

Presentation to Board of Supervisors
September 26, 2023
James Wallar
Friends of Colvin Run Mill

Chairman McKay, Supervisors, and County Executive.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is James Wallar, President of the Friends of Colvin Run Mill.

I appear before you today to offer praise and, naturally, make a request.

First the praise.

I commend the County Executive's proposed FY2023 Carryover Appropriation with respect to allocating \$15.7 million for the parks. As you have heard in presentations on the regular budget, the Park Authority's needs are greater than its budget. The Carryover Package will provide important resources for forest operations, capital equipment, turf fields, energy improvements, capital projects like recreation centers, and infrastructure replacements and upgrades.

This proposal is timely and most welcome! I urge you to adopt this part of the Carryover Appropriation.

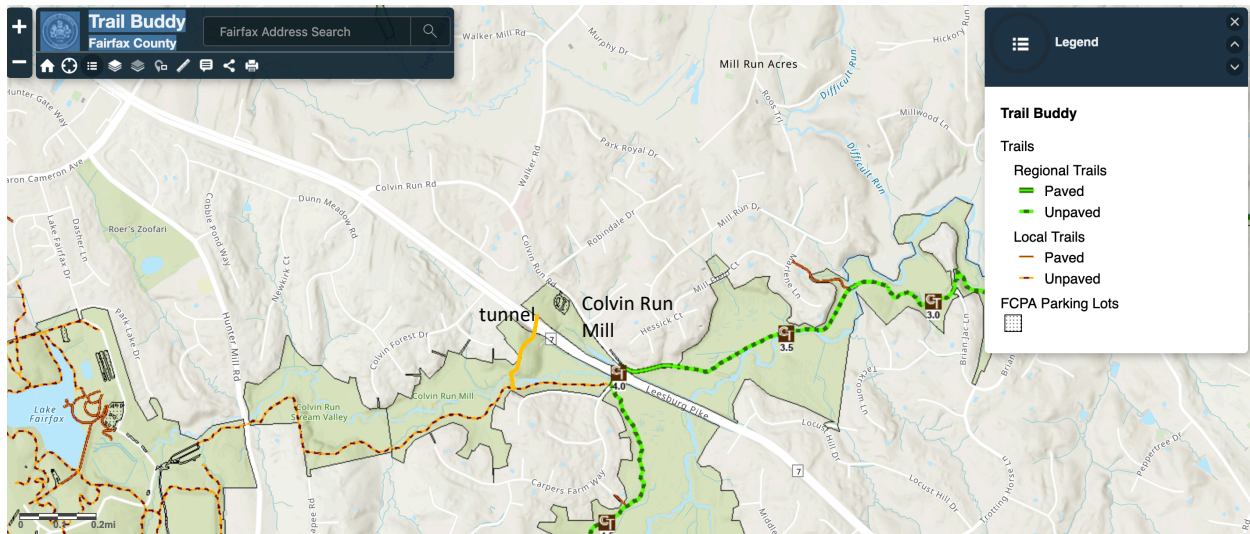
Now the request.

In 2014 the Fairfax County Park Authority had the brilliant idea for a pedestrian passageway under Route 7 as part of the widening of Leesburg Pike. About half of Colvin Run Mill Park's 67 acres are on the southside: the old quarries, mill dam and pond, wetlands, natural beauty and of course the park's namesake: Colvin Run.

The \$1.5 million tunnel is in place and road construction is moving toward completion. Barring unforeseen developments, I understand the project might be completed by the end of the year.



Yet, there is no trail on the south side of the tunnel (see yellow line in map below) for safe and easy access to the park's sites and the Rails to River Trail that goes to Lake Fairfax and the Gerry Connelly Cross County Trail. A tunnel to nowhere!! Or worse, hikers will bushwhack their way through protected wetlands to explore the very attractive tunnel.



Supervisor Foust considers the trail a priority. Supervisor Alcorn has walked the proposed trail and agrees it should be built.

After several years of prodding, this year the Park Authority found \$200,000 for preliminary work. It has issued a task order to map the wetlands and a trail alignment and study the hydrology of Colvin Run to determine a place for a crossing. Results are expected this month. Another task order will be issued for design and permitting. Steps in the right direction. More needs to be done.

Funds have not been allocated for the actual construction of the 1,000-foot trail. For the trail to be built with signs in place as soon as possible after the Route 7 widening project is completed, funds from the Carryover Appropriation should be allocated for building the trail. Until the preliminary work is completed there may be some uncertainty about the precise costs. Since the Park Authority has extensive experience with trail building, perhaps they could provide a maximum estimate for the allocation, then re-allocate any unused funds.



To conclude:

Please adopt the proposed Carryover Appropriation for park funding.

Please allocate funds to build a trail on the south side of Route 7 and avoid a costly tunnel to nowhere!

Thank you for your kind attention.