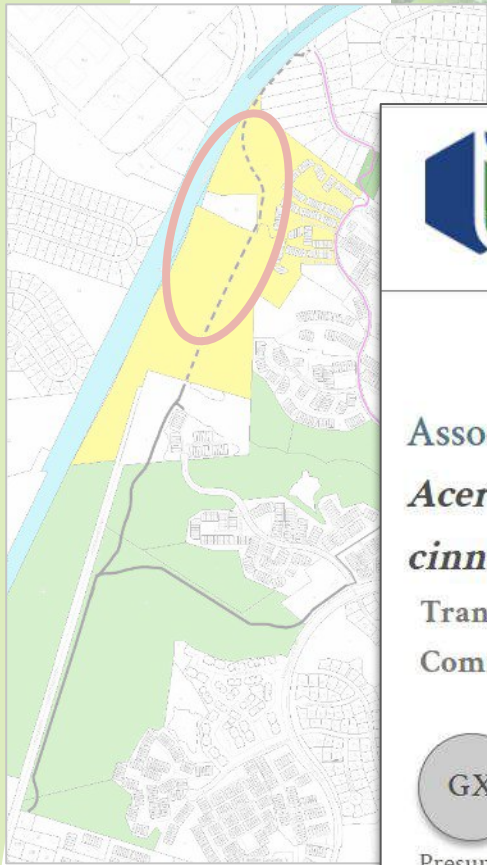


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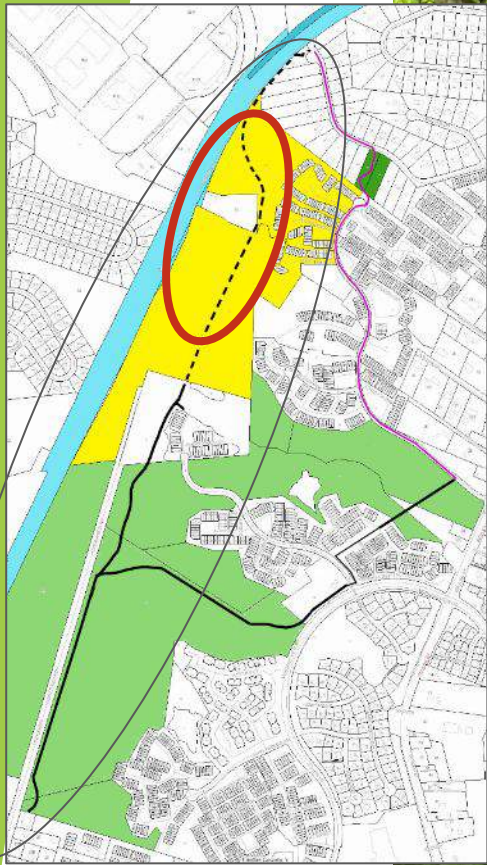


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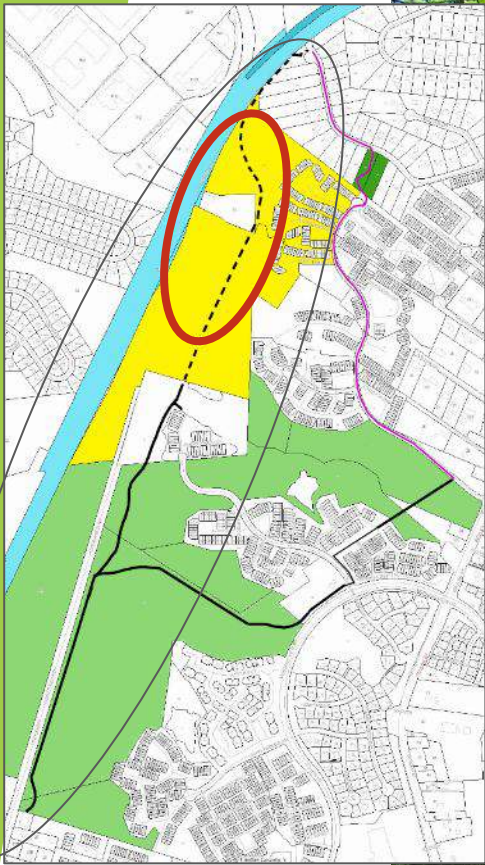
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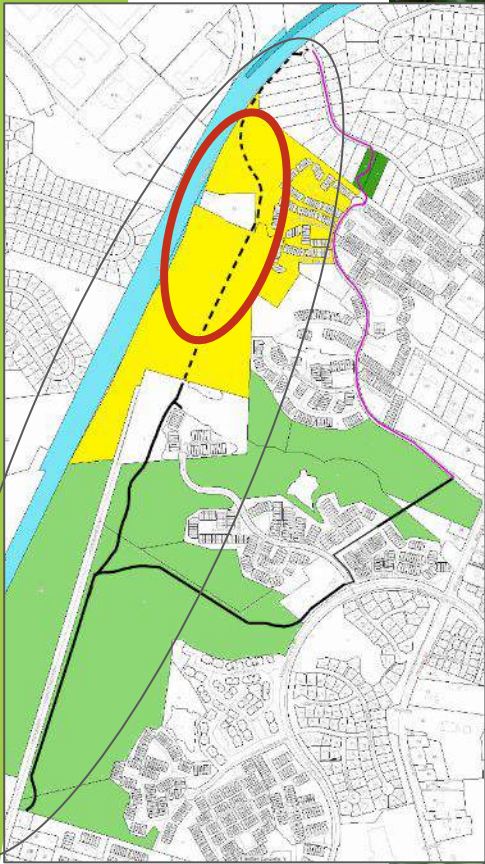
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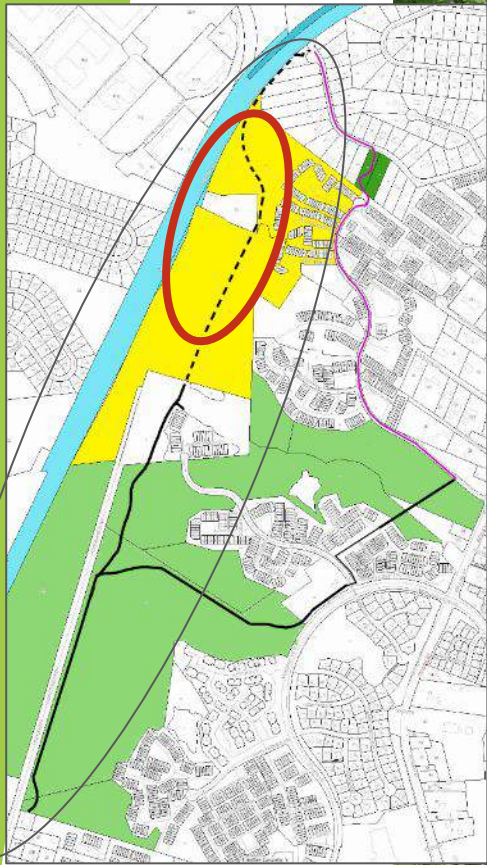
Acidic seepage swamp



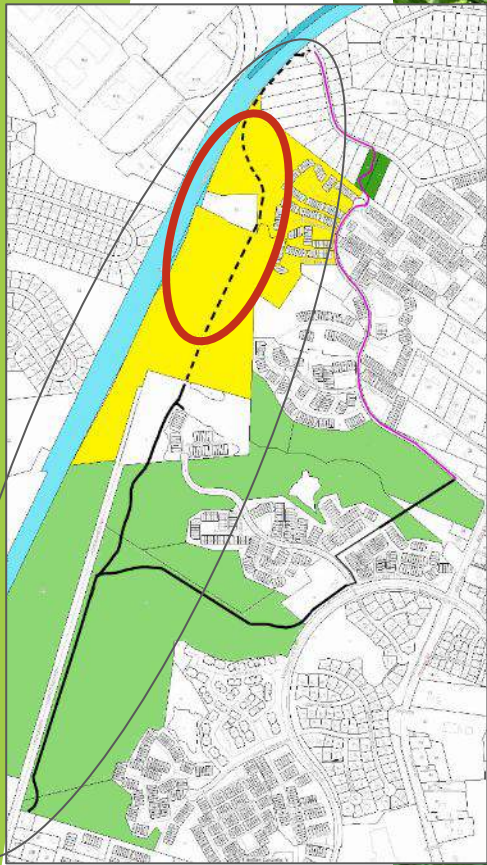
The long, bending tree is a Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)



Possumhaw (*Viburnum nudum*)



Cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*)

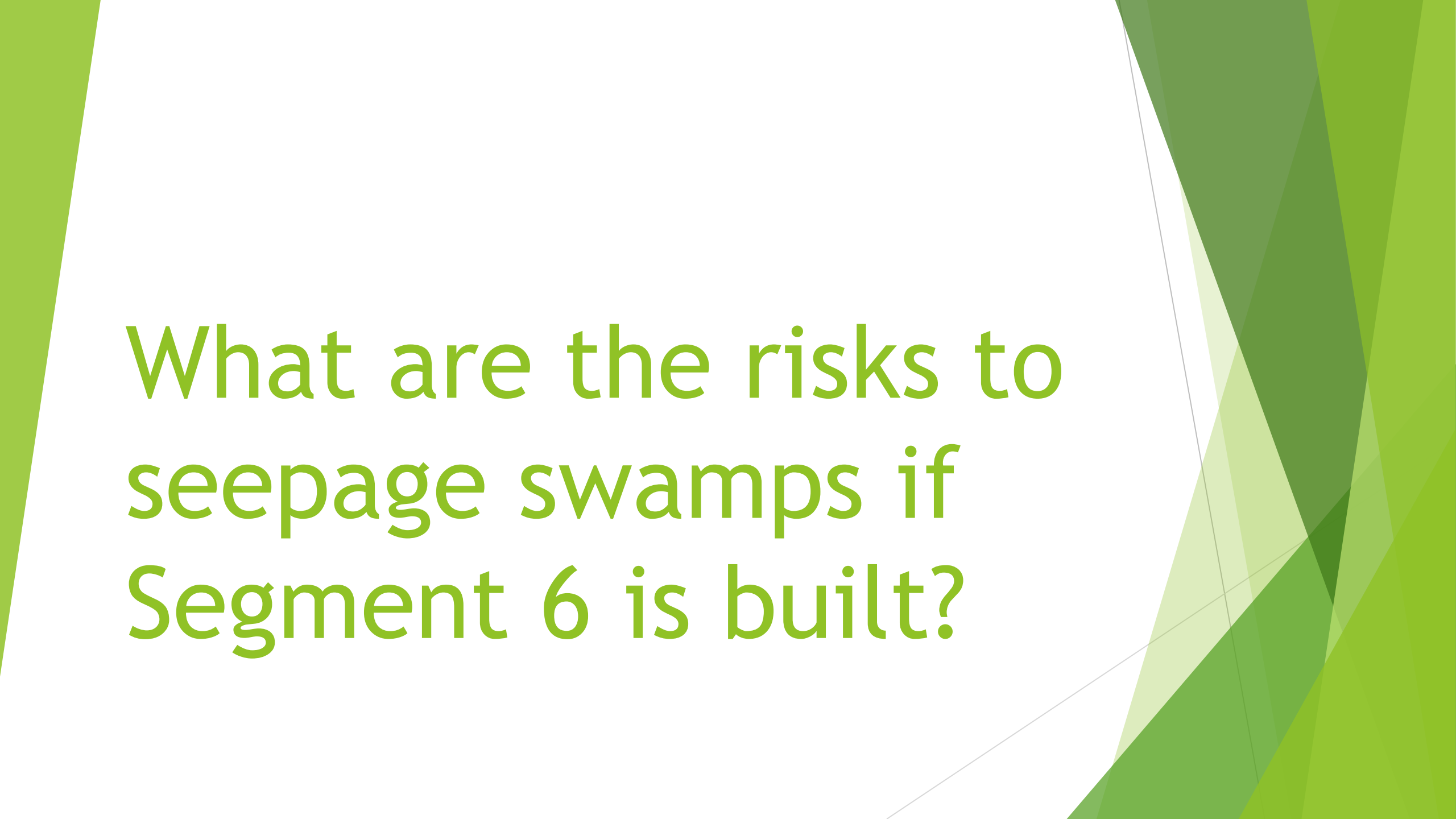


Eastern Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)



A person wearing a light blue shirt, khaki pants, and a cap is seen from behind, walking through a dense forest. They are carrying a black backpack and holding a tripod. The forest floor is covered in lush green ferns, and the trees are tall with green foliage. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

In 2023, DCR re-surveyed the area and more than doubled the seepage swamp area

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern, layered effect.

What are the risks to
seepage swamps if
Segment 6 is built?



Acidic seepage swamps

“This uncommon wetland habitat is vulnerable to alteration...including **hydrologic modifications** (NatureServe, 2010).”

Excerpts from Virginia’s Department of Conservation and Recreation’s July 29, 2020 letter regarding the natural resources in the Newington Conservation Site as part of the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway “Phase I Environmental Site Assessment” documents from the Fairfax County Department of Transportation on page 42:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19_sAmam9cDgM93Z8ew6kWKupxzX43ltS/view?usp=share_link



Magnolia Bogs

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Capital Region
National Capital Parks - East



Essential to the survival of magnolia bogs is a hydrologic cycle dependent on undisturbed soils, aquifer recharge zones, and forested lands. When plans arose for the extension of a rail right-of-way through park land, NPS managers collaborated with transportation officials to preserve Oxon Run Parkway's rare natural features. A deep tunnel was constructed below park lands, reducing surface impacts and maintaining critical hydrology.

Excerpts from Virginia's
Recreation's July 29, 20
the Newington Conserv
Bikeway "Phase I Envir
the Fairfax County Dep
[https://drive.google.com/...
zX43ltS/view?usp=share link](https://drive.google.com/...zX43ltS/view?usp=share_link)

<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/460854>

Acidic seepage swamps

and habitat is
...including
ns



Acidic seepage swamps

“This uncommon wetland habitat is vulnerable to alteration...including hydrologic modifications (NatureServe, 2010).”

. . .

“Trail construction and use often act as vectors for the spread of invasive plant species.”

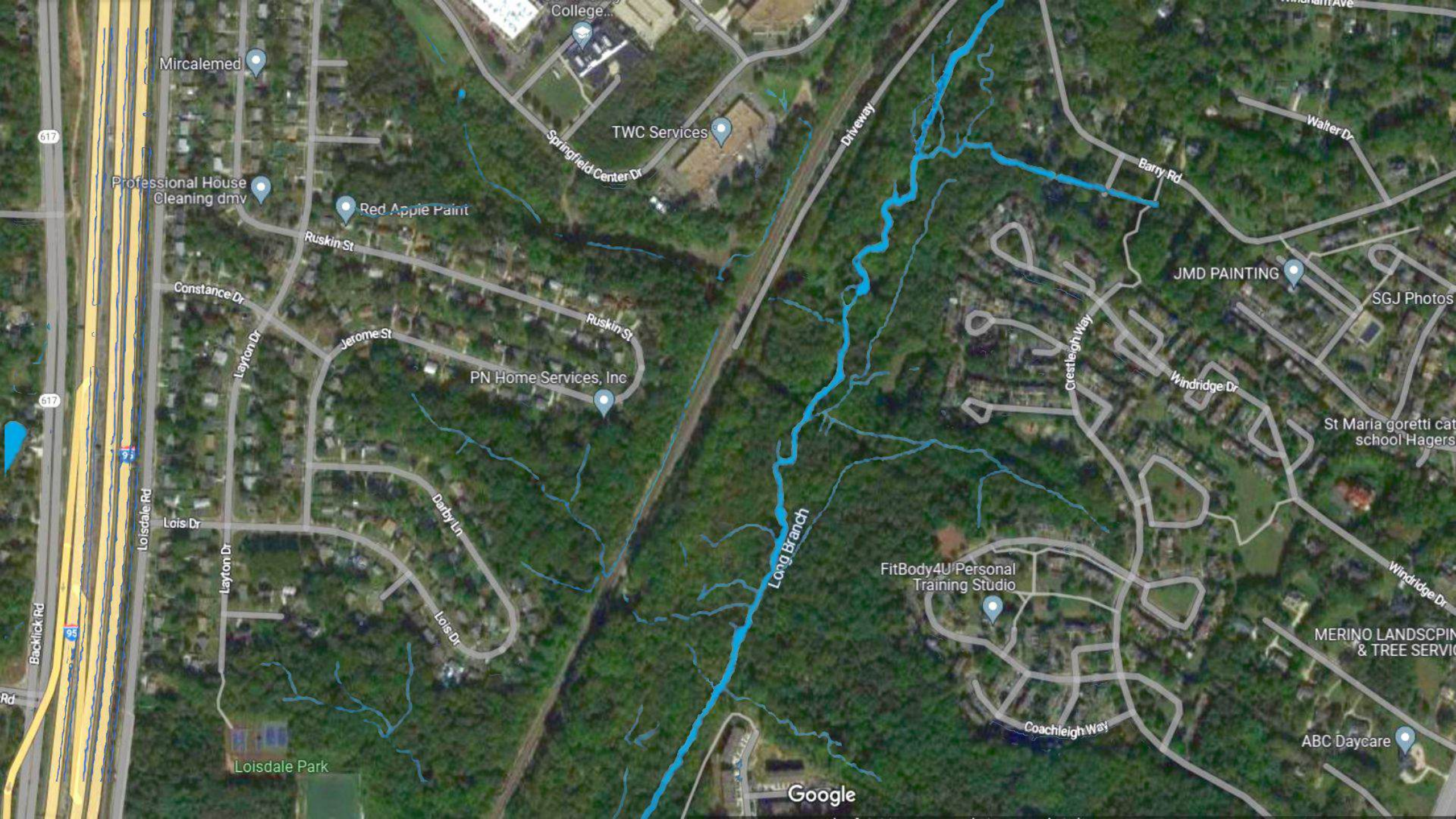
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Acidic seepage swamps

Invasive plants take hold more easily in disturbed areas with sun.





Mircalemed

617

Professional House
Cleaning dmv

Red Apple Paint

Ruskin St

Springfield Center Dr

TWC Services

Driveway

Barry Rd

Walter Dr

Constance Dr

Jerome St

Ruskin St

PN Home Services, Inc

Layton Dr

617

Loisdale Rd

Lois Dr

Layton Dr

Darby Ln

Lois Dr

Long Branch

FitBody4U Personal
Training Studio

JMD PAINTING

SGJ Photos

Windridge Dr

St Maria goretti cat
school Hagers

Windridge Dr

MERINO LANDSCPIN
& TREE SERVI

ABC Daycare

Loisdale Park

Google

Backlick Rd

95



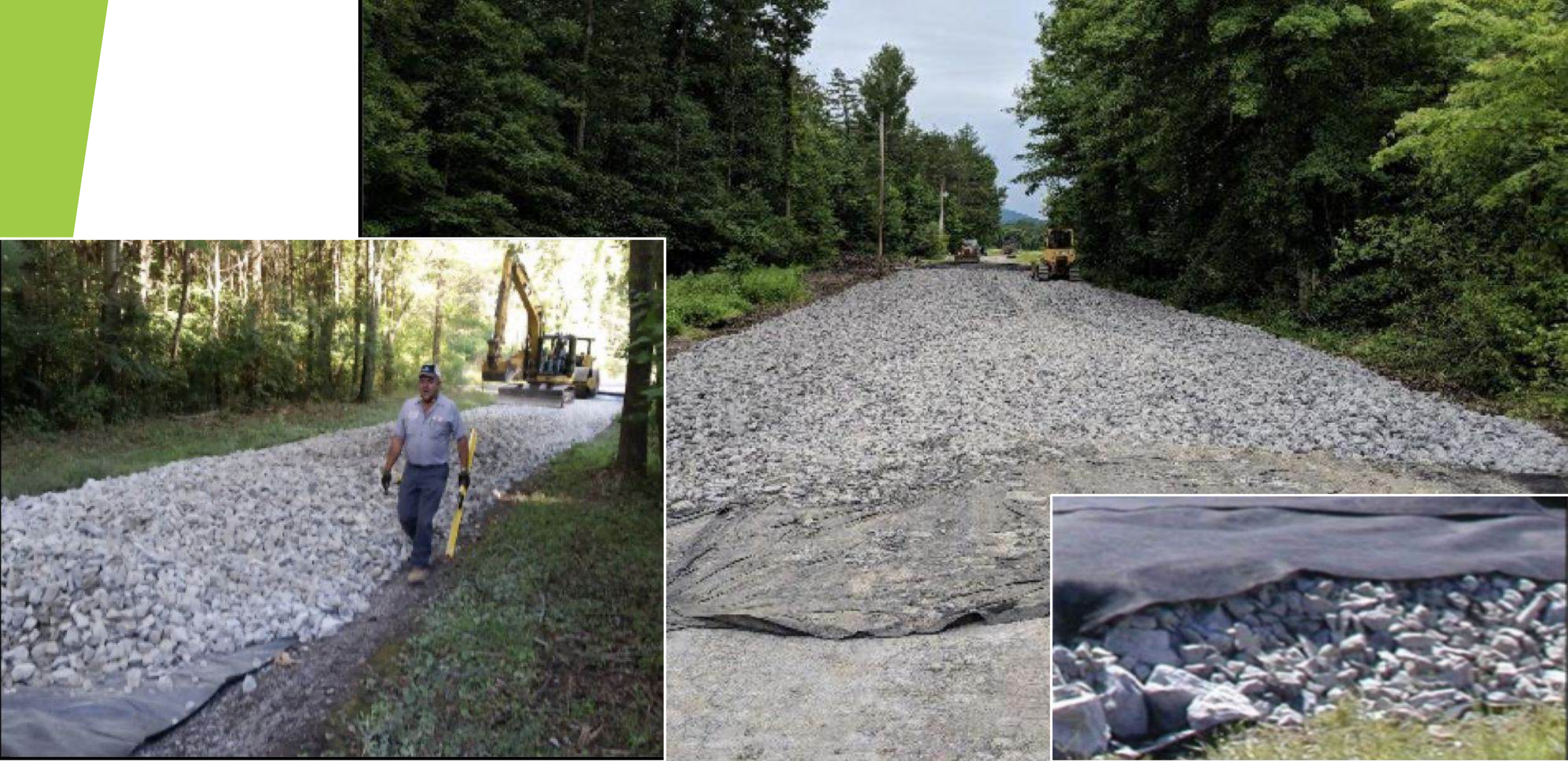




Building of the Cross County Trail, Fairfax County, between tributary crossings (*June 14, 2008*)



Building of the Cross County Trail, Fairfax County; permanent trail (right) and temporary staging area (left) at north bridge site (*Sept 10, 2008*)



Example of drainage mitigation measures (e.g. French Mattress)





Lights are planned to remain on
2 hours *after* Metro close and 2
hours *before* Metro opens.

Mon-Thur: 3am to 2am (1 hour off)

Friday: 3am to 3am (never off)

Saturday: 5am to 3am (2 hours off)

Sunday: 5am - 2am (3 hours off)

Hours of Metro: <https://www.wmata.com/service/rail/>

Photo: <https://pixabay.com/photos/street-lamp-path-lighting-lighting-240018/>

Artificial Lights Disrupt Wildlife

Artificial nighttime light has negative effects on birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, insects and even plants:

- Disrupts sleep patterns.
- Increases stress.
- Increases nighttime activity without corresponding increases in food consumption.
- Disrupts breeding.



*Cross County Trail, Fairfax County; reinforcement and hardening of riparian buffer.
Photo courtesy of Friends of Accotink Creek*





Fairfax County; surfaces must be maintained and/or sufficient investment must be made to build it with more resilience. Photo courtesy of Friends of Accotink Creek



FY26 FCPA trails maintenance

Current budget: \$500,000

Proposed budget: \$500,000 ✓

*Americana Park, Fairfax County; flooding contributes to sediment deposits and other debris.
Photo courtesy of Friends of Accotink Creek*



*Newington Road damage, after flooding,
near proposed trail entrance.*

Cinder Bed Road flooding, August 2021.



Photos courtesy of Friends of Accotink Creek

We support trails that are safe, useful, and not environmentally harmful.

- To try to reach common ground between environmentalists and cycling advocates, Fairfax Healthy Communities network formed a Trails Workgroup; met throughout 2022
(8 different bike & environmental orgs represented)
- Conversations are continuing.



The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect. The shapes are layered, with some appearing more prominent than others, and they extend towards the corners of the frame.

What can you do?

Take Action to Protect the Newington Conservation Area

- (1) Write a letter asking Segment 6 to be removed from the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway proposal.
<https://natureforward.org/cinder-bed-bikeway>
- (2) RSVP for a walk on May 18 in the Newington Conservation Area (limit 20):
<https://forms.gle/zfhadWwkB2UiwSeZ9>
- (3) Keep an eye out for updates.
- (4) Help us save this special place!



Support common-sense criteria for responsible active transportation / trail development

Northern Virginia Bird Alliance adopted a set of 8 criteria for responsible active transportation/ trail development in 2024, including:

- Do not plan new trails...through sensitive natural areas without first assessing their environmental impacts and avoiding them to the extent possible, including considering alternative alignments.
- Require transparency and public participation in trail planning.
- Consider all users in planning predictions, modeling, and designs.



You can read the full set of criteria here:

<https://www.nvbirdalliance.org/take-action/responsible-bike-trail-development>

Support DPWES's March 2025 memo on "Trails in Resource Protection Areas"

The Directors of both Fairfax County's ***Department of Public Works & Environmental Services*** and ***Fairfax County Park Authority*** sent a memo to the Director of Fairfax County's Department of Transportation asking that:

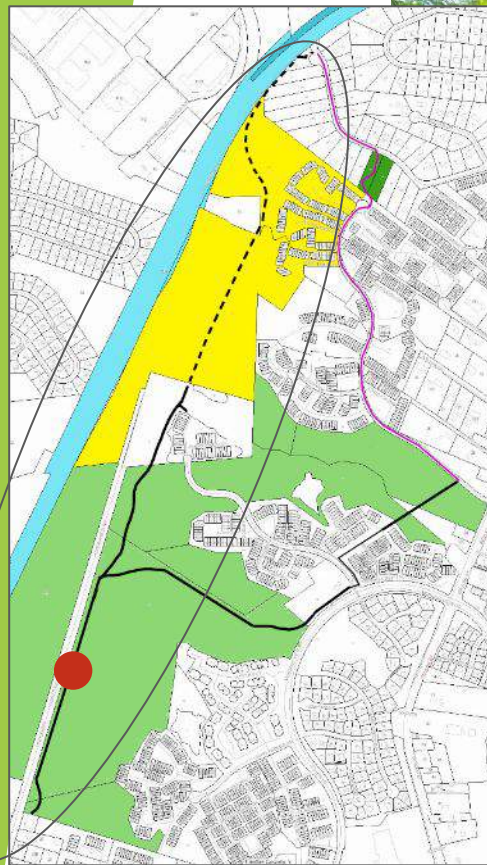
- Hard surface trails should not be shown in RPAs on the countywide plan unless environmental assessments have been completed beforehand, *and*
- Assessments show *de minimus* impact to water quality and sensitive resources.

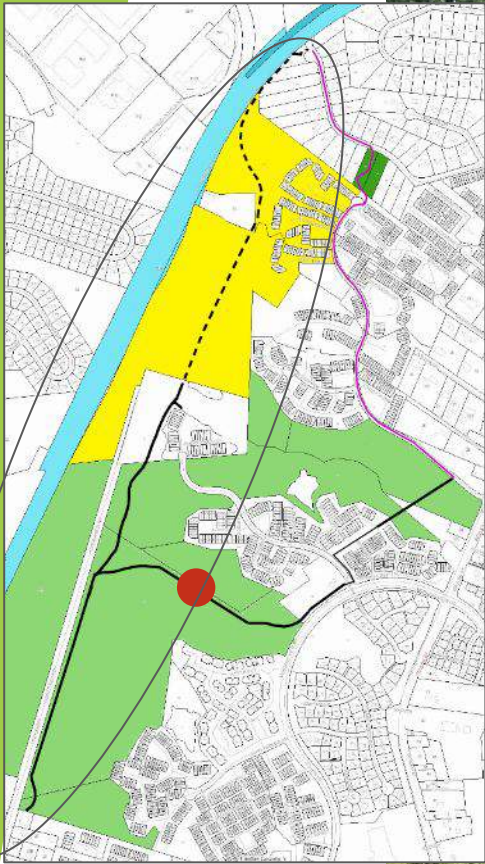


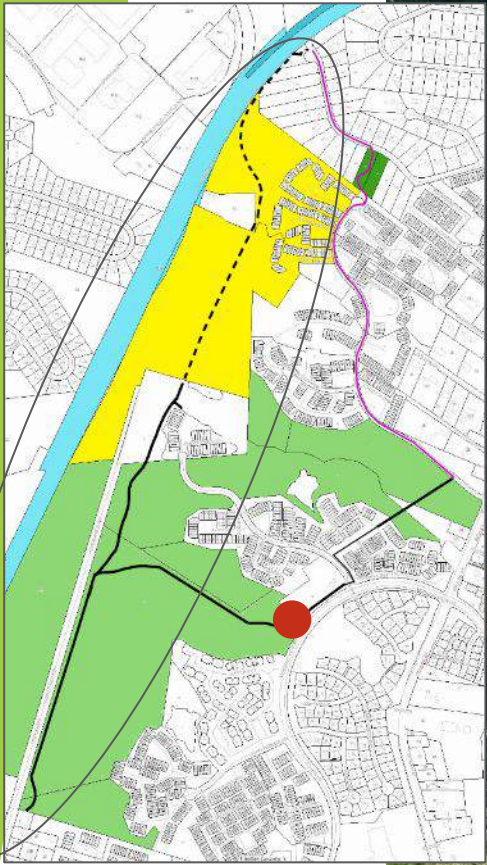
You can read the full memo here:

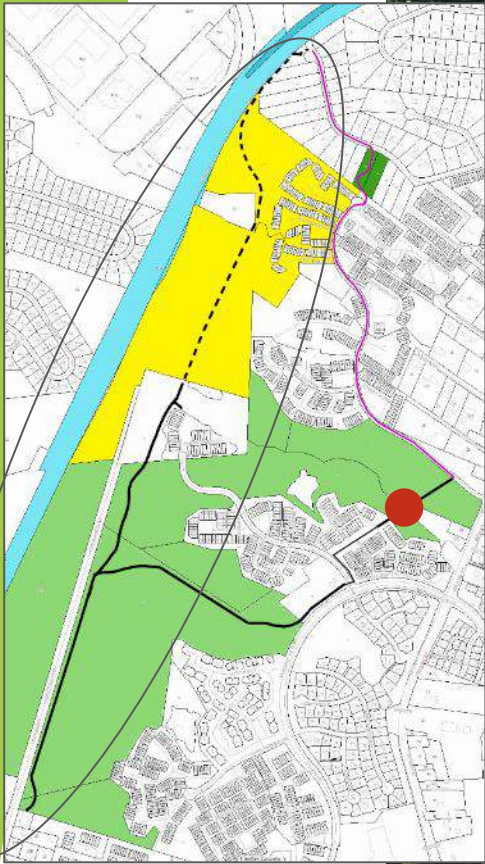
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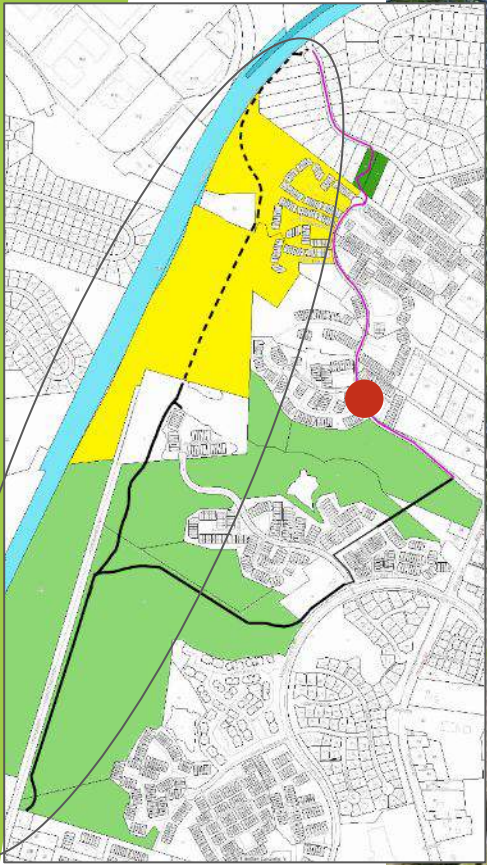
Advocate for maintaining & improving
current active transportation
infrastructure

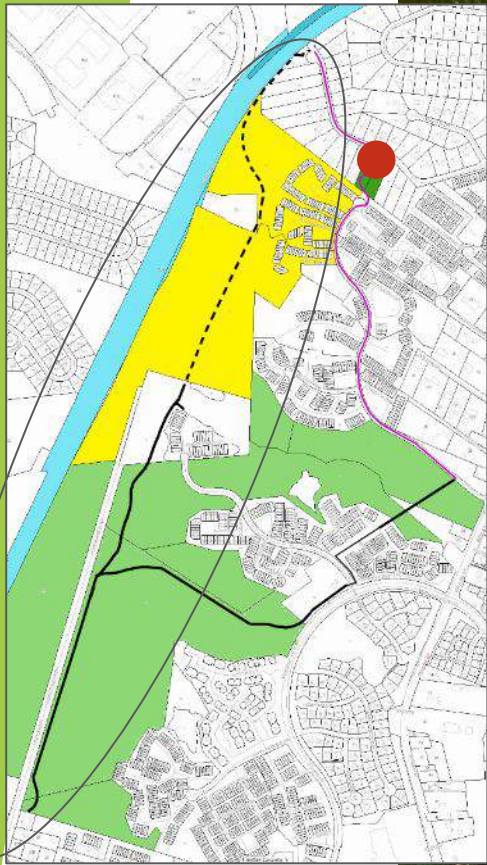


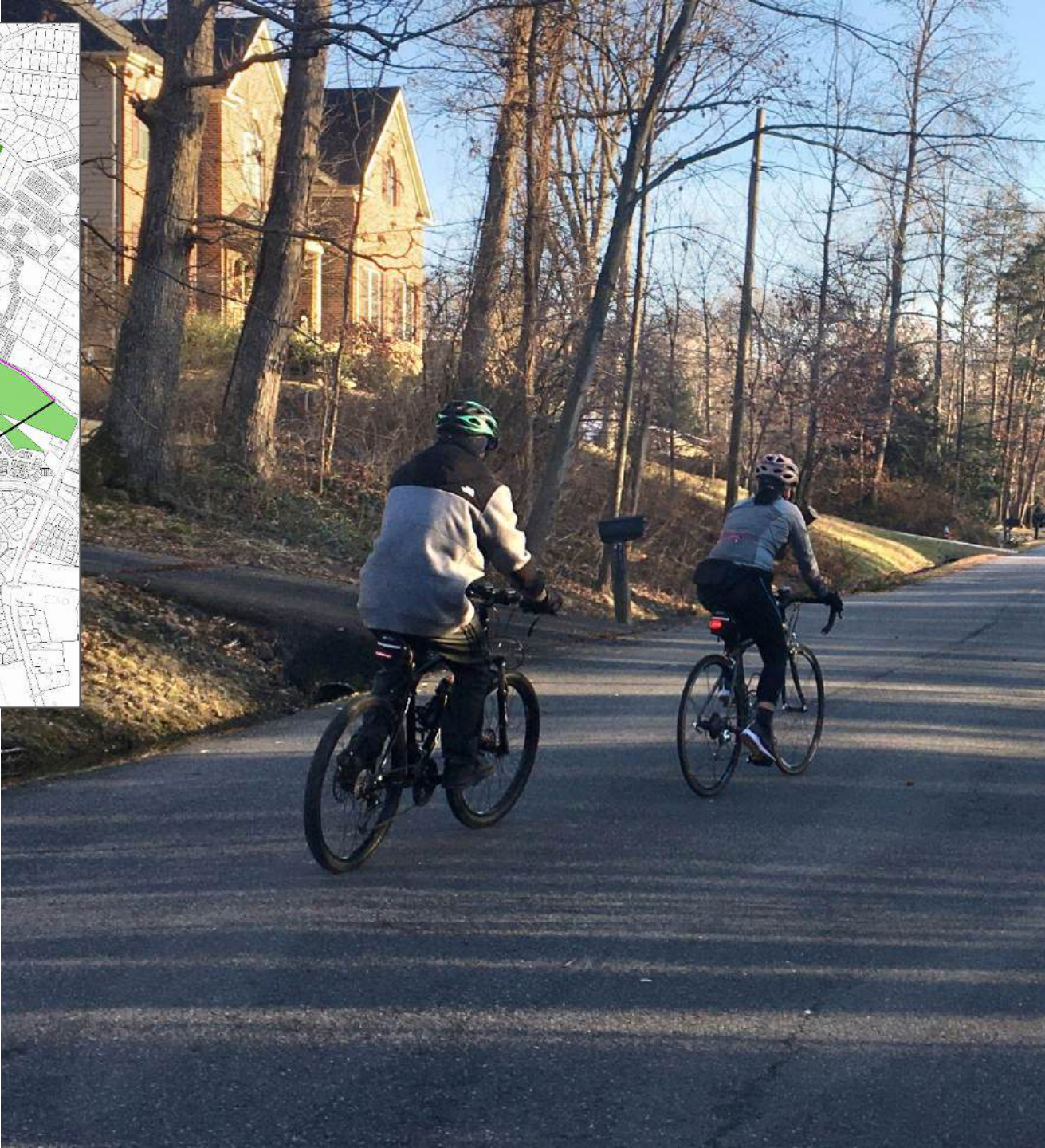
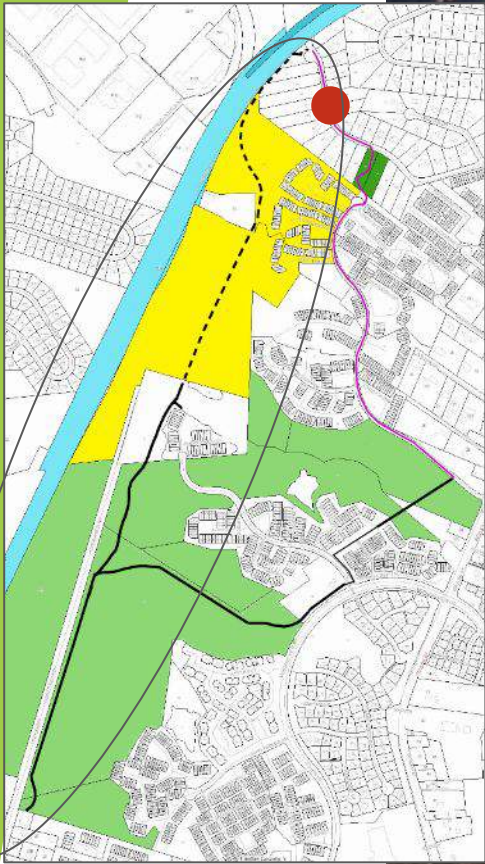


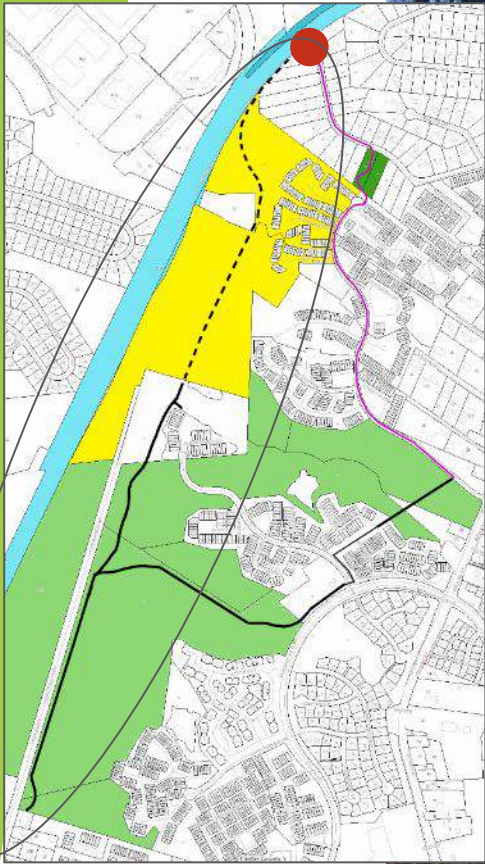












The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

What
comes next?

RIGHT OF WAY

THE PROPERTY ACQUISITION PROCESS

A Guide for Property Owners and Tenants

A Fairfax County, VA Publication. August 2021
To request this information in an alternate format,
call 703-324-5090, TTY 711

The Right of Way Process

The Right of Way process is on-going to acquire properties along the length of the proposed route.

ROW will be required in the Newington Conservation Area as well, primarily in the Amberleigh HOA.

Read Fairfax County's Right of Way guide:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/14o0aNKW5G5ZtIMT4qo651Zz2Q4cljB6M/view?usp=share_link

Eminent Domain possible: Late 2025 / Early 2026

- If Amberleigh HOA owners fail to approve an easement granting Right of Way, FCDOT *could* recommend that the county acquire the property by eminent domain (e.g. “condemnation”).
- Prior to condemnation, the Board of Supervisors would hold a public hearing on the potential condemnation.
- If the Board of Supervisors votes *for* condemnation, then the trail would be built through the Newington Conservation Site.
- If the Board of Supervisors votes *against* condemnation, then the county would not obtain the right-of-way needed to build the trail.



Q&A

Contact information

Renee Grebe

Northern Virginia Conservation
Advocate, Nature Forward

renee.grebe@natureforward.org

Betsy Martin

Northern Virginia Bird Alliance
Friends of Little Hunting Creek

betsy@folhc.org

Philip Latasa

Friends of Accotink Creek

steward@accotink.org

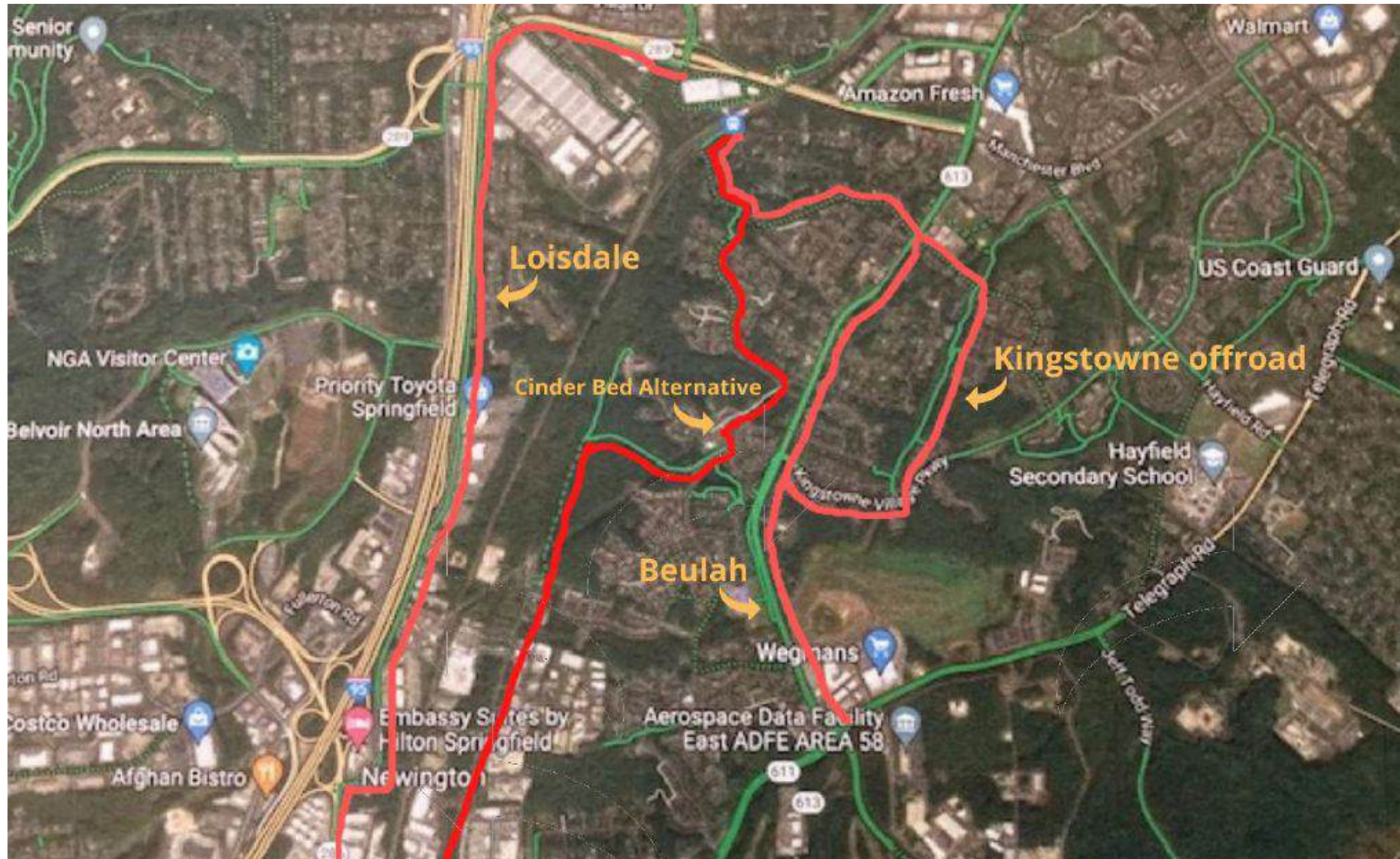
Ann Bennett

Sierra Club, Great Falls Group

ann.bennetttrtw@gmail.com



Advocate for maintaining, improving, & investing in the alternative routes that exist today.



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY
AMDENLEIGH PARK

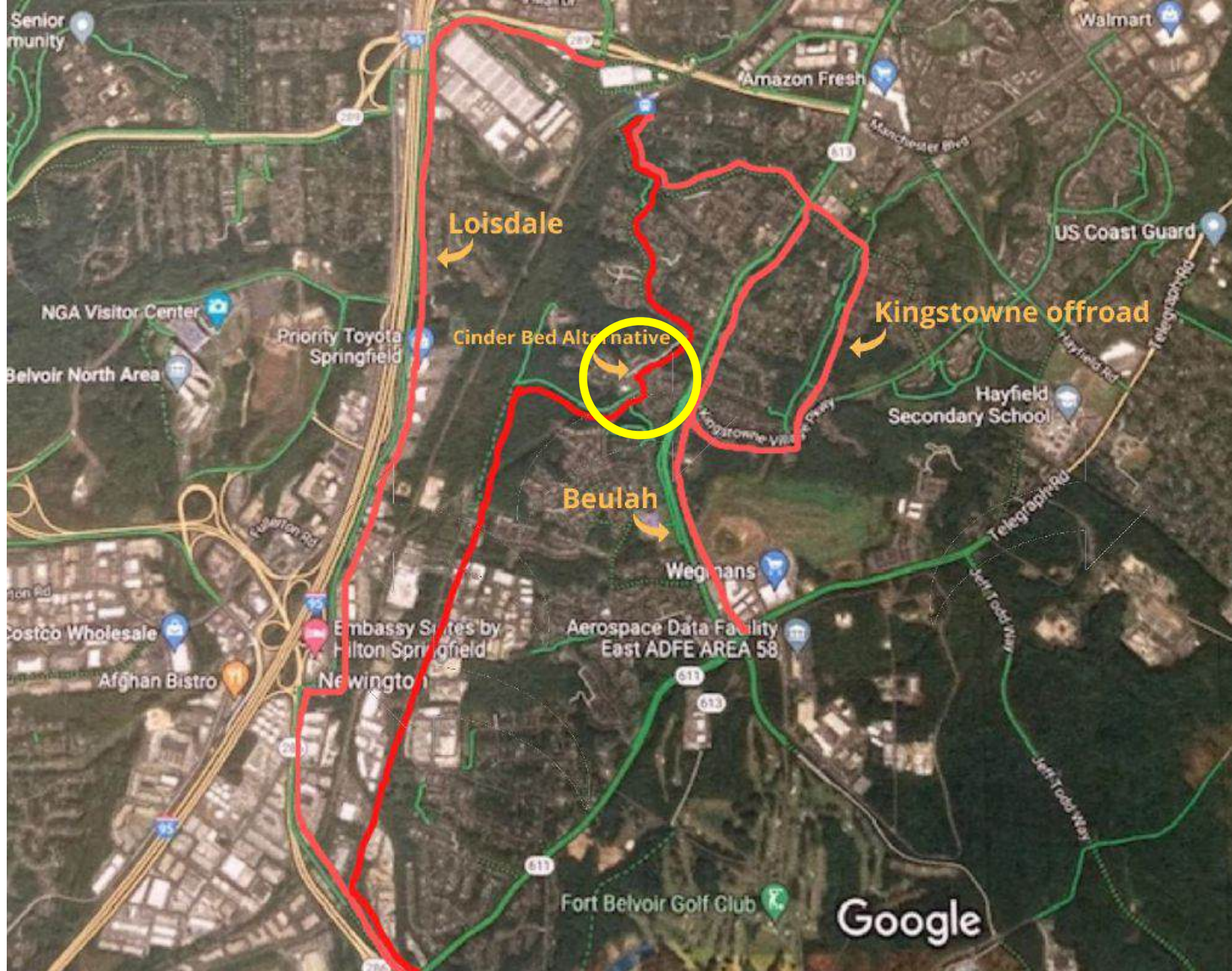
- NO MOTORIZED VEHICLES
- PARK CLOSED AT DARK, EXCEPT FOR LIGHTED FACILITIES
- NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES
- PETS MUST BE ON A LEASH AND HANDLERS MUST "SCOOP THE POOP"
- NO CAMPING OR OPEN FIRES
- NO DUMPING OR LITTERING
- NO GOLFING

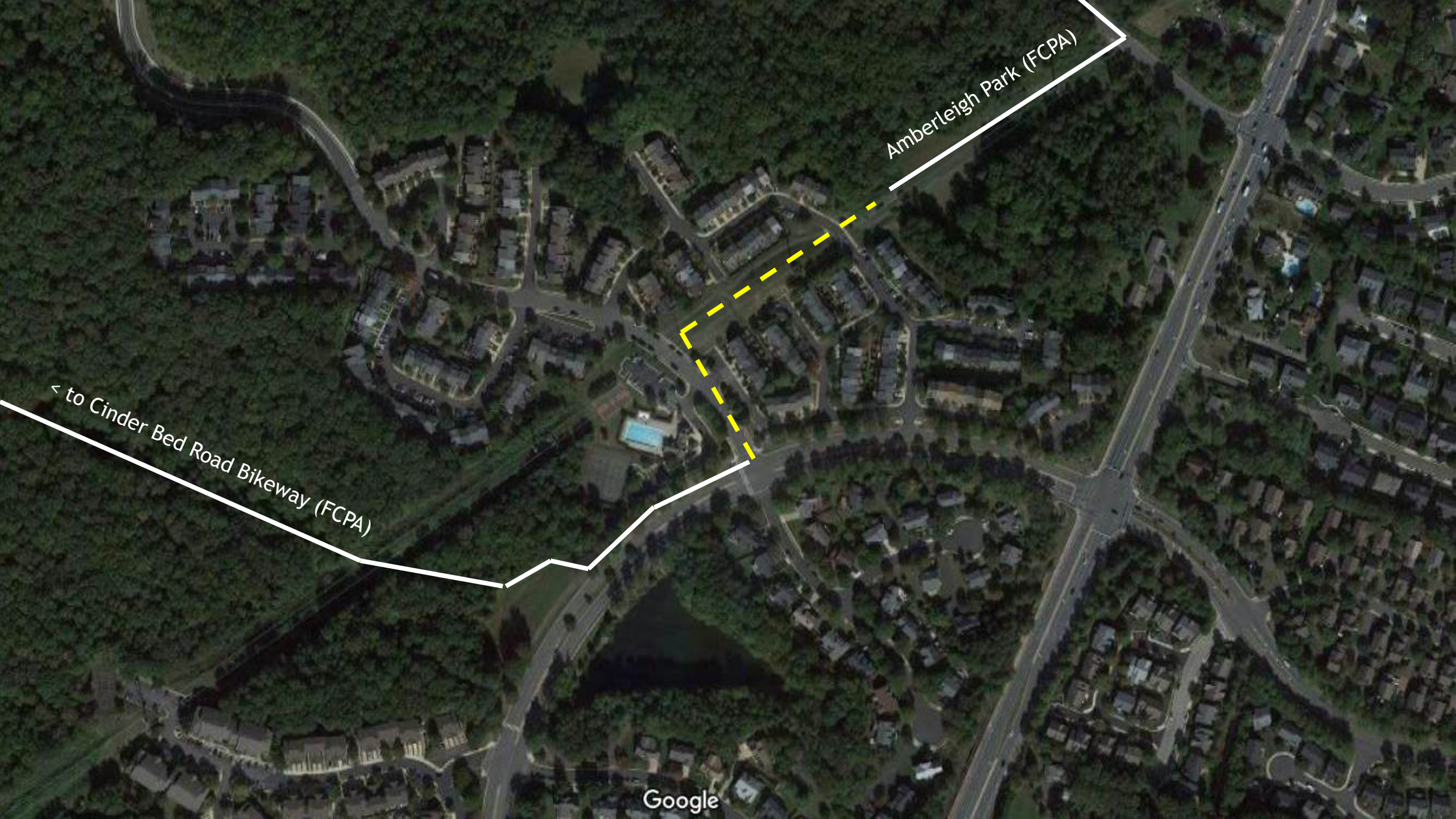


FY26 FCPA trails maintenance

Current budget: \$500,000

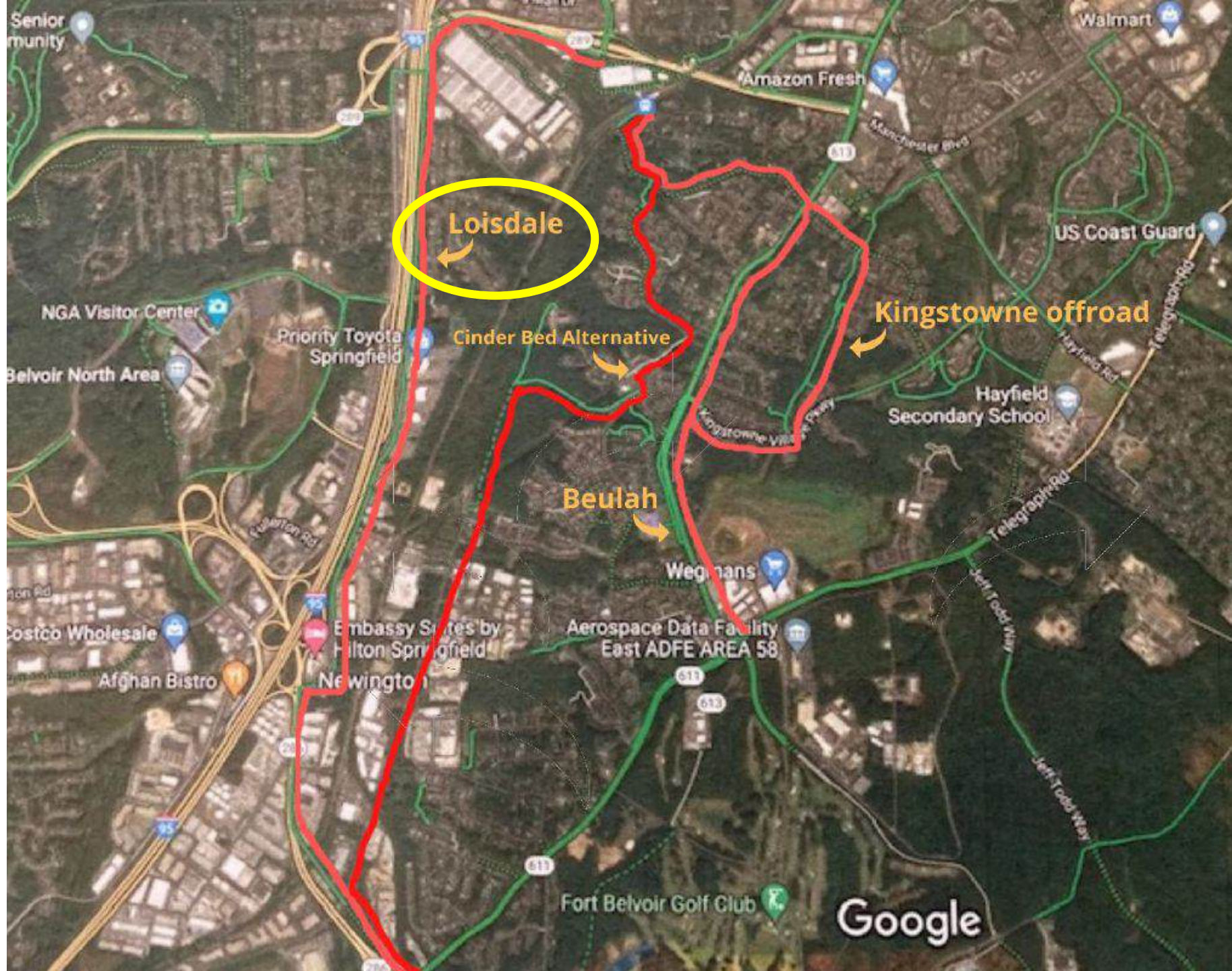
*Proposed budget: **\$250,000** ↓*





Amberleigh Park (FCPA)

< to Cinder Bed Road Bikeway (FCPA)



***Loisdale Road** does have well-planned connections across I95 and to the Metro, connecting with people where they are.*

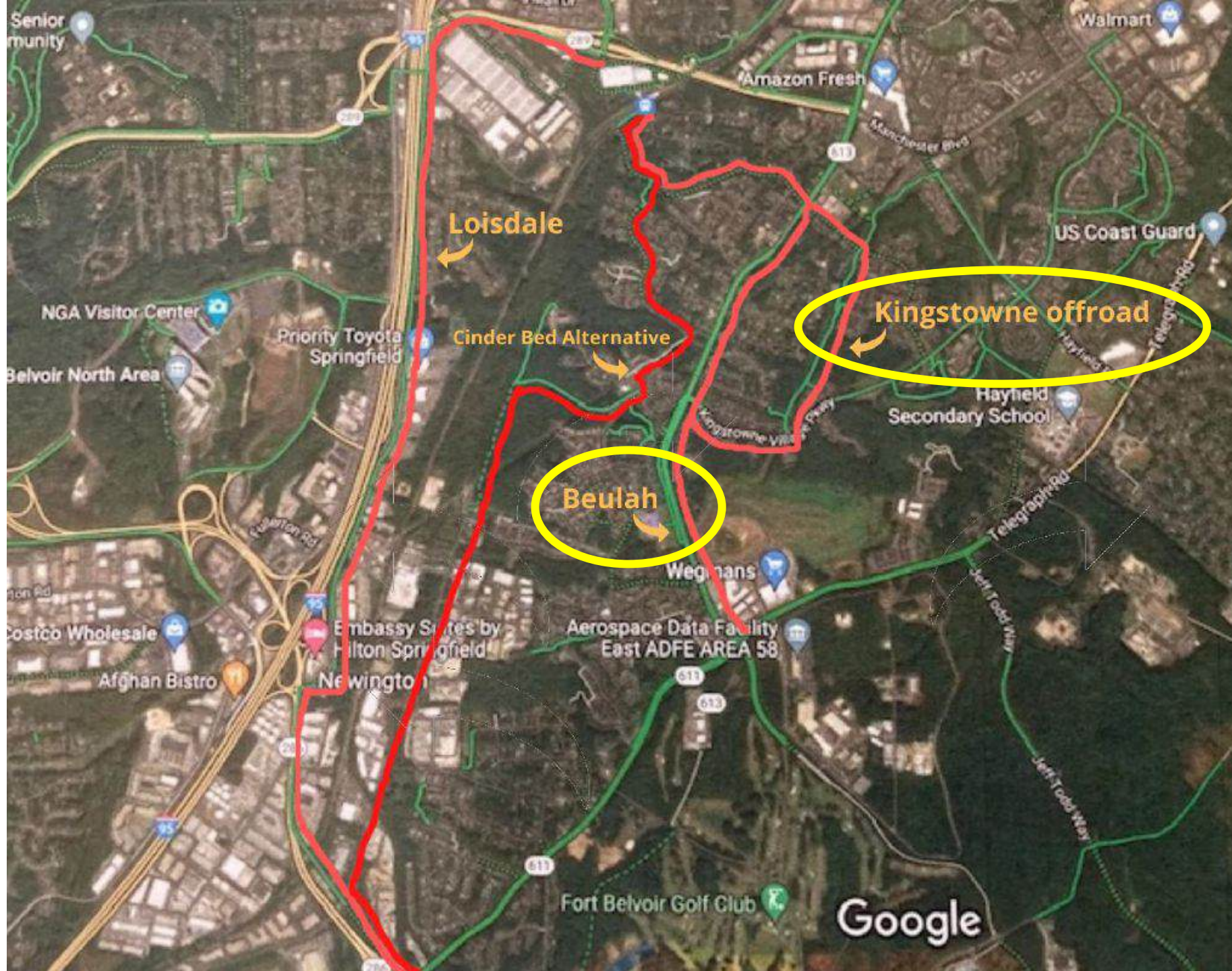


Loisdale Road lacks bike lanes and the sidewalks have been poorly maintained.



Loisdale Road lacks bike lanes and the sidewalks have been poorly maintained.





The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

Trails:

Their importance
and their challenges



VA: Arlington County; **Bluemont Junction trail** (rails to trails). Photo courtesy of:
<https://liveandlethike.com/2015/10/15/bluemont-junction-trail-custis-trail-loop-arlington-county-parks-va/>









Fairfax Ave., Arlington County| Photo courtesy of Friends of Accotink Creek



Loisdale Road, Fairfax County | Photo courtesy of Nature Forward



We support trails that are safe, useful, and not environmentally harmful.

- To try to reach common ground between environmentalists and cycling advocates, Fairfax Healthy Communities network formed a Trails Workgroup; met throughout 2022
(8 different bike & environmental orgs represented)
- Conversations are continuing.



Relevant Fairfax County Plans / Trail guidance



*Started 2020;
Expected 2025*



Resilient Fairfax
Overview

(2022)



CECAP

Community-wide Energy and
Climate Action Plan

(2021)



(2025+)

Q&A group norms

- ▶ Treat others with dignity and respect
- ▶ Practice active listening
- ▶ Be open to ideas and suggestions
- ▶ Step up /step back
- ▶ Respect time

