

W&OD Trail Lighting Project

Frequently Asked Questions:

Updated: June 12, 2024

Funding and Programming:

- 1) Why was the project added to the CIP? Why was it not brought to the public?**
 - a. The Town Council was seeking strategies to advance the Legacy Leesburg Town Plan which seeks to allow more people to walk and bike to and from the downtown area.
- 2) If the project was added to the CIP in June 2020, what has the Town done with the project since?**
 - a. The Town added the project to the CIP in 2020 to budget money for the study of it, however, the procurement of a consultant to perform the study has been delayed until this fiscal year 2024 (July 2024). The study began in late 2023/early 2024 and will be complete by the end of 2024.
- 3) Since the project is in the CIP, is this a done-deal?**
 - a. No, this project is not guaranteed to be constructed. The Town staff is currently only funded to bring the project to 30% design plans. At that time, additional public outreach will be conducted to receive input on the preliminary design, and it will be brought back to the Town Council for an endorsement. Only if staff receives an endorsement from the Council will the project proceed into final design and construction.
- 4) Why is Town spending money to enhance NOVA Parks property?**
 - a. Typically, NOVA Parks does not pay for the installation of lights on the trail, however, they do allow local jurisdictions to add them to the trail if they pay for it.

Project Purpose and Goals:

- 5) What do you mean that the project enhances safety?**
 - a. Expanding the trail hours during non-daylight hours gives people an additional option for a pedestrian route to/from downtown that crosses less streets, has more simple intersections with less turning vehicles, has less driveway crossings and has greater visibility than many other routes to/from downtown.
 - b. Trail user interactions would be safer since users, especially bicyclists, would be able to see pedestrians (sometimes without lights) sooner, improving safety.
 - c. While we do not have clear data that there would be a benefit in security, many trail users feel more secure with lights, also people would be able to see illegitimate activity on the trail at night easier and report it to the police, if necessary.
- 6) Is the purpose of this project to accommodate transportation users, or recreational users of the trail?**
 - a. It is often difficult to differentiate between transportation trips and recreational trips for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, especially if multiple stops are made along the way. Thus, Town staff does not make a distinction between the different trip purposes. The goal of the project is to allow access to the trail beyond sunrise-to-sunset hours and enhance the users' feel of the trail while operating during those hours.

Public Input:

- 7) It is stated that residents will have the opportunity for input on the project. What will this input be in the form of, and when will this input occur?**
 - a. After a couple design options are selected, it is anticipated that the project manager may host a few small meetings with residents along various sections of the trail to gain their input on the proposed designs.
 - b. A second public meeting will be held closer to the end of 2024. This meeting is intended to gather input on the selected conceptual design. At this meeting residents will gain a better understanding of where the lights will be installed and how it may impact their property.
 - c. At any time, interested members of the public may email the project manager, Dustin Kuzan, at dkuzan@leesburgva.gov.
- 8) The people that live along the trail will be the most impacted, therefore, the Town should have additional focus on those residents.**
 - a. Town staff recognizes that all projects, whether a road project, a drainage project, or a trail project, will impact surrounding residents. With all projects our goal is to mitigate impacts to all properties that may be impacted, to the greatest extent possible. Town staff will meet with any and all willing residents that may be affected by this project and seek to build strategies to minimize impacts to those residents.
- 9) Have rental properties been notified of the project?**
 - a. Yes, the Town has sent post card notifications of the field survey and the public meeting to residents that may be impacted along the trail, regardless of whether or not they are owners. Each address that has an off-site owner listed on the deed received a notification to the listed address, as well as, a post card addressed to “Current Resident” at the physical address.
- 10) The real challenges and issues are identified in the specifics of the design, which are not able to be reviewed at this time. How can residents be sure we won’t be impacted negatively without something to look at?**
 - a. Before staff returns to the public and the Town Council for an endorsement, we will finalize a few options for conceptual layout and design. At this time, we will have a more detailed design for residents to review and will meet with residents impacted
 - b. The Town will push out updates when these plans are available through the website and through those subscribed to the project. We will also post social media updates to notify the public when we reach this stage.
 - c. The Project Manager will also seek additional methods for residents to better understand the lighting impacts through photos and potential demonstrations so that residents can get a better understanding of the lighting outside of plan sheets.

Trail Use and Operations:

11) When will the lights turn off?

- a. If installed, the lights in the Town of Leesburg would turn off at the same time as similar jurisdictions such as Herndon, Reston and Falls Church. Most of these jurisdictions turn the lights off and close the trail at 9 PM. Reston keeps them on until 10 PM. The Town needs to discuss these hours as part of this project.

12) Would the lights shut off at different times throughout the year?

- a. No, the lights would turn off at the same time throughout the year.

13) Does the trail close from dawn-to-dusk or sunrise-to-sunset?

- a. NOVA Parks is clear about the trail in Loudoun County being closed from sunrise to sunset. This is a narrower window of time than dawn to dusk.

14) People walking on the trail outside of sunrise and sunset are trespassing on the trail.

- a. This is true today. If lights are installed as part of this project those operating hours would be extended to correspond to when the lights are on.

15) Have there been concerns with safety on the trail at night?

- a. There are no reports of crime on the trail at night in this section.
- b. Most reports have been for crimes such as harassment or groping during daylight hours.
- c. Some residents have reported issues with visibility on the trail in the dark.

16) Do we know how many people are using the trail?

- a. The only data the Town has at this time on trail usage data is from a project conducted in 2018. It counted over 700 trail users during the weekday and 1,800 during Saturday.
- b. These are pre-pandemic numbers, so we expect these numbers have increased, however, no matter the number of users it will not influence this project.

17) Some bicyclists and e-bike users ride the trail too fast to be safe.

- a. While we are not denying this behavior may occur on the trail, the focus of this project is to install lighting and we will not improve other features of the trail that may slow trail users down.
- b. The installation of lights would allow people to see each other at further distances during non-daylight hours and may help with this issue.

Lighting Design:

18) What will the lights look like? What will the type of light be? What can I use as a reference?

- a. There are hundreds of options for potential lighting. What they look like will depend on several factors:
 - i. Will we install a new pole or connect it to an existing utility pole?
 - ii. Is the light fixture Dark Sky approved?
 - iii. Is the fixture in the historic area, are the lights approved by the Board of Architectural Review?
 - iv. Is there significant resident opposition to a certain fixture type.
- b. Examples of similar lights will be used to describe the proposed lights as part of the next round of public review.

19) Can this project look at advanced lighting features such as Smart Lights?

- a. At this time the project has budgeted only for standard prescheduled lights, however, as part of this project we will study these options further.
- b. One concern about smart lights in proximity to residential houses are the inconsistency in lights turning on/off as people or animals pass by.

20) Could different lights be used along different parts of the trail?

- a. As part of the 30% design process, we will investigate a few different types of lights and determine the best fit based on the context in different sections of the trail.

21) Can we use red light? Can we use blue light?

- a. There are benefits and disadvantages to all colors. At this time, we are unsure which color or temperature the lights will be. The color selected will depend on the placement and frequency of lights, as well as feedback from residents. We will determine this as part of the 30% design submission.

22) There are several nearby examples of lighting designs that impact residents to the point that it disrupts a person's ability to sleep at night or live comfortable in their home due to a light shining through the window. How can I be sure the Town will ensure this type of design is avoided?

- a. One of the goals of this project is to minimize impacts to the surrounding residential properties. Light shining through a bedroom window would be considered a major impact and would be mitigated, if not completely removed. There are many options for lights to be designed so the light doesn't impede on a nearby resident. Once a conceptual design is developed, we will identify impacts of this type and the design team will work to correct or reduce this type of impact. Town staff will work closely with any resident that identifies such an impact so that we may find a better solution. The current intent is to turn the lights off after 9pm.

Additional Design Features:

23) Can we install security poles along the trail, or blinking blue lights?

- a. At this time, the project is not budgeted for this type of technology. This scope would be beyond the focus of this project.

24) What role will landscaping play in this project?

- a. Vegetation may be used as a screening tool to block the lighting from houses or may be used as a physical barrier to deter trespassing from the trail.
- b. The use of vegetation will depend on the need, its placement and rights to install it. The W&OD Trail property is not likely to allow additional plantings that will be in the way of utility maintenance, therefore, we may need to work with private landowners to find opportunities for plantings, however, it is not out of the question for this project.