

# SENATE OF VIRGINIA

**ADAM P. EBBIN**  
30TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT  
PART OF ARLINGTON AND FAIRFAX COUNTIES;  
AND PART OF THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA  
P. O. Box 26415  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22313  
(571) 384-8957



COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:  
AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
GENERAL LAWS AND TECHNOLOGY  
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

August 15, 2017

The Honorable Aubrey Layne  
Virginia Department of Transportation  
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

RE: I-66 HOT Lanes Shared Use Trail Objections

Dear Secretary Layne:

I am concerned with the current design proposal for the shared-use path outside the Beltway along Interstate 66 (I-66 Trail) as a part of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and I-66 Express Mobility Partners' (EMP) Transform 66 project.

As you know, the proposed design proposes constructing approximately 7.25 miles of the I-66 Trail as eight-to-ten foot wide shared use trails directly adjacent to traffic lanes along I-66. I believe this design does not adequately serve the needs of pedestrians or cyclists, and is contrary to VDOT's goal of providing effective multimodal solutions along the I-66 corridor. It is my understanding that VDOT is working to identify portions of the I-66 Trail that do not lie directly adjacent to residential properties to determine if it would be possible to move those portions of the trail outside of the sound wall under the current contract specifications. However, while this is encouraging, I would ask that the public-private partnership (P3) contract be adjusted to state that, wherever the I-66 Trail runs parallel to a soundwall along the corridor, the trail should be positioned outside of the sound wall, or vertically separated from the highway wherever feasible for the following reasons:

Trail users will be sandwiched between a sound wall and jersey wall, exposing them to concentrated qualities of car exhaust, noise pollution, and road debris along a majority of the outside the beltway portion of the I-66 Trail.

The proposed design has the potential to create heat islands in warm weather and restrict snow melt in cold weather making the path either unsafe or unusable, as pedestrians will have limited ability to escape the elements and, per my conversation with the project team in July, there are currently no plans to enact snow removal for the I-66 Trail.

This proposed option is inconsistent with the current layout of both the Custis Trail and the Washington and Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail where they run along I-66. Trail user safety and utility are preserved along the Custis and W&OD trail through vertical separation from I-66 or by positioning the sound wall between traffic lanes and the trail. The current I-66 Trail design would serve as a break from current practice and would establish a precedent throughout the entire state of allowing the concerns of adjacent property owners to override best practices regarding trail construction and broader regional and statewide interests.

Portions of the trail are proposed to be as little as eight feet wide and bounded on both sides by a sound wall and jersey fence. It is my understanding that shared-use pathways must have a minimum tread width of ten feet to comply with American Association of State Highways and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards and that twelve to fourteen foot widths are recommended. The presence of a wall on both sides of the trail will further limit the usable footprint of a trail, increasing danger to cyclists and pedestrians proposed by the current design, particularly when passing in opposing directions or overtaking one another, and the resulting increase in user conflicts and injuries.

I would like VDOT and EMP to consider committing to the construction of a shared use path that spans the entire length of the project as a part of the Transform-66 project or to strongly encourage Prince William County and other potential providers of parallel trails to begin the process of designing and implementing multimodal solutions that would compliment the coming I-66 Trail. Construction of a multimodal facility with access to I-66 transit and ridesharing lots that extends to Gainesville would help the I-66 Trail realize its potential as a bike commuting resource and possibly even reduce parking overcrowding at the Vienna metro.

I am aware of the concerns raised by certain current homeowners who will have to endure change and hardship as a result of the road widening and construction of the I-66 Trail. However, as shown by the W&OD Trail and the Custis Trail, the long-term result of incorporating multimodal resources into a community is to enhance property values and promote interconnectedness without resulting in significant negative externalities.

The following organizations support this general position:

- (1) The Virginia League of Conservation Voters;
- (2) The Southern Environmental Law Center;
- (3) The Virginia Bicycling Federation;
- (4) The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA);
- (5) The Coalition for Smarter Growth;
- (6) The Fairfax Alliance for Better Biking (FABB)
- (7) Active Prince William;
- (8) The Sierra Club - Mt. Vernon Chapter;
- (9) The Rail-to-Trails Conservancy;
- (10) The Alexandria Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

I believe that for Virginia to establish a true multimodal transportation system that encourages commuting by all modes of transit, it is imperative that VDOT provide non-vehicle users with a high-quality transportation infrastructure.

Please redesign the project to place the shared-use path on the outside of the sound walls, or, where appropriate, engage in vertical separation of the trail from the I-66 traffic lanes.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Adam P. Ebbin  
30th District  
Member, Virginia Senate