

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

D. Hamilton  
NCPC File No. 6550

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## **ANACOSTIA RIVERWALK MULTI-USE TRAIL SECTION 2** West of the Anacostia River, Southeast, Washington D.C.

Submitted by the District of Columbia Department of Transportation

May 26, 2005

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### **Abstract**

The District of Columbia Department of Transportation has submitted plans for Section 2 of the Anacostia Riverwalk. The trail is planned as a multi-use trail for bicycles and pedestrians and would extend along the east and west sides of the Anacostia River from 11<sup>th</sup> Street to the Bladensburg Waterfront Park in Bladensburg, Maryland. The project is the District of Columbia Department of Transportation's (DCDOT) leading Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) project, and is being planned and designed in accordance with the framework plan contained in the AWI. The current proposal is focused on the west side of the Anacostia River.

### **Commission Action Requested by Applicant**

Approval of preliminary and final site development plans pursuant to Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722(b) (1)).

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### **Executive Director's Recommendation**

The Commission

**Approves** the preliminary and final site development plans for the Anacostia Riverwalk Multi-use Trail Section 2, West of the Anacostia River, Southeast, Washington D.C., as shown on NCPC Map File No. 00.00(70.00)41620.

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## BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### Site Description

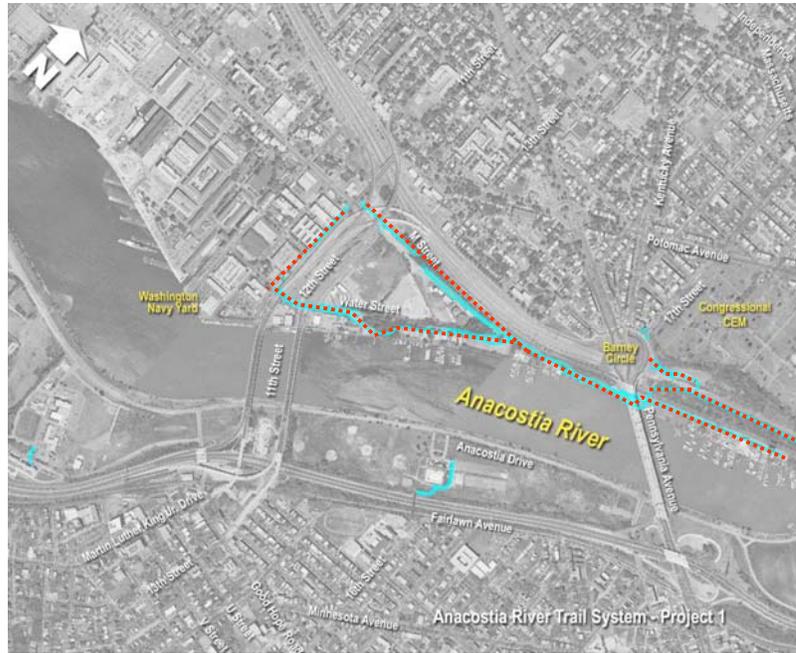
The proposed Riverwalk Multi-use Trail (Trail) and its connecting points would extend along the east side of the Anacostia River from the Washington Navy Yard to Benning Road, and on the west side of the Anacostia River from the Anacostia Naval Station to the Bladensburg trail in Prince George's County, Maryland. The overall Trail is divided into three design sections:

- *Section 1* – Includes all portions of the trail east of the Anacostia River from the Anacostia Naval Station at the south end to Benning Road at the north.
- *Section 2* – Includes all portions of the trail west of the Anacostia River from the Washington Navy Yard at the south to the Benning Road at the north.
- *Section 3* – Includes all portions of the trail east of the Anacostia River from Benning Road to the Bladensburg Trail in Prince George's County, Maryland.

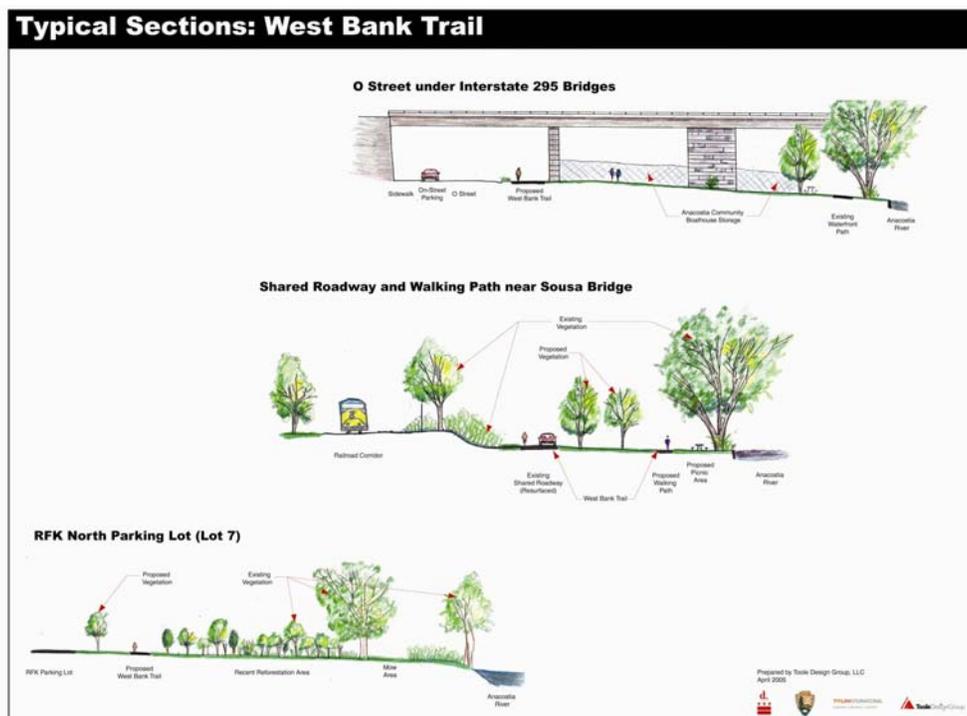
The current proposal submitted for Commission review and preliminary and final approval is design Section 2. As mentioned, this section includes all portions of the trail on the west side of the Anacostia River from the Washington Navy Yard on the south to Benning Road on the north.



Northern portion of Section 2



Southern portion of Section 2



Typical sections for Section 2

## Background

The AWI was conceived in the Commission's Legacy Plan of 1997. Legacy called for making greater use of the Anacostia River's waterfronts and shorelines and connecting these areas to the adjacent surrounding communities and neighborhoods. The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and convenient means for park visitors to access the Anacostia waterfront and enjoy Anacostia Park. As such, it is intended that the proposed project consist of a trail system that would provide bicyclists and pedestrians with:

- Nearly continuous access to the east side of the river from South Capitol Street to the Bladensburg Trail in Maryland (seven miles)
- Continuous access to the west side of the river from 11<sup>th</sup> Street to Benning Road (three miles).
- Safe and convenient access points to enter the Park from the surrounding neighborhoods.

The proposed trail system is a key component of the AWI, which is the framework plan for revitalizing the District's waterfront areas. The AWI is the product of coordination between federal and local agencies to cooperatively develop a vision for the waterfront. Overall, the AWI would eventually provide a comprehensive 48-mile trail system that includes approximately 20 miles of trails along waterfront areas within the District of Columbia.

There are few trails along the Anacostia that allow park users to walk or ride from one area of the Anacostia Park to another. On a larger scale, multiple regional trails that include the Bladensburg Trail, the Potomac Heritage Scenic Trail, Rock Creek Trails, Mount Vernon Trail, Anacostia River Tributary Trails, Anacostia Greenway, Suitland Parkway Trail, and Fort Circle Trails surround and approach the Anacostia Park area. Although Anacostia Park's 1200 acres offer passive and active recreation, they do not offer extended biking and walking opportunities, nor is it fully accessible from the surrounding communities.

## PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

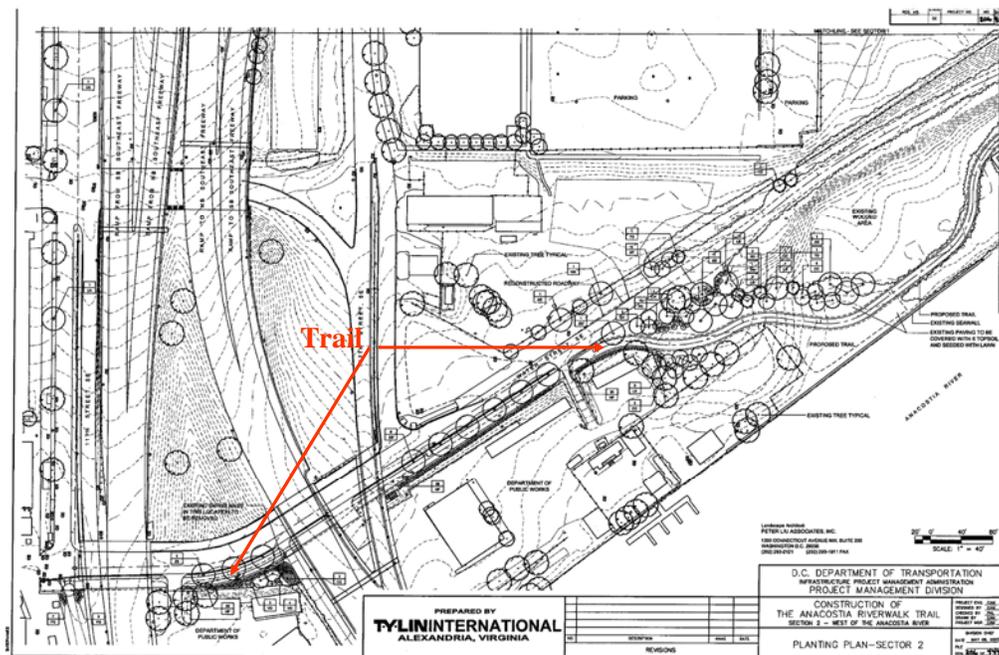
At its January 6, 2005 meeting, the Commission approved the concept site development plans for the Anacostia Riverwalk Multi-use Trail. The Commission also commended the District of Columbia Department of Transportation for the extensive coordination and consultation efforts in developing federal and local partnerships in creating a unified vision for the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative and Anacostia Riverwalk Multi-use Trail. The Commission also encouraged the National Park Service to use low impact construction techniques when constructing the trail. Finally, the Commission reminded the District of Columbia Office of Planning that the Commission was eagerly awaiting the submission of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative prior to the submission of the preliminary and final plans for the Anacostia Riverwalk Multi-use Trail.

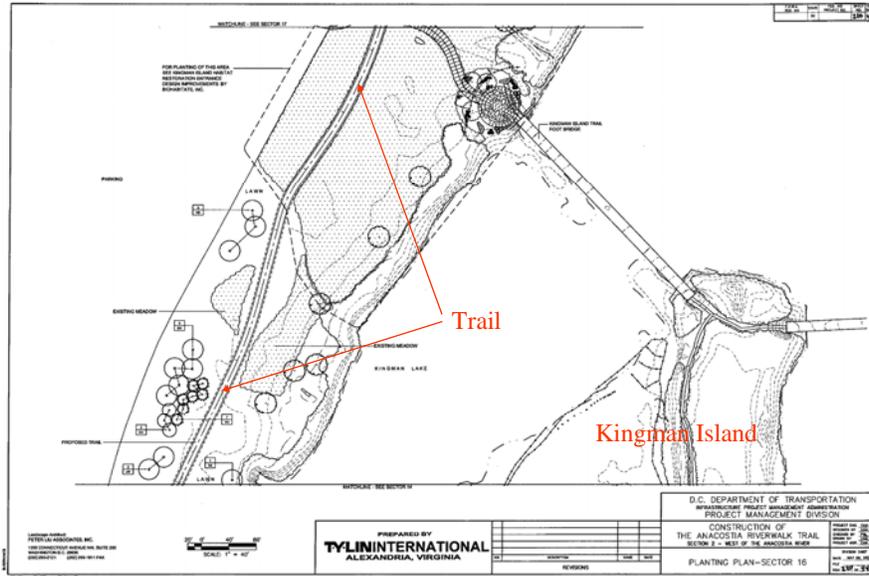
## Proposal

The preliminary and final site development plans for Section #2 would begin at the intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> and Water Streets SE, near the entrance to the Washington Navy Yard. In this area, the Trail alignment would parallel and be constructed on the south side of Water Street. It would

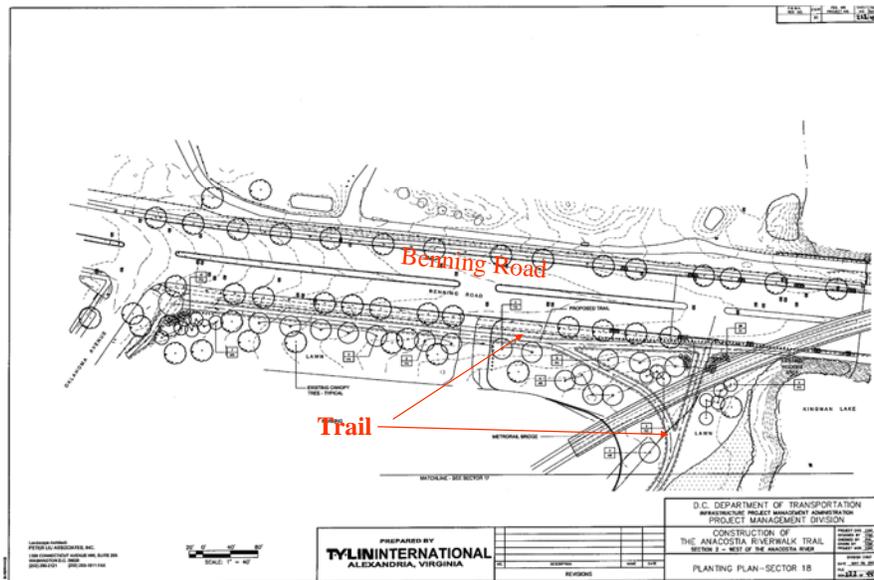
continue and move southward away from Water Street and closely parallel the existing vegetation in the areas between the Eastern Power Boat Club and the District Yacht Club. The trail would primarily be constructed on National Park Service park land and DCDOT's rights-of-way and routed primarily through Anacostia Park. In the vicinity of RFK Stadium, the trail would run parallel to and on sections of the RFK service road, eventually connecting to Benning Road on the north. The trail would include circular wayside resting and orientation areas. These areas would be approximately 30 feet in diameter and include benches, bike racks, interpretive signs, and orientation maps. Landscaping would be provided throughout the trail system and include maintaining and enhancing existing planted areas by adding grasses, shrub masses, canopy trees, evergreen trees, and ornamental trees.

Portion of trail in vicinity of Washington Navy Yard





Trail connection at Benning Road



### PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff is pleased with the overall evolution of the site development plans for the Anacostia Riverwalk Multi-Use Trail. The idea of increasing use of the Anacostia River and shoreline, providing better local and regional access to the shoreline, and connecting Anacostia Park to the larger Regional Park and trail system are all principles and policies contained in the Commission's Legacy Plan. The final plans appear to seamlessly insert the trail into the fabric

of the shoreline environment. The selection of environmentally sensitive alignments for the Trail, as indicated in design Section #2:

- Provides for an overall trail system that links with the larger trail system.
- Provides connectivity to local communities, transportation infrastructure, and local and regional trails.
- Minimizes potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Emphasizes and strengthens desired view sheds from the Trail.
- Provides closer proximity to the Anacostia River.
- Provides improved access to important park features, including recreational facilities and areas of natural and cultural interests.

Staff supports the Anacostia Riverwalk project. Constructing this project will meet the goals established in the NCPC *Extending the Legacy Plan* as well as the AWI, in which NCPC is a partner.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan

The proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The Parks and Open Space Element states that the federal government should:

- Promote public access along the waterfront, including waterfronts on military and other properties when security considerations will permit
- Plan, complete and maintain connection between public parks and open spaces.
- Plan for new parks as part of the park system of the region.
- Link open space along the waterfront to provide a continuous public open space system.
- Develop the banks of the Anacostia River as a high-quality urban park with a mix of active and passive recreational opportunities.
- Ensure that Anacostia Park functions as a regional recreational resource, emphasizing the park's special riverside, ecological, and scenic qualities and character.

The proposal is consistent with all of the above policies.

In addition, final plans are also consistent with policies contained in other Master Plan documents relating to enhancing access to Anacostia Park, the Anacostia River, and providing a continuous trail system along the Anacostia River. They include:

- District of Columbia Comprehensive Plan.
- The Anacostia Park General Management Plan.
- Anacostia Waterfront Initiative Framework Plan.
- Priorities 2000: Metropolitan Washington Greenways.
- Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
- East of the River Initiative.

## CONSULTATION

Regarding the previous Commission comment regarding submission of the overall AWI plan prior to submission of the preliminary and final plans for the Riverwalk Multi-use Trail, staff still recommends approval. The Commission is represented on the Anacostia Waterfront Corporation's (AWC) Board and NCPC has been participating in the overall development of the AWC. Additionally, the Council of the District of Columbia has already approved the AWI plan and the AWC advises that the plan will be submitted for Commission review at its July 7, 2005 meeting.

The plans have been extensively coordinated with many federal and local agencies. NCPC is a partner with the District and a Memorandum of Understanding has been developed with the following agencies: General Services Administration; the Government of the District of Columbia; the Office of Management and Budget; Naval District of Washington; Military District of Washington; Commanding Officer Marine Barracks Washington; U. S. Department of Labor; U.S. Department of Transportation; National Park Service; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Environmental Protection Agency; District of Columbia Housing Authority; Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; District of Columbia Sports and Entertainment Commission; District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority; National Arboretum of the United States Department of Agriculture; and U. S. Small Business Administration.

### Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal on May 11, 2005. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies represented. The participating agencies were: NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the Fire Department, the General Services Administration, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### National Environmental Policy Act

The project plans as developed, have been submitted to NCPC from the District of Columbia Department of Transportation. As a District of Columbia agency project, outside of the central area of the District, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) does not apply to the proposed construction. However, land use permits on federal property locations on which the Riverwalk may be located would be necessary federal actions that are subject to NEPA review by the responsible federal landholder. NCPC review criteria within the Commission's environmental procedures, however, Categorical Excludes minor permitting actions.

The District of Columbia has reviewed the action and determined that it qualifies as an exempted action in accordance with the implementing rules of the District of Columbia Environmental Policy Act of 1989.

### Historic Preservation Act

NPS is the lead agency for NHPA. NPS and its team have begun early consultation with the District of Columbia and Maryland State Historic Preservation Offices (DC SHPO and MD SHPO) on the identification of cultural resources—both historic structures and archaeological sites. DDOT as the applicant has also been working directly with the DC SHPO.

NPS identified 4 or possibly 5 known archaeological sites that would be impacted by construction activity. These sites are located on the east bank roughly between 11<sup>th</sup> Street, SE and Benning Road, SE. Archaeological sites are generally located on upper terraces along the Anacostia River, mostly at the mouths of tributary streams. Most known sites are situated on the east bank of the river rather than the west bank, which is marshy. Although both sides of the river have had extensive grading and filling, the west bank has been more extensively disturbed through efforts to reclaim the extensive marshlands.

The DC SHPO confirms that it is working in concert with the applicants to develop a plan for data recovery of any National Register-eligible sites that are disturbed. NCPC has an advisory role in this project; Section 106 consultation is ongoing and must be concluded prior to implementation of the project.