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ACTIVE WILLIAMSBURG ALLIANCE

PO Box 203 • WILLIAMSBURG, VA 23187-0203 • (757) 871-8639 • FAX (757) 259-2372

FEB 27 2008

February 1, 2008

Dear Mr. Wanner and James City County Supervisors:

The Active Williamsburg Alliance was established to represent the interests of residents of James City County who desire safe access from their homes to parks, schools, shops and attractions in our County. Safe ways to bike, run and walk help our County meet its "strategic pathway" goals of increasing healthy activity and move us toward the County's transportation goal of truly becoming a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly community.

We applaud the steps the Board of Supervisors and the County staff have taken in acquiring key pieces of property for our exceptional park system, and in acquiring easements for greenway trails across the County. Heavy use of the Virginia Capital Trail and the sharp increase in biking, walking and running in the County show the public demand for these facilities, confirming resident surveys conducted for Comprehensive Plan revisions which for years have shown the high level of interest of residents for a functional system of trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes.

The AWA calls on the Board of Supervisors to look for innovative ways to finance a serious update in Greenways planning, and progress in its rapid implementation. In particular, we call for the County to:

1. Increase the CIT budget beyond its symbolic level, to a minimum of \$250,000 a year (the original projection in the Greenways Master Plan), preferably adjusted for inflation and increased construction costs;
2. Coordinate the use of existing but unused easements from proffers, site plans, and JCSA corridors to create new gravel and asphalted routes connecting neighborhoods to shops and schools (see the many 2002 Comprehensive Plan items supporting this goal);
3. Consider how to use currently earmarked Greenspace and Purchase of Development Rights funds to buy easements across the fronts, backs, or along the sides of key properties to create a network of functional and safe sidewalks, bike paths, or gravel paths connecting our residents and local facilities, perhaps supporting new buffer requirements under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act;
4. Provide adequate maintenance and long-term management funds for County greenways (such as the new Warhill trail); and
5. Aggressively seek innovative finance such as grants from national and state private foundation and government funds such as Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to Schools, the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation, Rails-to-Trails, and so on.

We recognize the numerous demands on limited resources, but this is an investment that has significant benefits to the County's quality of life, including the health of our citizens, the health of our environment, and the great potential to attract tourists and new businesses to the County. We stand ready to assist the County in educating residents and discussing the value of greenways in their neighborhoods, and in assisting staff and County Supervisors in visioning and planning an updated greenways plan and in providing citizens' voices in negotiations with developers, VDOT, and private foundations.

The AWA was a leader in educating the public and supporting the 2005 bond issue, which included \$1.5 million for greenways trails as part of Parks and Recreation department improvements, which passed with 78% approval from County voters. Most recently, we appreciate the role of those funds in making possible the spurs from the Virginia Capital Trail into populated areas, and look forward to the current use of the remainder of those funds to link the Five Forks area and Clara Byrd Elementary School to the Virginia Capital Trail. These improvements will reach many residents, improve quality of life in these neighborhoods, and their usage will be great. Such trails will eventually relieve traffic strain on county roads at key choke points such as around schools at drop-off and dismissal times.

However with that spur completed, the bond funds will be entirely depleted, and a functional system of trails is just begun. The County's quite visionary Greenways Master Plan was drafted in 2001 and approved by this Board, but it has never been funded at a level that would allow any significant forward progress: year after year the \$50,000 for CIT budget support for this program is entirely inadequate for even beginning to address the plan's goals. New funding is needed for improving accessibility and safety in our County.

We appreciate your attention to the safe passage of children and adults seeking to experience James City County outside their cars for health, community, and environmental reasons. Our community will be better for these investments in the future.

Sincerely,

The Active Williamsburg Alliance Board of Directors

Chris DeWitt, President, James City County resident

Tod Allen, Williamsburg Area Bicyclists, James City County resident

Dorothy Geyer, James City County resident

Dave Malmquist, York County resident

Susan Mulholland, James City County resident

Katherine Preston, HTBAC, James City County resident

Timmons Roberts, Colonial Road Runners, James City County resident

Whit Richardson, York County resident

Stephanie Smith, BikeWalk Virginia