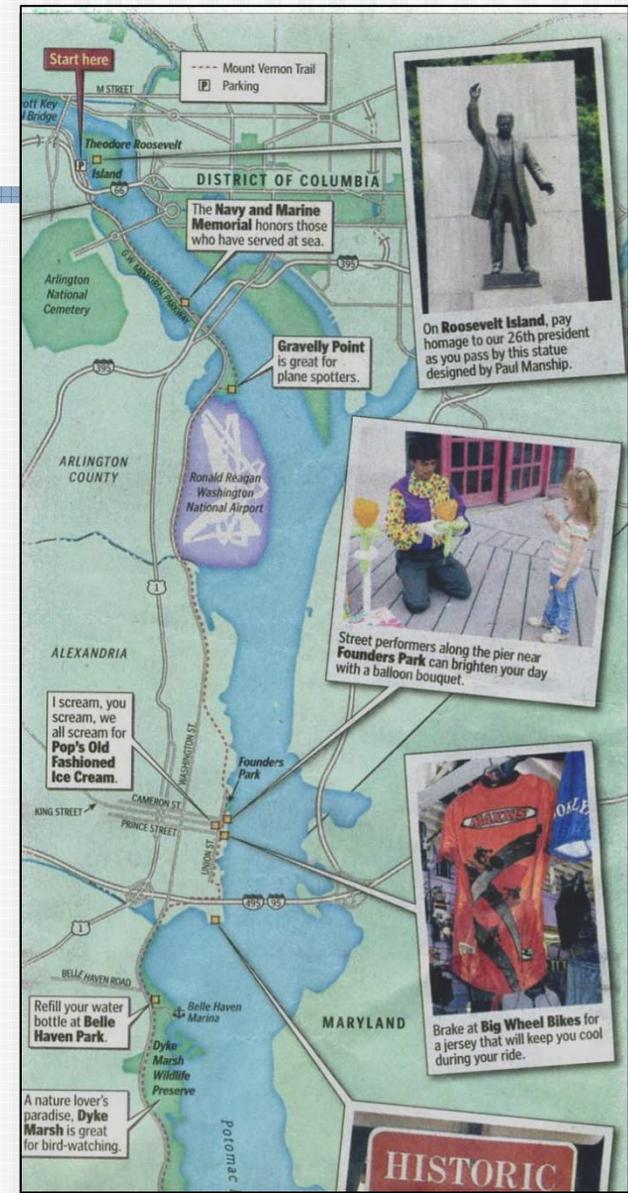


Mount Vernon Trail

Safety Task Force Committees:

- Recreational Use and Management
- Education and Media
- Design and Maintenance
- Partnerships





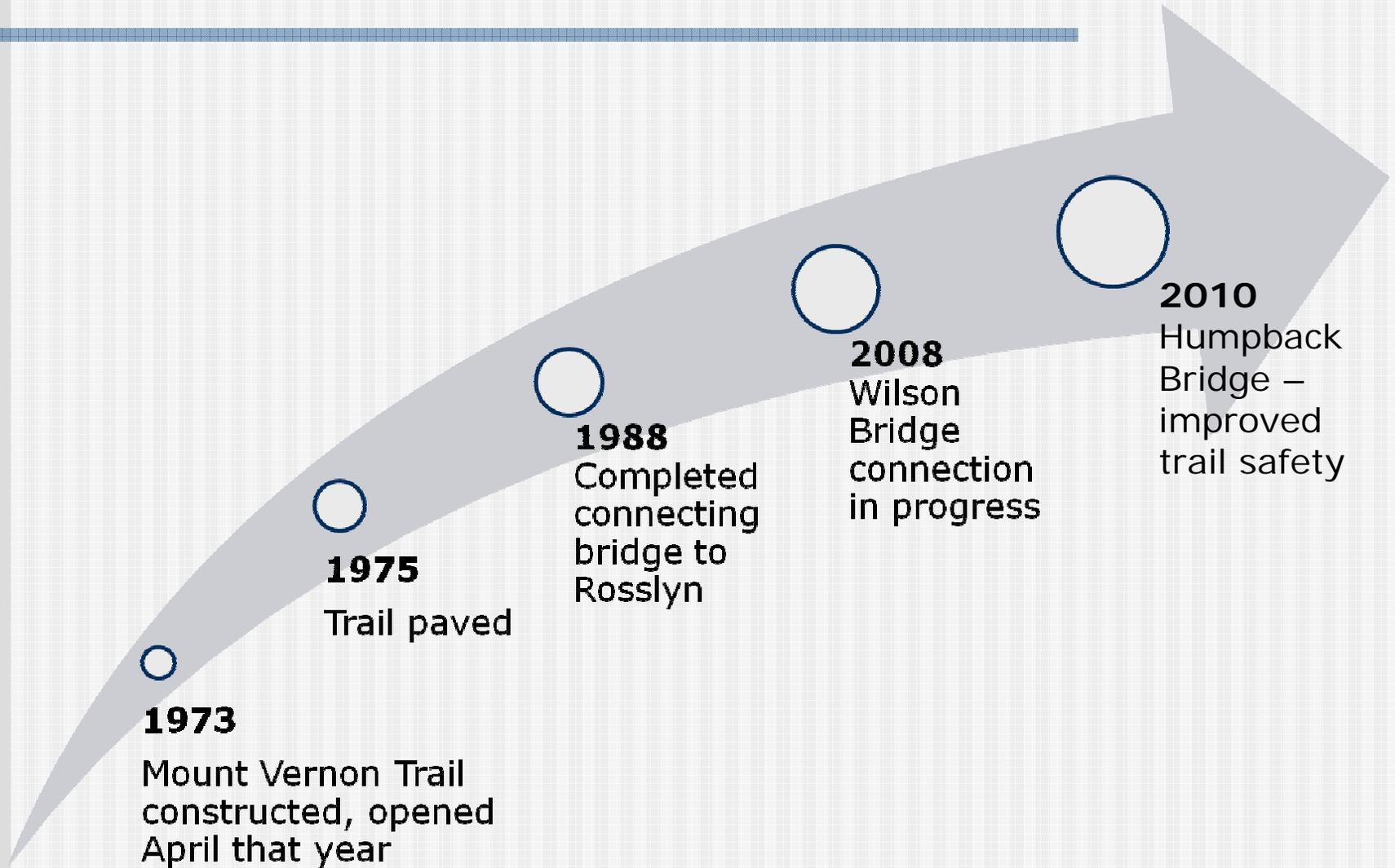
Safety Task Force Goals:

STRATEGIES TO INCREASE TRAIL SAFETY:

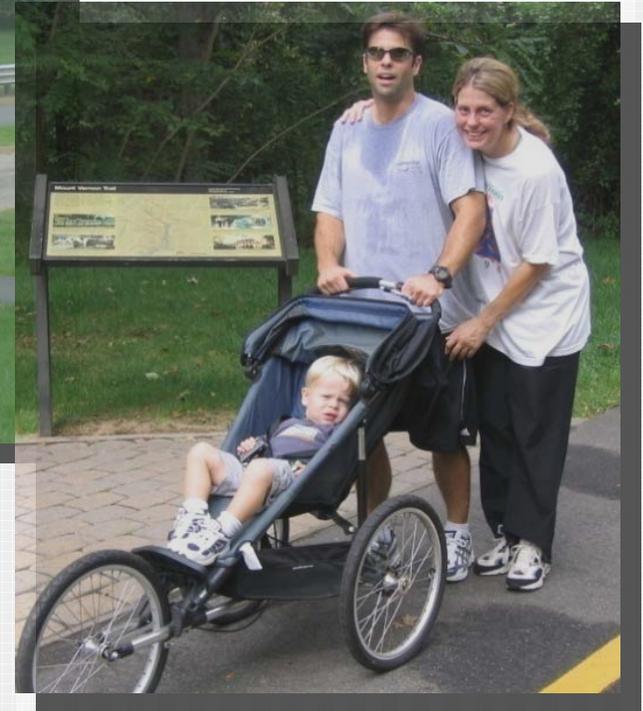
- Incident / Accident Data Collection
- Public Education and Outreach / Media
- Update Trail Map & Brochure
- Enforcement Activities
- Partnerships
- Coordination with Other Jurisdictions



35th Anniversary of the Mount Vernon Trail



Who uses the trail?





NPS photo
Brent O'Neill

Weekend use – a.m.

Marine Corps Marathon training



Morning use:
Comparable ratio of
bikers:runners

Weekend peak use



Afternoon rate of use:
400/hr typical rate of peak use
20:1 Ratio of bikers to runners

Weekday commuting

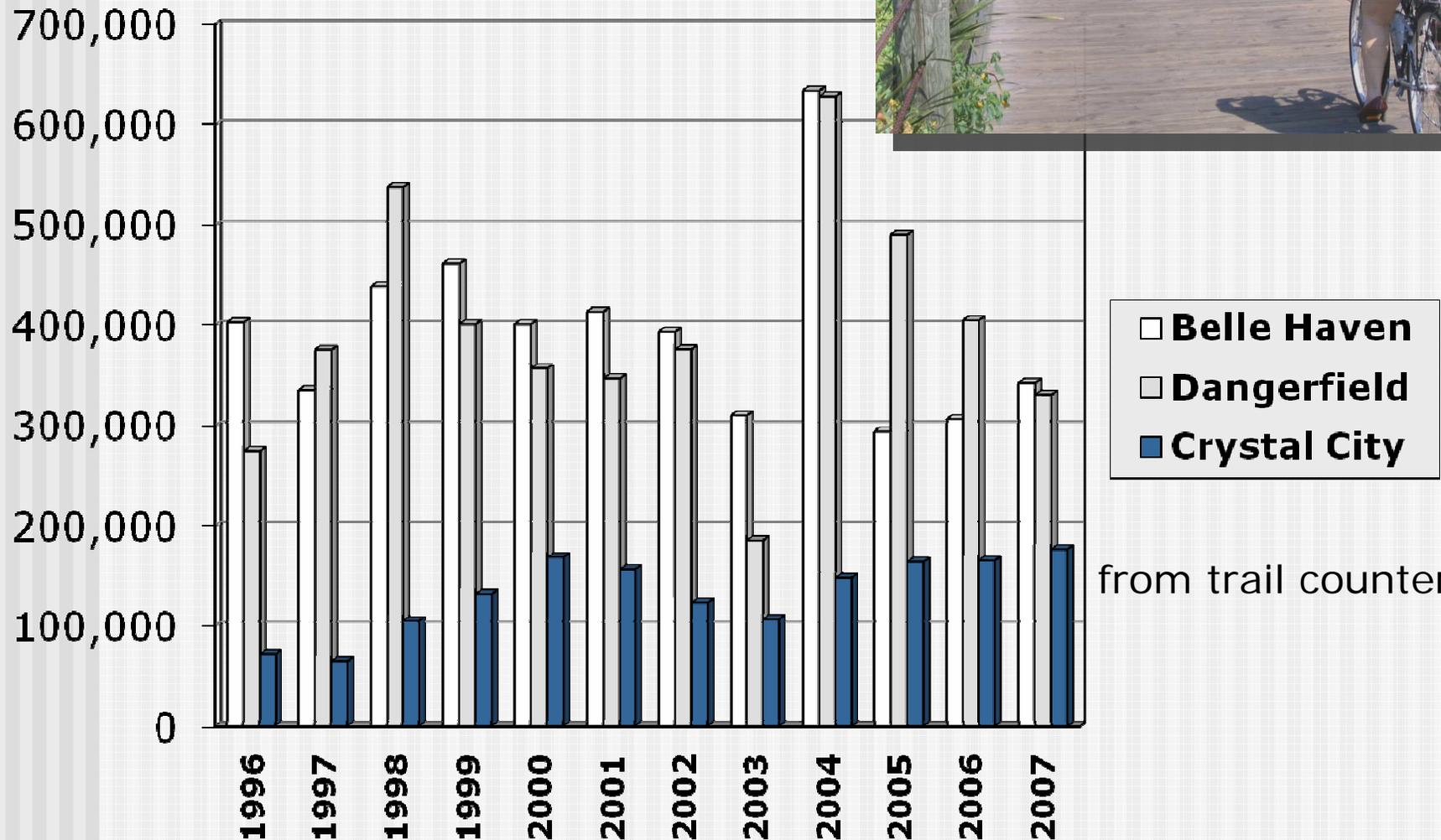
Commuting rate is nearly 50% of peak recreational rate



WABA – 2007 Bike to Work Day

- Bike commuters share the trail with runners 2:1
- Visibility essential for both users in low-light conditions

Trail use: increasing?



from trail counters

Serious Accidents Increasingly Common on Bike Trails

TRAILS, From Page 1

"Sometimes you feel like you're taking your life into your hands around here," Pam Roberts said as she adjusted scarred knee pads and yanked on the neon-pink laces of her rollerblades before setting off on a Saturday morning jaunt from a parking lot near Memorial Bridge to Old Town Alexandria along the Mount Vernon Trail.

"The worst is when you get up a little speed and a bike passes too close," she said. "You want to get out of the way, but you can't skate on grass. I've wiped out a few times, especially when I first started."

Quantifying the injuries of cyclists and others on the area's bike trails has been hindered by what Bonnie Nevel, director of the Washington area's largest bicycle advocacy group, calls "a general dearth in statistics and studies concerning bicycling."

Hospitals don't keep count of the number of people admitted to their emergency rooms suffering from injuries sustained on the trails, but emergency room doctors say that bike paths now are a more dangerous place to cycle than the roads.

"Most bicycle injuries occur on the bike path and not on the road," said Eric Silfen, director of Reston Hospital Center's emergency room.

"And they're pretty serious. We see a lot of head injuries, broken collarbones, abrasions and lacerations in all age groups, from older adults to little children," he said.

Of the 27 cyclists who came to Fairfax Hospital's emergency room with serious injuries resulting from bicycle accidents last year, only one was hit by a car.



BY RICH LIPSKI—THE WASHINGTON POST

The 20-mile Mount Vernon Bike Trail becomes quite congested on weekends, park rangers say.

Just who is to blame for making the bike trails dangerous is a continuing subject of debate between cyclists, who often blame joggers for not paying enough attention to their surroundings, and joggers and other pedestrians, who say cyclists are turning the trails into racetracks.

"Let's face it. We have very few accidents involving joggers who went out of control and slammed into a tree," Grant said. He said cyclists often complain that joggers are oblivious to their warning cries because many of them are wearing headphones.

"That's true," said cyclist Paul Burette, taking a water break astride a carbon-fiber frame racing bike built

for speed. "But there are a lot of bikers out here with Walkmans too."

"People need to pay a little more attention to what the guy ahead is doing and what's coming up behind you," he said.

Put Nokesville resident Paula Rusher firmly in the ranks of the irritated pedestrians. Three weekends ago, a cyclist careered into her 4-year-old daughter on the bike path near Mount Vernon.

"I was walking just in front of Cori when a bicyclist yelled out, 'On your left,'" Rusher said. "I yelled at her to get on the grass, but when she veered toward me, the bike struck her from behind and dragged her about five feet," she said.

"We took her to the hospital; her

arm was very black and blue and her face was pretty scratched," she said. "When it happened, the man fell off his bike. He was concerned, but he didn't leave his name and number."

Congestion along the trails is expected to get more acute as the trends of the past decade continue into the '90s. With tight budgets restricting trail widening and the construction of new trails, officials say it's the behavior of trail users that's going to have to change.

To that end, all area trails have mounted education campaigns, from posting notices on billboards to holding special events such as "fun runs," in an effort to get trail users to follow a few simple rules.

"We tell everyone to keep to the

right of the trail, pass on the left and always give pedestrians the right-of-way," said Ritch Viola, Arlington County's bicycle and pedestrian coordinator. Viola is responsible for more than 37 miles of bike trails in the county, including the I-66 Custis Trail, Four Mile Run and parts of the W&OD.

"Give a warning two seconds before you actually pass someone, and leave two feet between yourself and the person you're passing," he said.

Proposals to institute speed limits have been considered for all of the trails, but were rejected for all but Mount Vernon because none of the various authorities governing the trails has any power to enforce rules with fines or other sanctions. New York City instituted a 15 mph speed limit last month on trails in Central Park.

"I don't think speed limits are the answer," Viola said. "It tells people that if you go 15 miles an hour or slower, you're safe and that if you go faster, you're being dangerous, and that's not necessarily the case."

A few 15 mph speed limit signs have been posted on the Mount Vernon Trail, but Grant agreed that the signs have been ineffective.

Painting center lines along sections of the Mount Vernon Trail, all of the W&OD and all of Arlington's trails has proved to be the most effective way of managing an increased volume of cyclists and other users. When it looks like a road, officials said, people are more cautious.

"Center striping has been a big help," Grant said. "It's a subliminal reminder to folks that there are people going both ways, and that they need to stay aware."



Mount Vernon Trail Safety Task Force

Safety Task Force Committees:

- Recreational Use and Management
- Education and Media
- Design and Maintenance
- Partnerships



Safety Task Force progress:

Recreational Use & Management Committee

- Trail counters to be added on north end
- Emergency response statistics
U.S. Army Captain Paul Lang, MPH student at USUHS is assisting in developing the ability to acquire & organize EMS data from local jurisdictions.
- National Grid (USNG)
utilize in park maps to allow compatibility with other agencies and jurisdictions.
- NPS.gov/GWMP/trailreports
Consider user-friendly, computer-based system for people to accurately report accidents, incidents, and safety related problems.



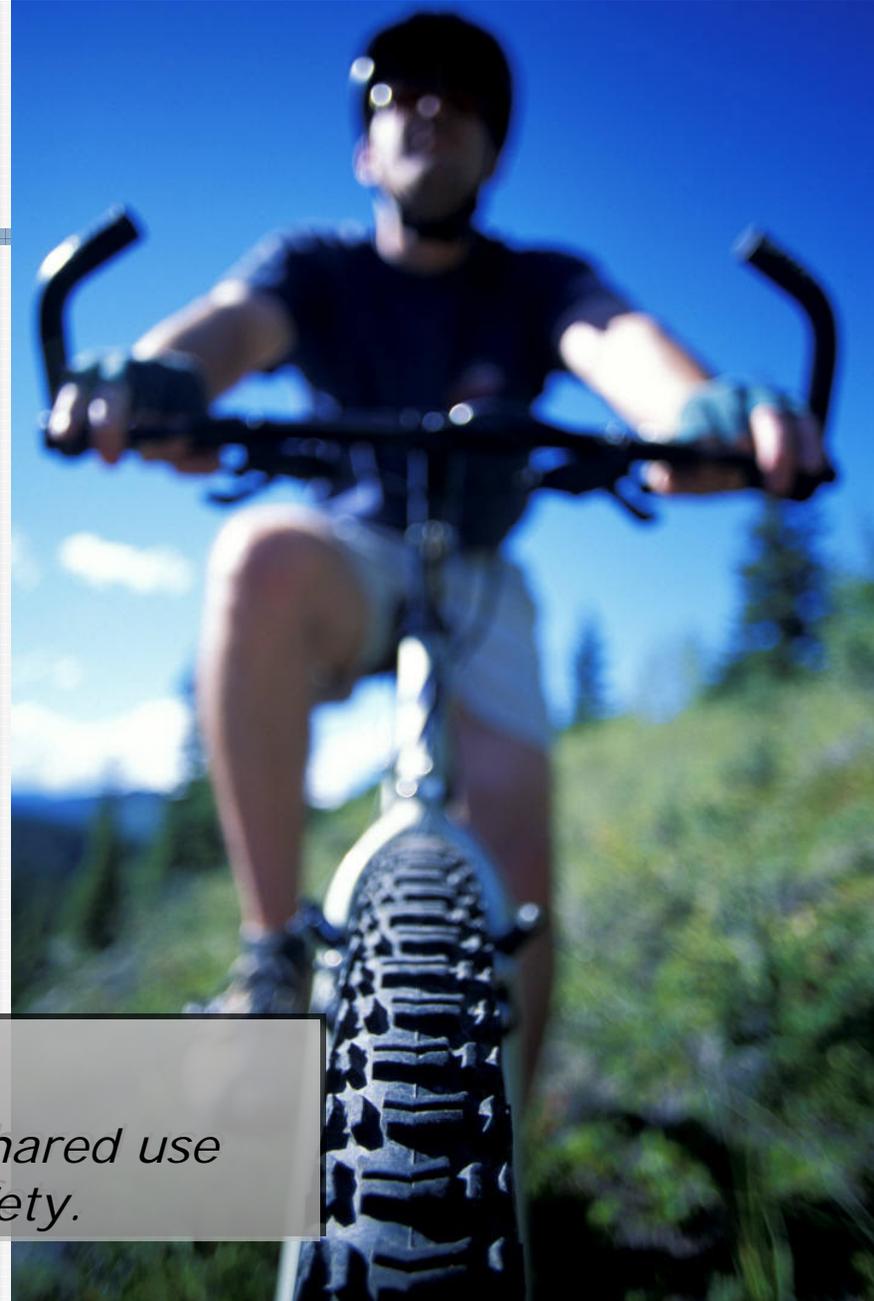
Safety Task Force progress:

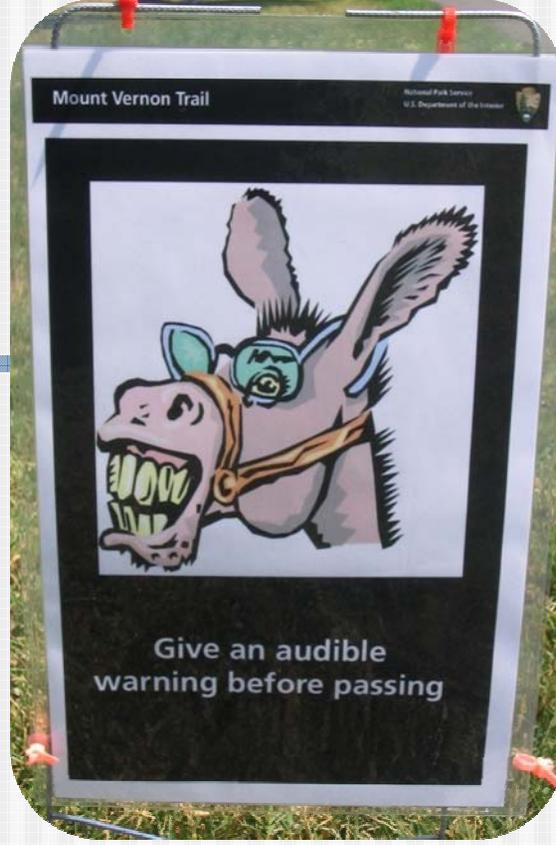
Information & Media Committee

- Trail Safety Events
- Brochure/Website information
- Sign Plan

It's not just about the cyclists.

*We need to educate everyone about shared use
and personal responsibility for trail safety.*





Trail Rules & Etiquette



For your safety, stay to the right and move off the trail to stop.



Bicyclists must give audible warning before passing.



Speed limit is 15mph.
Slow down and be alert in congested areas areas.

2007 Trail Safety Events



Good exposure

5 events/40 hours of education
2,000 contacts

Visual impact on trail community

230 bells given away

38 lights

150 trail pledges

750 trail maps

Staffing: 150 staff hours/5 events





Bell give-away



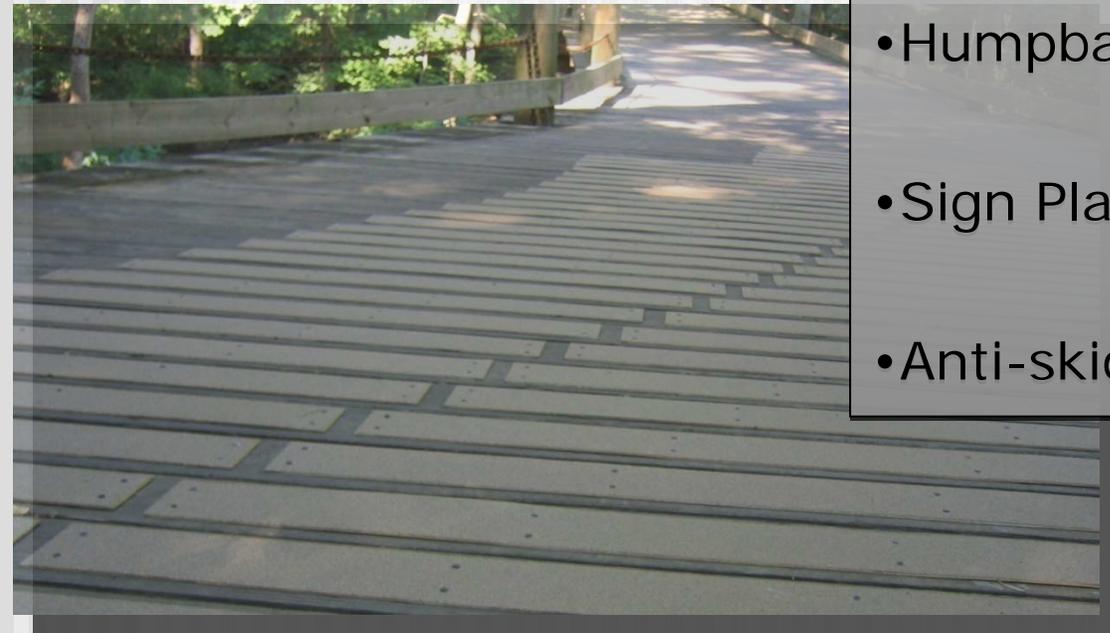
Message boards



Safety Task Force progress:

Design & Maintenance Committee:

- Humpback Bridge improved safety
- Sign Plan proposal
- Anti-skid surfaces for bridges



Sign inventory,
examples of
inconsistency



**SPEED
LIMIT
15**

Mile 2

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



**Riverside
Park**

**George Washington
Memorial Parkway**

Trail Rules

Notify US Park Police of accidents
or Incidents 202-619-7300 or 911

All Trail Users

- Obey all posted signs.
- Keep right.
- Move off pavement to stop.
- Leash your pet; maximum 6' long leash.
- Clean up after your pet.
- Respect the rights of park neighbors.

Bicyclists

- Speed limit is 15 mph.
- Keep right, pass left, travel in single file.
- Give an audible warning before passing.
- Dismount at road and driveway crossings.

Share the Trail

Slow down;
congested area ahead.



12" X 18" SIGNS.
TWO SIGNS MOUNTED BACK TO
BACK.

LOCATED AT EACH MILE EXCEPT
WITHIN ALEXANDRIA CITY LIMITS.

18" X 18" SIGNS.
MOUNTED BACK TO BACK WITH TRAIL RULES SIGNS.

LOCATED AT MOUNT VERNON, RIVERSIDE PARK, FORT HUNT PARK, BELLE HAVEN
PARK, JONES POINT PARK, CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, MEMORIAL CORE AREA, THEODORE
ROOSEVELT ISLAND.

12" X 12" SIGNS.
ONE SIGN LOCATED IN ADVANCE

LOCATED AT MOUNT VERNON,
HUNT PARK, BELLE HAVEN PA
CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, MEMORIA
ROOSEVELT ISLAND.

↑ Mount Vernon
Estate and
Gardens
4 mi

Fort Hunt Park ↗



↑ Theodore
Roosevelt
Island
12 mi

↙ Fort Hunt Park



**Proposed
sign plan**

12" X 12" DIRECTIONAL SIGNS.
MOUNTED BACK TO BACK.



Safety Task Force progress:

Partnerships Committee:

- Mount Vernon Trail Patrol
 - 18 member volunteer patrol/1,200 volunteer hours in 2007
 - Assists with information, injuries (4 EMS), bike repairs (75)
- Task Force Partnerships
 - WABA
 - DC Roadrunners
- Monitor Special Use Permits
- Media outreach – utilize group newsletters
- Arlington & Alexandria coordination on:
 - Events & education
 - Enforcement
 - Developing additional trail connections

THE END

TRAIL COUNTERS ON MOUNT VERNON TRAIL & HOFFMEYER DRIVE

| Special Use Data | FY'06 | October | November | December | January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August | September |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|----------|---------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|
| Mount Vernon Trail - Mile Marker | | 13,284 | 7,323 | 7,848 | 5,227 | 3,954 | 5,105 | 7,875 | 13,183 | 13,013 | 12,500 | 15,101 | |
| Mount Vernon Trail - Belle Haven | | 27,525 | 31,237 | 40,690 | 17,425 | 15,322 | 22,890 | 38,557 | 30,830 | 41,959 | 50,591 | 50,193 | |
| Mount Vernon Trail - Daingerfield | | 75,230 | 34,745 | 48,283 | 43,770 | 36,907 | 53,635 | 93,769 | 78,669 | 82,410 | 105,180 | 88,137 | |
| Crystal City Connector @ | | 16,500 | 7,367 | 3,373 | 2,861 | 6,726 | 13,608 | 24,512 | 19,341 | 16,619 | 18,764 | 15,750 | |

