



# CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

**Date:** Aug. 10, 2022

**To:** Dr. Ralph Buehler and Virginia Tech students

**Cc:** Falls Church City Council, City Manager, Planning Director, and Public Works Director

**From:** Falls Church Citizens' Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT)

**Subject:** Citizen Input on Updating Falls Church's Bicycle Master Plan

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## Overview

The CACT's seven volunteer members thank all of you for sharing your insights and expertise to make important updates to [Falls Church's 2015 Bicycle Master Plan \(BMP\)](#) and, ultimately, help the City become a safer and more inviting place to bicycle for people of all ages and abilities. As you begin the work of your studio class, the CACT offers its goals for the updated BMP in this memo as well as our perspectives on the following topics:

- Biking challenges and opportunities in Falls Church (Appendix A)
- Details on Bike Master Plan considerations (Appendix B)
- How biking has and hasn't changed in Falls Church since the 2015 BMP (Appendix C)
- CACT offer of support and references (Appendix D)

This content is based on our experience on the CACT, community input shared in Bike Falls Church (BFC) meetings, best practices documented by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) and the League of American Bicyclists (LAB), and lessons learned from Montgomery County and Washington D.C. transportation engineers, Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling (FABB), and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA).

## CACT Goals for Updated BMP

The 2015 BMP is still a relevant and useful document for the city to build upon. CACT's overriding view is that main challenge is in implementing the plan we have vs. rethinking the plan. With that context, **our #1 goal for the next iteration of the BMP is for it to include a detailed, actionable implementation plan for bicycle infrastructure.** We hope that your class can take the broad outlines in the 2015 plan (which does not suggest the target bicycle facility types, owners on city staff, or funding amount or sources), and help our community better understand exactly where, how, and when we can add specific bicycle infrastructure to create a low-stress active transportation network.

The largest gap in the city’s bike-friendly infrastructure is in on-road bicycle routes, thus we ask that your class please add as many of the following details for each designed bicycle route in the BMP:

- **The #1 priority for implementation planning is a safe and direct “all ages and abilities” route to the middle and high schools and West Falls from the W&OD Trail and points east**
- Define the feasible and reasonable cost bike infrastructure needed to meet an “all ages and abilities” standard (per NACTO metrics), the means of construction, target funding source, and target timing (e.g., protected bicycle lane on each side, in FY25, funded as part of planned reconstruction of the road already in the CIP)
- Role of the route and key stakeholders (e.g., S. Maple Ave. links the Broad Street commercial area to the Tinner Hill commercial and residential area)
- Skills, people, and support needed to implement the updated BMP (e.g., a designated bike/ped coordinator on staff, active bicycle advocacy group, supportive Council to set aside funds)
- Recommendations for phased approaches, prioritizing routes and interim use of short-term, low-cost installations. We would like to see the plan prioritize completion of bike routes where there are other projects being planned (e.g., Park Ave., Founders Row II, the [proposed roundabout](#))

To help with successful implementation, these details would enable City Council and the public to track City progress year-by-year and street-by-street, would provide a starting point for design by identifying the most appropriate facility for bicycle use *before tradeoffs* against alternative uses of public space that must be debated during the public engagement already required as part of the implementation of each route (e.g., vehicle throughput vs. parking spaces vs. bike/ped accessibility and safety), and would help with budgeting and grant applications.

The CACT commits to working with City Council, Planning Commission, BFC, and other stakeholders to establish clear metrics and goals for tracking the City’s progress on bicycling and transportation (e.g., drawing on the LAB Bicycle Friendly Communities metrics). We welcome input from the class on these. The CACT also commits to help the City accomplish portions of the 2015 plan that have not been fully implemented (e.g., review adding bike facilities amid other transportation projects, hosting Bike to Work Day, hosting bike education classes).

Other “nice to have” elements for the updated BMP are listed below. Our goal is not that the BMP necessarily comes to a conclusion on each but provides some guidance for next steps required:

- Update BMP where development or other transit have changed, where data can be used to better inform choices or where best practices have evolved (e.g., tweaks to bike routes, use of temporary solutions, “bike lanes to nowhere” temporarily, focus on equity, etc.)
- Identify where the plan has other gaps vs. best practice bicycle master plans (e.g., bicycle-friendly laws and ordinances, community engagement and events)
- Build templates for a dashboard and required annual progress report to help City and stakeholders understand how best to track progress

As further elaborated in the attachments and CACT’s prior memos, we believe that encouraging bicycling (and other active- and micro-mobility) is essential to meeting the City’s goals and delivering on its values (e.g., for mode share, climate, and economic development). We believe Falls Church City can be one of the most bike-friendly communities in the country with a modest investment and continued focus on building bicycle infrastructure and culture. Your class has an exciting opportunity to help our community evolve into a place where safe, friendly, equitable, emission-free, local, and low-cost bicycling is the default mode of transportation for a large portion of our residents and visitors. CACT stands ready to support you and take your recommendations forward. Thank you!

## Appendix A: Biking Challenges and Opportunities in Falls Church

“Falls Church is a great place to bike through. Let's make it a great place to bike around.” That’s the tagline of the Bike Falls Church (BFC) group that was founded in 2021.

The sentiment alludes to the City boasting the world-class W&OD Dual Trails paths, plus bike bridges over busy roads on its east and west entrances. Many bicyclists and joggers use the paths in Falls Church to move between Vienna, Tysons, Reston, and points west to Arlington and Washington, D.C. to our east. Our neighbors have invested more heavily in bicycle infrastructure and culture. Bicycle advocates see bicycle lanes end at the Falls Church City line and infrastructure like temporary curb extensions and protected bike lanes being built in Fairfax, Arlington, and D.C. but not yet in Falls Church City.

What CACT, BFC, and others have recommended in recent years is that Falls Church build off its new Dual Trails backbone and links to our neighboring jurisdictions to create a connected, low-stress multimodal transportation network to help riders of all ages and abilities get around the City without needing a motor vehicle.

We believe there have been five main barriers to more substantial progress building bike infrastructure:

- **Staff size:** Due to the City’s relatively small population and City staff size compared to surrounding jurisdictions, the City has not had sufficient staff focused on implementing bicycle infrastructure or delivering mode share shift toward bicycles.
- **Advocacy:** Until the founding of BFC, there was no organized community advocacy dedicated to bicycles in the City to encourage consideration of bicycles and act as a counterpoint to residents opposed to changing our public spaces. (WABA and FABB have members in the City but are not actively engaged in City transportation matters.)
- **Council and B&C focus:** Building bicycle infrastructure and culture takes sustained effort over many years. After a flurry of activity in 2014-2016, the key members of Council and the boards and commissions who drove bike-friendly changes left their roles or moved on to other priorities. You see this in the data: bike commuting grew 2010-2016 (including more female riders) but has flatlined since 2017.
- **Car-centric history:** Falls Church has been designed as — and thought of — a car-centric suburb since the end of the trams in the 1950s. With the City’s population growing 40 percent since 2000, this default culture and design philosophy is starting to change as the area grows more urban and denser. However, the rapidly growing and changing population is likely far more open to multi-modal transportation now than residents were 10, 20, or 30 years ago.
- **Sharrows:** Sharrows have been painted throughout the City to declare that bicycle routes are implemented and thereby avoid difficult tradeoffs on narrow streets, traffic calming needs, or parking / travel lane reductions. When nothing else changes about the surrounding road design, they offer little comfort to bicyclists, especially less confident riders, who must still mix with motor vehicle traffic. A “sharrow” is a pavement marking with a variety of uses to support a complete bikeway network; it is not a facility type and should not be considered a substitute for bike lanes, cycle tracks, or other separation treatments where these types of facilities are otherwise warranted or space permits (per NACTO). There is not convincing data on the efficacy of “sharrows” for improving bicycle safety or mode share.

**Despite this, we are optimistic about the massive opportunities for bicycling in Falls Church City!** Our City has many aspects that should make it relatively easy to become very bicycle friendly:

- Strong links to regional transportation, including bicycle facilities and transit

- Topography with few large hills or other geographic barriers
- Many low-volume and 25 mph speed limit neighborhood streets, often in a grid pattern
- Centrally located commercial areas and schools
- A small size (only 3 miles long) that makes 100% of trips within the City <15 minutes by bicycle
- A city culture focused on education, community, health, inclusiveness, and local business
- 13% of residents also work in the city and not from home (if half of them biked to work, we'd have one of the highest shares of bicycle commuting in the country)
- City goals and values that are very much aligned with bicycling and active transportation
- Bike racks available at many locations, in large part thanks to the 2015 Bike Master Plan
- Bikeshare at many central locations

We believe Falls Church City has the opportunity to:

- Have zero fatalities and zero life-altering injuries among bicycle users each year
- Make our rapid population growth sustainable by offering a transportation option that does not contribute to congestion on Broad and Washington Streets and does not require expensive parking garages (which hurts housing affordability) or dedicating large areas to parking lots (which hurts density and walkability)
- Build a for “all ages and abilities” bicycle network that links our neighborhoods and destinations to each other
- Make progress on the City’s Vision 2040 goals with more use of bicycling – see CACT’s “Prioritizing Bike Lanes” memo
- Deliver a substantial mode share shift by 2030, e.g., jumping from 2% to 8% of commuters using bicycles regularly and from 2% to 20% of students at Oak Street Elementary and the middle and high schools biking to school would put Falls Church among the country’s top 10 jurisdictions for bike commuting
- Achieve “Bicycle Friendly Community” Silver or Gold level performance with the League of American bicyclists (and only apply once we are confident in a strong scoring)

Finally, we see a more bike-friendly City as critical to delivering on the City’s goals and values. In CACT’s “Why Falls Church Should Prioritize Bikes Lanes and Micro-Mobility Infrastructure” memo of February 2022, we outlined how bicycling aligns with each of the City’s core values in Falls Church Vision 2040. Below we lay out how bicycling (and other active transport and micro-mobility) supports the goals in the “Mobility for all Modes” chapter of the City’s Comprehensive Plan:

**1. Maintain or increase transportation safety:** “All ages and abilities” infrastructure is needed to make bicycling be perceived as safe enough for mainstream transportation use. Also, data shows that as bicycling mode share increases, [bicycling as an overall mode becomes safer](#).

**2. Provide travelers with multiple options of travel modes, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile:** Infrastructure and a supportive culture are needed to make bicycling a real option to most people. A mode that is perceived as unsafe, inconvenient, too costly, or “not for people like me” is not actually an option for those travelers. Mobility for all Modes calls for all growth in trips between 2014 and 2030 in the city to come from non-car modes, such that non-car mode share grows from 14% to 21% (per MWCOG once-a-decade survey data).

**3. Support economic activity by increasing access to City businesses and by increasing access to regional activity centers:** Evidence from other jurisdictions shows that better bicycle access results in [more local visits and more spent at local businesses](#). The City also has thousands of daily visitors on the W&OD that largely bypass the City’s businesses today.

**4. Mitigate environmental damage from transportation and play a role in achieving environmental goals:** Bicycles are a carbon-free form of transportation and thus increasing bicycle mode share fights climate change. Bicycle routes and parking also take up significantly less real estate than automobile parking, freeing up space for other modes, added density (which encourages biking, walking, and transit). On-road vehicles account for 34% of regional GHG emissions and the City’s goal is to reduce emissions 80% by 2050 versus 2005 levels.

**5. Preserve the character of different neighborhoods throughout the City:** Bicycling and bicycle facilities preserve a village character, allowing more people to get around and to see each other face-to-face. Bicycle facilities can be tailored to the character of different neighborhoods (e.g., cycle tracks in busy commercial area, bicycle boulevards on quiet residential streets).

**6. Provide equitable access in transportation options by considering the needs of all travelers, including those with disabilities or limited mobility, those with limited or no English proficiency, and those unable or unwilling to drive:** Bicycles are low-cost transportation and are often used for transportation by those who cannot afford a car. Nationally those with annual incomes under \$10,000 are three times more likely to bike to work than the national average. In these circumstances, bicycling can be a high-risk, low-status activity. Providing safe routes and normalizing bicycling improves equity. The goal also explicitly calls out “those unable or unwilling to drive.” Bicycles and micro-mobility are the most viable substitute for cars – transit is slower and more expensive to build than bike infrastructure and currently has limited coverage, and walking has a limited radius.

**7. Maintain the City’s infrastructure in a state of good repair:** Bicycle infrastructure does come with costs to keep in good repair and this must be funded. However, we should not treat this as a reason not to build and experiment with infrastructure. The City did not build in maintenance budget for brick sidewalks before building them. Jurisdictions regularly do not factor in the full lifecycle maintenance costs of roads and highways before building them. Bicycle infrastructure should not be held to a different standard. Build it, and if it remains in demand and used, pressure will arise to prioritize budgeting for its maintenance.

We have not seen clear metrics defined to measure progress against many of these goals, so as noted in the cover memo CACT commits to helping develop those metrics.

This is a particularly exciting year for bicycling in Falls Church City due to the strong level of support. Every member of City Council has voiced support for more bicycle infrastructure and/or other bike-friendly improvements. There are multiple bike advocates on critical city boards and commissions and support for doing more for bicycling in B&Cs and community groups. The Bike Falls Church community advocacy group grew from an idea on a winter bike ride to more than 125 people (~1+% of the City’s adult population) in less than 6 months. Every developer or major project engineer puts images of bicyclists on their site renderings. We’ve just opened the W&OD Dual Trails, the first in the region.

The CACT sees a massive opportunity in this year and the years to come to make our city better and more sustainable by building bicycle infrastructure and an inclusive, bike-friendly culture.

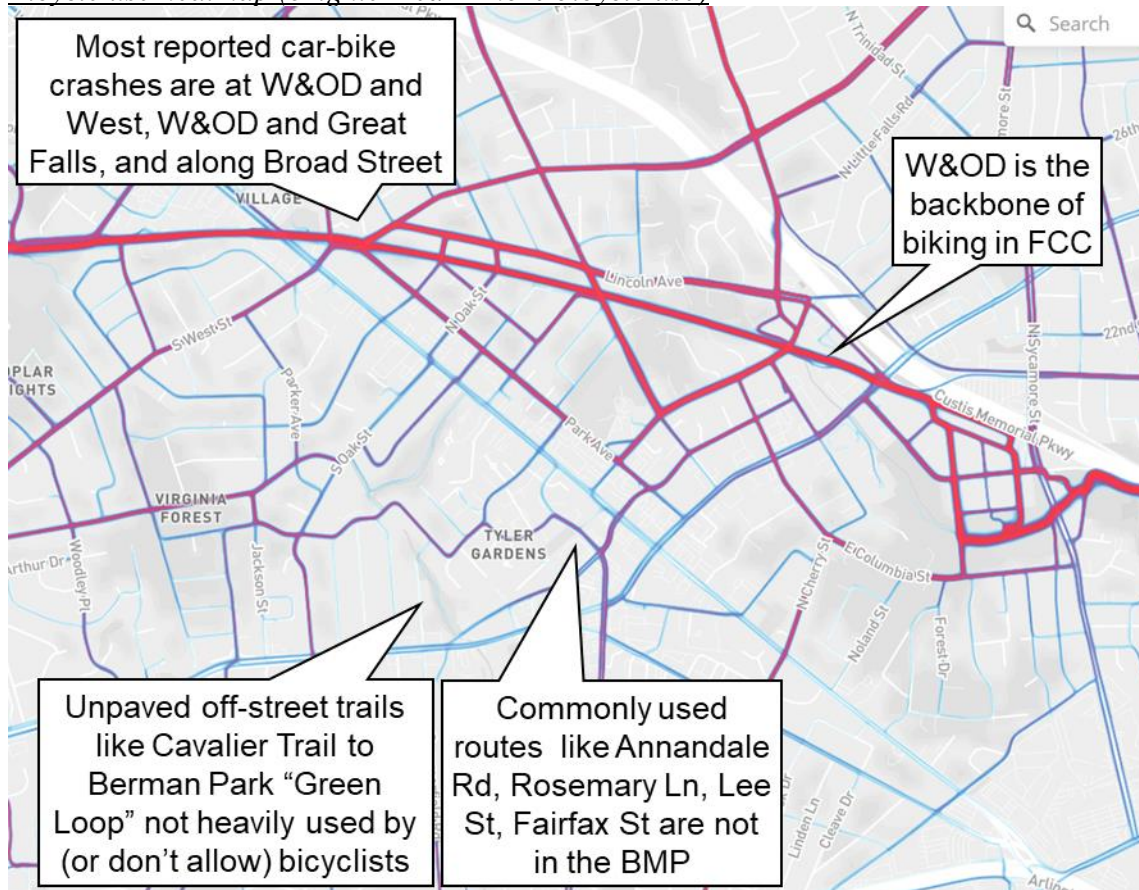
## Appendix B: Details on Bike Master Plan Considerations

This section captures the specific observations and recommendations of CACT members that will ideally be reflected in the updated Bicycle Master Plan – either as completed recommendations or as areas that require further investigation.

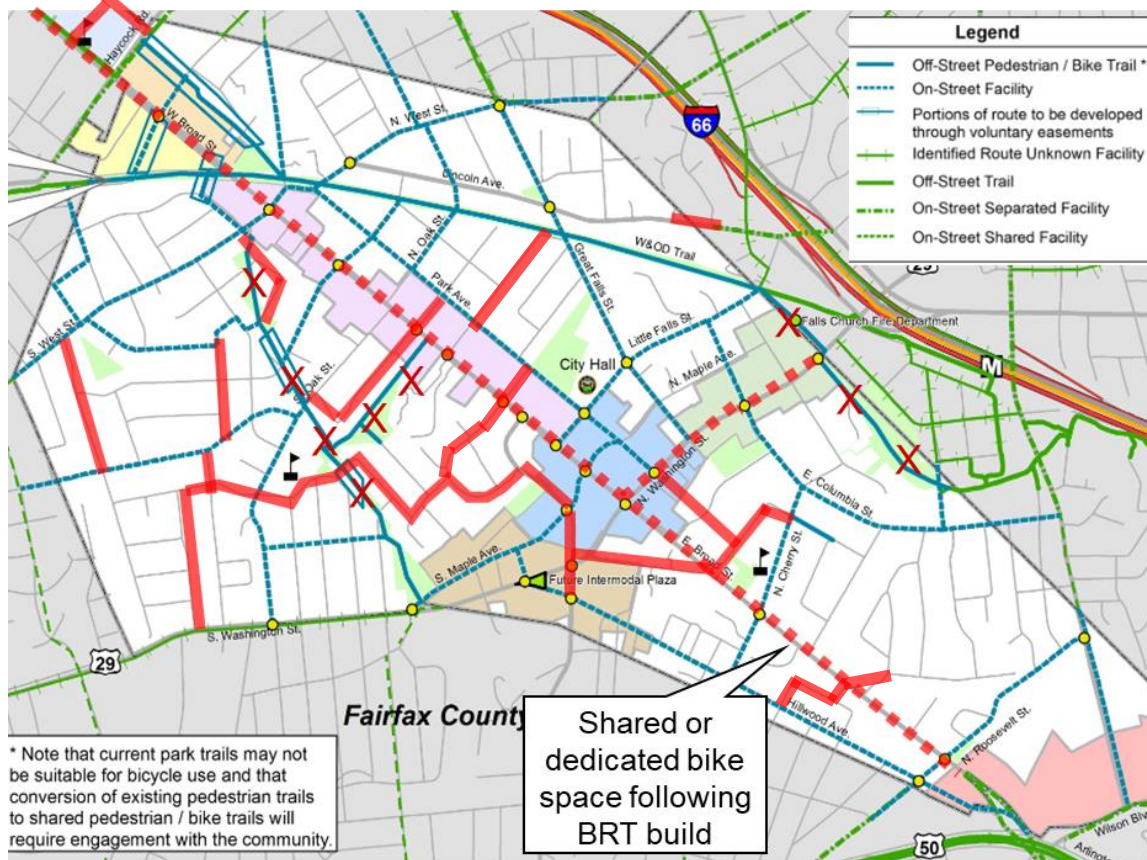
### Recommended Infrastructure Updates: Bike Routes

The 2015 BMP routes map is largely still relevant. We recommend evaluating a few targeted changes to reflect data on actual use, new development since 2015, local/global learnings since 2015, and input from the BFC community. Below are maps of bicycle use density in the City (per the fitness app Strava) and recommended adjustments to the BMP routes map with rationale following:

*Bicycle use heatmap (brighter red = more bicycle use)*



CACT-recommended updates to Bicycle Master Plan (additions in red lines, removals marked with red X)



- **E/W Broad St. and N. Washington St.:** As part of proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) implementation, mark bus lanes to permit bicyclist use. Evaluate a road diet on E. Broad St. (from four to two travel lanes, one turn lane, two bicycle lanes) to permit direct bicycle access to Eden Center and Seven Corners from downtown if the BRT does not follow this route.
- **Fairfax St.:** This as a link on low-volume roads between Cherry St., Tinner Hill, and points west.
- **Link Park Ave. to Fairfax St.:** Via a new off-road facility to provide a direct “all ages and abilities” link between neighborhoods east of Washington and downtown.
- **Remove Howard E. Herman Park route from BMP, replace with S. Lee St.:** Recognize the established use of HEH Park for pedestrians and build infrastructure to support the currently utilized route on S. Lee St. that takes advantage of the signalized crossing of W. Broad St.
- **Remove Berman Park/Cavalier Trail Park and Isaac Crossman Park routes from BMP:** The former should be studied as part of the Green Loop project but is likely to remain pedestrian-focused. Isaac Crossman Park is designed as “no bicycles” after a gravel trail was installed by VPIS. Add Ellison St. as a replacement.
- **Lincoln Ave:** Create a graceful end to Arlington County’s bike lanes on Fairfax Drive (becomes Lincoln Ave. in Falls Church) with sharrows or lane extension to Yucatan St. or Wyoming St.
- **Reflect the planned bicycle routes in the West Falls Development**
- **Add routes on Poplar Drive, Jackson St., Seaton Ln., Sherrow Ave., S Virginia Ave., Gundry Dr., and Annandale Road:** Reflect this route’s actual use as a popular link across the city’s southwest side. Provide better connectivity on low-volume, low-speed roads than the 2015 BMP.

- **Pennsylvania Ave. (or Riley St.):** Provide a link from the W&OD and neighborhoods north to the center of Park Ave. and the library that does not require riding on high-volume Great Falls St. (which may be too narrow south of the W&OD to accommodate bike lanes).
- **Buxton Road / Berry St.:** Provide a link between neighborhoods and routes both north and south of E. Broad St.

### **Recommended Infrastructure Updates: Other Infrastructure**

The updated plan should reference shared micro-mobility buildout and encouragement. Falls Church joined the Capital Bikeshare network in 2019, and other forms of micro-mobility need consideration. Specifically:

- Recognize the Capital Bikeshare current state including planned stations and identify gaps to prioritize for new stations. The most glaring gap is the lack of a station near Birch & Broad. Six residential stations near Oak Street Elementary, near Lincoln Park and the W&OD, and between E. Columbia St. and Hillwood Ave. would put all the City within a 5-minute walk of Bikeshare.
- Evaluate the opportunity and best means to introduce dockless bikeshare and shared e-scooters
- Evaluate action needed to encourage use and build a culture of micro-mobility use

For educating our youth, we should identify a location for a “traffic garden” within the City, perhaps near Oak Street Elementary, in coordination with Recs & Parks.

We note that the City has made great progress on building out bicycle rack locations throughout the City. We encourage continued buildout through private development and continued operation of the “Request a Rack” program laid out in the 2015 BMP.

Finally, we suggest that a few “guiding principle” statements within the 2015 BMP be modified in areas where best practice thinking and City goals have evolved, specifically:

- Recognize that bicycle infrastructure serves constituents within and beyond the City, some who do not yet bicycle because the infrastructure is not yet built, and most who do not live or work on the specific block where a bicycle facility is being planned yet have as much “claim” to that stretch of public space as home or business owners on the street.
- Recognize that it’s OK to temporarily (e.g., for years) to have “bike routes to nowhere” – experience in the U.S. has shown that bicycle infrastructure is best delivered block-by-block when opportunities arise and an “all or nothing” approach almost always results in nothing.
- Adjust the 2015 BMP comment that “Understanding that on-street parking contributes to quality of life in the City, the intention of this Plan is not to remove on-street parking. Therefore, proposed concepts will limit impacts to on-street parking that is regularly used.” To reflect the fact that tradeoffs between parking and bicycle facilities should not be pre-determined in the BMP in favor of parking (see the first bullet above) and that as our City population and density of businesses continues to grow, the utility of on street parking will continue to decrease while the utility of bicycle infrastructure will continue to increase (for example, with twice as many residents, a parking spot is likely to be available only half as often, while there are twice as many residents who might use a bicycle lane).

### **Observations on “What it takes to deliver” mode share shift to bicycles**

Based on lessons learned from other jurisdictions and observations of how we as a City approach transportation projects generally, we believe an ideal Bicycle Master Plan would lay out what it practically takes to deliver on that plan. For example:



- Establish bike/ped advisory as a core part of CACT’s mission
- Establish a bike/ped expert and champion role on city staff
- Establish a bike/ped liaison role within the police department
- Make experience with urban bike/ped infrastructure, particularly NACTO “all ages and abilities” design guidance, a requirement for procurement of engineering services
- Make evaluating bike/ped level of service (LOS) at intersections and micro-mobility opportunities and impacts a required part of every special exception development review
- Make encouraging bike-friendly culture, especially as driven by engagement and advocacy organizations like local bike shops, Bike Falls Church, WABA and FABB, a City priority
- Commit to using tactical urbanism approaches to make quick progress, test options, and engage public (e.g., pop-up lanes, paint-and-bollard 3-5 year solutions, etc.)

In addition to the infrastructure updates described above, a bicycle-encouraging culture is needed to deliver mode share shift. We believe the BMP should identify the City as needing to lead on these but can lean on the B&Cs and community for support in delivering them.

- City Council and the School Board actively push Bike to Work Day and Bike/Walk to School Day, holding Staff and the boards and commissions accountable for delivering them, with support from community organizations and local businesses as needed.
- Host the classes the 2015 BMP promised: one class each for adults and youth once per year. Ideally education is built into physical education class at Mount Daniel and/or Oak Street Elementary. Ideally the City budgets at least \$10,000/year as a line item to educate over 50 adults and children per year.
- Identify other engagement/encouragement events at least twice a year (e.g., support a city ride event, set up pop-up lanes in accordance with tactical urbanism, run a Mayor’s car-free challenge, set up “Bike Friendly Workplace / Business” award that local businesses can sign up for, etc.)

### **Specific challenges for creating a safe route from the W&OD to middle/high schools and West Falls**

CACT’s May 2021 memo [“CACT evaluations and recommendations for safer bicycle routes to middle and high schools” evaluated options to implement a route from the W&OD near West End Park to the cycle track being built along Mustang Alley, which connects to the Middle and High Schools. This is the single most important “all ages and abilities” route to build in the City, and, ideally, build before the West Falls development is complete. Since May 2021, CACT has learned of other factors the class and City should consider:](#)

- **Preferred route:** The route via Falls Ave, Offutt Drive, Birch St, and north of the Falls Plaza condos has emerged in discussions as the most viable route
- **Birch & Broad easement:** The owners of the Birch & Broad site have been approached by the City multiple times about using the access road behind (to the north of) the buildings as a pedestrian/bicycle route. Due to concerns over safety – children on bikes and tractor-trailer delivery trucks sharing the same space – the owners have firmly declined.
- **Mr. Tire Easement:** The preferred route requires an easement from Mr. Tire. The old owners of this property were approached about an easement and declined, though they did not take any action to prevent use of the informal trail that already exists linking West Falls Park to Falls Ave. To our knowledge, the current owners have not been approached. A “minimum viable product” link could be created with some volunteers and several bags of gravel – even if an easement cannot be negotiated we believe the City and community should explore creative solutions.
- **On-road section:** The on-road section would be inexpensive. Given low traffic volumes, a bicycle boulevard treatment could be applied on Falls Ave. and Offutt Drive. Birch Street could similarly

support an unprotected bicycle lane from W. Broad St. to the City line with a limited impact on parking (much of the distance is “no parking” already) and this would provide bicycle access into the Birch & Broad shopping center.

- **Falls Plaza condos easement:** The section “across” the Falls plaza condos property presents challenges. Between the north fence line and the property and City line, there is an undeveloped, partially wooded area on top of a City sewer easement. With thoughtful development, at least an unpaved trail could be added here and create a park amenity for the Falls Plaza residents and owners. To our knowledge, the condo board has not been approached. This greenway ends at Haycock Road, directly across from Mustang Alley.
- **Haycock Road Crossing:** The light at Mustang Alley should include bicycle-specific features that link to the cycle track. Alternatively, the elevation on both sides of Haycock Road could be used to build an elevated bike/ped bridge over this busy road.
- **Prior approach hindered progress:** We believe two factors have held up completion of this route since it was identified in the 2015 Bicycle Master Plan. First, the approach has been “all or nothing” and the challenges for a few hundred feet of the route length have stopped any progress. We believe a “build what you can” approach would create improvements and build support for later completing the more costly and/or politically challenging sections. Second, recent development at Birch & Broad (a largely cosmetic “facelift” with some layout changes) and West Falls has created uncertainty about the potential options. Now that the former is complete and plans for the latter are clear, it is clear there is no simple solution coming from the developers.

## Observations on bicycle friendly laws

A review of city ordinances and opportunities within federal and Virginia law is likely outside of the scope of this class, though one recommendation could be to have CACT review and recommend changes to laws/policy to align with best practices, such as:

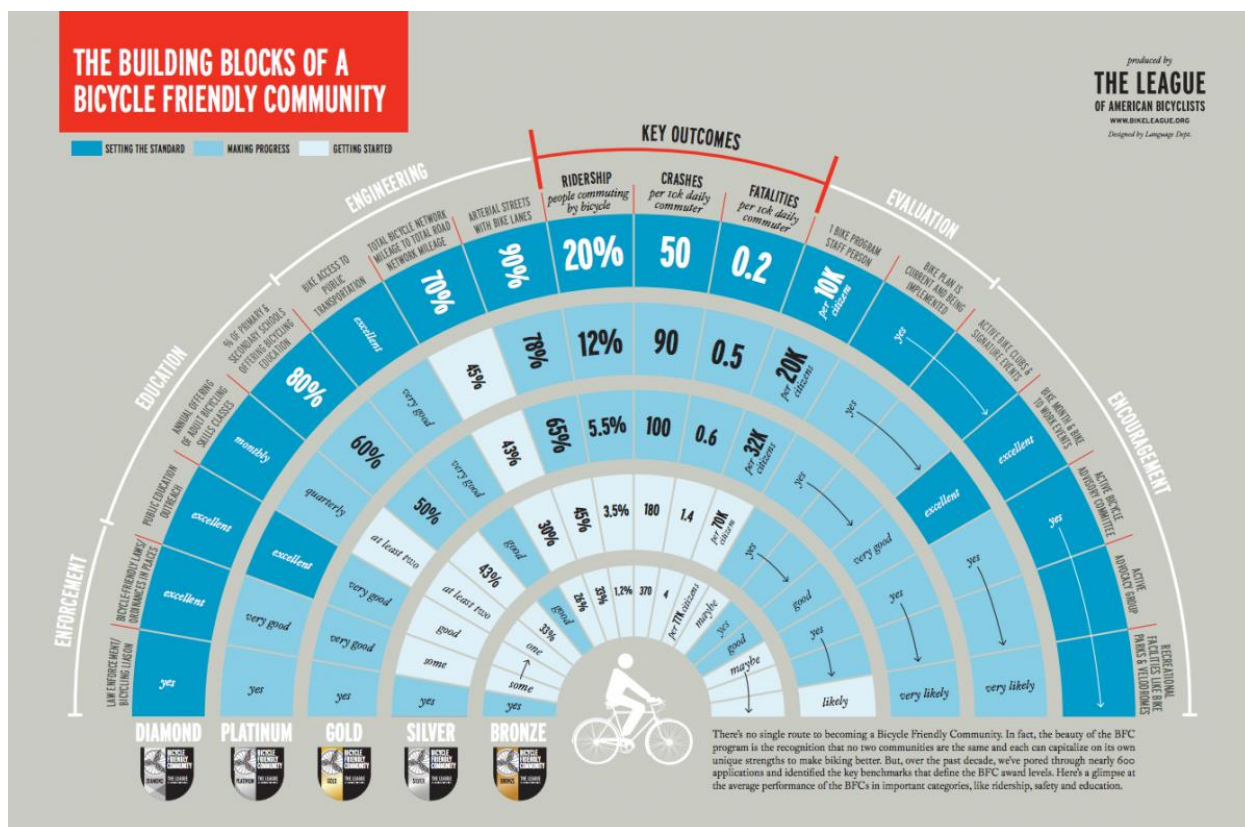
- Code of Ordinances, Chapter 20, Article VI prohibits e-bikes and scooters on the W&OD and other trails. It also prohibits riding two abreast. Both conflict with 2022 Virginia law, are not enforced, and discourage use of bicycles and other micro-mobility.
- Article VI, Section 20-57 prohibits riding in the road when a bicycle facility is available which is a common, but bicycle-unfriendly, law. If bicycle users choose not to use the facility, it is typically for good reason (e.g., the facility is perceived as less safe than riding with traffic, the bike user is moving faster than other riders in the bicycle facility, etc.)
- Article VI, Section 20-57 requires bicycles to stop at all stop signs and to “ride as near to the ride side of the roadway as practicable.” Both are covered by Virginia law and viewed by the international bicycle community as unsafe and discouraging to bicycling. Virginia considered an “Idaho Stop” law in 2021, nearly repealing the “stop at all stop signs” law for bicycles. Falls Church should at least not reinforce questionable bicycle policy or retain ordinances that may conflict with state law as state and national thinking changes on bike safety and accessibility.
- Article VI, Section 20-57 allows prohibitions against riding on sidewalks when requested by a property owner. The ordinance does not explicitly consider that use of the sidewalk by bicycle user is most likely because there is no other safe route and that any complaints may have also have a root cause in insufficient local bicycle education and enforcement on how and when to yield when riding on the sidewalk. Bicycle users should have rights to get to their destination safely as much as neighbors have “rights to peace” on the sidewalk.
- Stop sign placement on W&OD conflicts with the Virginia Manual for Uniform Control of Traffic Devices (MUCTD) Section 9B.03: The volume of traffic (bike, car, and ped) is much higher on the W&OD Trail than on Oak, Spring, or Grove Streets (per W&OD trail count data from

Arlington and VDOT average daily traffic counts). Per the MUCTD the trail should not have a stop sign and the road should have a stop or yield to reflect priority for the route with more volume. **The current design is dangerous.** It is contrary to cultural practice (most drivers stop at trail crossings while most bicycle users do not) and thus leaves vulnerable bicyclists and pedestrians with limited legal protections if they are hit by a car. It also trains bicyclists to ignore these stop signs, putting them at risk at busy intersections like Great Falls St. These stop signs are only allowed under Virginia law (§ 46.2-924) if the local governing body (Falls Church City) permits them by ordinance.

- Roll out 20 mph speed limits on as many bike route roads as possible, based on evidence that 20 mph speed limits do in fact reduce median speeds and that even slightly lower speeds make crashes far less deadly.
- Update parking ordinances to reflect stronger requirements for bike parking volume and locations on a property (see CACT and ESC feedback on One City Center, Founders II) and fewer requirements for motor vehicle parking (all recent special exception projects have had encouragement from Planning Commission and Council to provide less parking than called for by ordinance). Update City streetscape standards for bicycle parking infrastructure (e.g., the racks at Founders Row II are too tall to be useful while the ones at the Library are too short yet otherwise their design is identical).
- Update roadway and streetscape design standards to make “all ages and abilities” infrastructure part of the default design of our public spaces.
- “No bicycles” signs at the Fire Department send a message to the public that bicyclists uniquely do not belong, a message that carries weight in the community beyond the narrow confines of where the sign applies. If they were necessary to reinforce the “no through traffic” sign for bicyclists during the W&OD construction, they are no longer needed and should be removed.

# CACT-performed scoring of Falls Church City against the League of American Bicyclists “Bicycle Friendly Community” metrics

Likely overall score: Bronze



	Metric	FCC Value	Score	Commentary
<b>Enforce-ment</b>	Law enforcement bicycling liaison	None	None	
	Bicycle friendly ordinances	Some un-friendly	Bronze	See commentary above
<b>Education</b>	Public education outreach	None	None	
	Annual offering of adult bicycle skills class	None	None	WABA willing to support; funding required
	% of schools offering bicycle education	0%	None	WABA willing to support; funding required
<b>Engineering</b>	Bike access to public transportation	Good	Silver	Bus access good, EFC good, WFC poor
	Total bicycle network mileage to total road network mileage	5%	None	See (2) below; completed 2015 BMP would cover 40% (Silver)
	Arterial street with bike lanes	4% (Hillwood Ave)	None	See (3) below; 2015 BMP covers 43% (Bronze)
<b>Key outcome</b>	People commuting by bicycle	1.7%	Bronze	Per 2019 ACS
	Crashes per 10k daily commuters	490	None	5-year average

	Fatalities per 10k daily commuters	None in 12+ years	Unclear	1 fatality every 20 years for FCC is not “Bronze”
<b>Evaluation</b>	Bike program staffing per resident	None	None	
	Bike plan is current and being implemented	2015 plan, lagging implementation	Silver (est.)	Could do light refresh; must reinvigorate use
<b>Encouragement</b>	Active bike clubs and signature events	Conte’s and Bikenetic clubs	Silver (est.)	Add at least one annual City-promoted ride event
	Bike Month & Bike to Work events	Bike to Work & Bike to School	Silver (est.)	Expand Bike Month to more than 1-2 days
	Active bicycle advisory committee	CACT partially serves this role	Bronze (est.)	Formalize this as part of CACT role
	Active advocacy group	Bike Falls Church	Bronze (est.)	Organization needs to grow and mature
	Recreational facilities (e.g. bike park, velodrome)	W&OD Trail, West End skate-park	Silver (est.)	Add a “traffic garden” to teach children

- (1) 76 lane-miles under DPW per budget, assume 36 centerline miles (2 lanes avg). 0.5 miles of bike lanes on street (S Maple, Hillwood) and 1.5 miles of W&OD. Excludes other off-street trails (mostly closed to or not suitable for bicycles) and on-street routes with sharrows that are not likely to meet NACTO “all ages and abilities” guidelines for 95<sup>th</sup> percentile speed and ADT. Bike Master Plan includes 14.4 miles of on and off-street facilities.
- (2) Minor and major urban arterials total 6.2 miles. 0.3 miles of Hillwood Ave includes bike lanes.

## Appendix C: How biking has and hasn't changed in Falls Church since 2015 BMP

Since the adoption of the Bicycle Master Plan in July 2015, here are some highlights to provide you some context about how the City has evolved in the past seven years:

### City highlights

- Population grew 7.5% from estimated 13,308 in 2015 to 14,309 in 2020 (U.S. Census)

### Completed developments ([see full list and project plans](#))

- The West Broad development with 282 apartments and Harris Teeter grocery store opened.
- Founders Row opened with 322 apartments, plus space for a movie theater, restaurants, and more retail.
- The Lincoln at Tinner Hill with 224 apartments and a Target opened.
- The new Meridian High School was built, and the old high school was demolished.
- South Washington Street transit, road design, and streetscape improvements were built.
- The renovated library opened.

### Coming developments ([see full list and project plans](#))

- Broad and Washington
- One City Center
- West Falls
- Founders Row II

### Bicycling/micro mobility highlights

- In October 2021, the [W&OD Dual Trails project](#) — featuring separate paths for bicyclists and pedestrians — was unveiled in Falls Church, featuring nearly 1.5 miles of trail from Little Falls Street to North West Street. The road crossings are a separate city CIP project for the coming years. Trail lighting has been discussed but is not currently planned or funded.
- In March 2021, the [Washington & Old Dominion \(W&OD\) Trail Bridge](#) over Route 29 opened. This has made Little Falls Street a new gateway into the city for many more bicyclists and pedestrians. East of the new bridge, a gap was wisely left to allow for future construction of a western entrance to East Falls Church Metro station that would further shorten biking/walking time from downtown Falls Church to this major transit hub.
- The [city joined the Capital Bikeshare network](#) in 2019 with an initial 10 stations.
- An ad hoc committee updated [suggested biking and walking routes to all city schools](#) and posted information online.
- [City Council's work plan](#) included a not-yet-met goal of adding one mile of protected bike lanes.
- The CACT and the Environmental Sustainability Council held two joint meetings focused on bicycling issues. A [March 2022 meeting \(watch\)](#) solicited advice on building bike infrastructure from transportation engineers from Montgomery County, Maryland, and Washington, D.C.
- The city explored adding dockless e-scooters, but no companies signed on before the pandemic. This effort may be revived. Arlington-authorized scooters are often left near City borders.
- The Bike Falls Church group launched in 2021 and added nearly 100 members in first six months.
- Little City-branded bike racks continue to be added throughout the city.
- Painted bike lanes were added on Hillwood and South Maple.
- Sharrows were added/refreshed on Park, E. Columbia, and West.
- Bike parking is required in major new developments.
- Pit stops for Bike to Work Day are held at West Falls Church and East Falls Church.
- Large participation in Bike and Walk to School Day in spring and fall.

## Appendix D: CACT offer of support and references

CACT is at your disposal to help with your greatly appreciated efforts to update the BMP. Please reach out if we can provide you help at any stage of your effort. We're happy to provide formal/informal feedback and help collect input from our networks, including Bike Falls Church and local bike shops.

Below are some City documents on bicycling and other relevant information that you may find useful:

- [Bike Master Plan Implementation Report](#), April 2022
- [Falls Church transportation safety presentation with ped/bike injury data](#) (January 2022)
- [CACT "Lessons Learned from Bike Infrastructure Discussion" memo](#), April 2022 | [Bicycle Infrastructure in Washington, D.C.](#) - Will Handsfield (March 2022) | [Bikeways in Montgomery County](#) - Patricia Shepherd (March 2022)
- [CACT "Why Falls Church Should Prioritize Bikes Lanes and Micro-Mobility Infrastructure" memo](#), February 2022
- [CACT "Recommended Locations to Construct Protected Bike Lanes" memo](#), June 2021
- ["CACT evaluations and recommendations for safer bicycle routes to middle and high schools" memo](#), May 2021
- [Who Bicycles in the City of Falls Church? 2015 survey results](#)
- [Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments \(MWCOC\) Visualize 2045 plan](#)
- [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#)
- Data, policy, and approaches from other cities that are leading on bike-friendliness (e.g., Cambridge, Mass., Washington, D.C.) and our metro-area neighbors who are slightly ahead of us (Fairfax City, Arlington, Montgomery County)

Finally, we note other resources and plans that might prove helpful:

- [Falls Church Planning Library](#), including Small Areas Plans
- [City development project plans](#) (at various stages of maturity) for ongoing development (e.g., Park Ave. Great Streets, One City Center and the roundabout, Founders Row II, West End, N. Washington St. Multi-Modal, various Neighborhood Traffic Calming projects)
- [Strava Heatmap](#) and [Strava Metro](#)
- [People for Bikes Bicycle Network Analysis](#)
- [VDOT vehicle counts](#)
- [Virginia TREDs bike crash locations](#)
- [Northern Virginia Near Miss and Dangerous Locations Survey](#)
- [American Community Survey % bike commuters by gender](#)
- [W&OD Trail user count data \(NOVA Parks\)](#)
- [Falls Church Safe Routes to School Plan and Survey](#) (2011)