



Follow up to the Impact of Childhood Obesity of Learning Forum Questions held on March 18, 2010

1. What is Prince George's County doing to improve and connect bike paths in the County?

Major trail development is guided by the Prince George's County Master Plan of Transportation which guides the development of transportation facilities including those for bicycling and walking. There are four primary implementing entities of these facilities in the county: State Highway Administration, Prince George's Department of Public Works & Transportation, M-NCPPC/Department of Parks and Recreation, and private land developers. SHA and DPW&T provide sidewalks and bike facilities including separate bike paths along certain road right-of-ways. Trails that M-NCPPC provides are focused towards recreation including long distance trails located in stream valley parks and former railroad right-of-ways. Lastly, private residential developers are required, at times, to provide trails that either will be dedicated to M-NCPPC or managed by a homeowners association. Regardless of the managing entity, it is the goal to create an interconnected network of trails to residential neighborhoods, employment centers, shopping areas, and parks.

Examples of trails that are largely completed by M-NCPPC include the Anacostia Tributary Trail System, Henson Creek Trail, and WB&A Trail. In addition to completing those trails, work is proceeding to complete the Rhode Island Avenue Trolley and Little Paint Trails. Future projects will focus on completing the Western Branch Trail from Enterprise Park to Watkins Regional Park, the Chesapeake Beach Rail Trail, the Patuxent River Trails, and connecting the Potomac River to the Patuxent River via the Piscataway Creek and Charles Branch Trails. As future residential developments and road improvements occur, efforts will be made to build additional pedestrian and bike facilities to complete the connections to the trails.

Prince George's County has several initiatives aimed at expanding the trails network and improving the walkability of local communities. The County Council approved the *Adopted Master Plan of Transportation (MPOT)* in November 2009. This plan contains a trails, bicycle and pedestrian element that includes recommendations for many new stream valley trails, rail-trails, sidepaths along major roads, and sidewalks. These planned trails will not only provide additional recreational opportunities, but also allow people to walk to area schools, mass transit, parks, and other local destinations.

Some of the major trails in the county include the Anacostia Tributaries Trails Network, the WB&A Trail, and the Henson Creek Trail. The Anacostia Tributaries Trails Network extends over 25 miles along multiple tributaries of the Anacostia River and currently connects to Bladensburg, College Park, and Montgomery County. M-NCPPC is working to extend the Anacostia Tributaries Trails Network both to the south into Washington D.C. and to the north outside the Capital Beltway towards Laurel. The Anacostia River Trail will be extended from Bladensburg Waterfront Park south to Washington D.C., where it will connect to the planned Anacostia Riverwalk. The planned Prince George's Connector Trail will also connect the Northwest Branch Trail with the Metropolitan Branch Trail in Washington D.C. In addition to linking two major trail systems, this trail will also provide access to the West Hyattsville Metro. Major design work has been completed for both trails and M-NCPPC is currently working to obtain the necessary permits and easements for construction.

M-NCPPC is also working with the State Highway Administration, the Department of Public Works and Transportation and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center to extend the Paint Branch Trail outside the Capital Beltway. This trail extension will provide a connection from the existing Paint Branch Trail at Cherry Hill Road with the existing Little Paint Branch Trail at Sellman Road. By providing these extensions to the Anacostia Tributaries Trails Network to both the north and the south, M-NCPPC will soon complete an entirely off-road park trail from just south of Laurel to Washington, D.C. as originally proposed in the 2001 *Approved Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Management Plan*.

M-NCPPC also recently completed an extension of the WB&A Trail to the Patuxent River. This was in anticipation of the ultimate extension of this major rail-trail across the Patuxent River and into Anne Arundel County, where it will connect to the Anne Arundel County portion of the WB&A Trail, as well as the B&A Trail and the BWI Trail. Upon its completion into Anne Arundel County, the WB&A Trail may ultimately serve as a segment of the nationally significant East Coast Greenway.

In June 2009 M-NCPPC and the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project officially opened the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trail. This trail provides access between Alexandria and the Mount Vernon Trail and Prince George's County, National Harbor and the Potomac Heritage Trail On-Road Bicycle Route. This trail provides a pedestrian and bicycle connection across the Potomac River, as well as spectacular views into Washington D.C. The *Adopted Master Plan of Transportation (MPOT)* recommends improvements along Oxon Hill Road, Fort Foote Road and other area roads to provide better bicycle and pedestrian access to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Trail. These improvements will also enhance access to the existing Henson Creek Trail.

M-NCPPC also works to ensure that trails are provided as part of new developments. Many new developments incorporate both a comprehensive sidewalk network and internal neighborhood trail connections. These not only provide recreational opportunities, but also ensure that new communities allow residents to walk to nearby schools, parks, and adjacent

neighborhoods. Segments of master plan trails can also be completed through development applications. In recent years, trails have been constructed along Folly Branch, Piscataway Creek, and Collington Branch as part of development applications.

Finally, the *Adopted Master Plan of Transportation (MPOT)* includes a “complete streets” section that requires that road improvements and new road construction accommodate bicycles and pedestrians in addition to motor vehicles. Roads that accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists provide residents with the opportunity to walk for recreation, to parks and schools, and for some transportation trips. It also provides people with the opportunity to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle, which is a key factor in combating childhood obesity and other health issues. Fred Shaffer of the Prince George’s County Planning Department can be contacted at either 301-952-3661 or fred.shaffer@ppd.mncppc.org regarding any questions about planned trails in Prince George’s County or ongoing trail projects.

It’s great there are many organizations that are proactive in reducing and preventing childhood obesity. Park and Planning has a department for special needs fitness programs. What other organizations in the County are proactive in fitness and nutrition programs for obese and overweight children?

Prince George’s County Health Department
Prince George’s County – Nutrition Council
Strategic Community Services, Inc.
Port Towns Youth Council – Diabetes focus

2. Since Obesity is prevalent in both adults and children, are joint programs available for parents and kids together?

The Department of Parks and Recreation’s Spring GUIDE offers an array of courses/classes such as Aerobics, Bench Step, Carribean Dance, Hula Hoop, Kickboxing, Cardio Fit, Fitness Boot Camp, Spinning, Hip-Hop Cardio, Pilates, Step Aerobics, Tai Chi, Weight Training, Yoga, and Zumba classes for both teens and adults. Additionally, we offer some Ice Skating and Tennis classes that are for ages 13 & up—and Tucker Rd. offers Beginners Mixed Age Hockey for anyone over age 5! You can also take Roller Skating at Good Luck Community Center—ages 5 & up. And Central Area is offering a Family Walking program for ages 2 & up. This summer we are offering free aquatics programs. Check out our website for new and upcoming health and wellness programs and events.

3. Is Prince George’s County embracing any countywide initiative to raise awareness about the problem of childhood obesity and solutions?

Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) Wellness Policy was developed by the Prince George’s County School Health Council and implemented in 2006. Members of the Prince George’s County School Health Council include; School board member, school administrators, school food services staff, health education supervisor, health services supervisor, Employee wellness staff, physical education supervisor, local health department staff, representatives from parent and other community members. The policy is committed to healthy schools and lifestyles, providing a total learning environment that enhances the development of lifelong healthy habits in wellness, nutrition and regular physical activity. To that end PGCPS implemented the Healthy Schools Program, a partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.

Other programs addressing the issue of childhood obesity in schools include, School Nurses Childhood Obesity Prevention Education S.C.O.P.E., Team Nutrition and Take 10.

4. Are there programs currently in Prince George's County schools that include incentive programs, competitions, or workshops to promote healthier lifestyles for our young people in the classroom and at home?

The Healthy Schools program awards bronze, silver and gold recognition for meeting the criteria in all 8 components of the program. This is a national recognition. In addition, each school can determine what activities, workshops and health related programs they would like to implement. Activities at many schools have included health fairs, taking parents to the grocery store to read food labels and prepare nutritious meals, students making healthy food posters and participating in a 2 minute exercise activity during the morning announcements.

5. Are such programs located in all schools or are school programs to fight childhood obesity targeted for specific locations?

All Prince George's County Schools will be participating in The Healthy Schools program in the 2010/2011 school year. The first two cohorts of schools are currently participating in the Healthy Schools program.

6. What progress has been made in the advancement of afterschool fitness programs?

As obesity continues to plague County youth, the Department of Parks and Recreation has continued to incorporate many activities into our after-school programs that give youth the tools needed to combat this epidemic. A mandate of healthy snacks has been incorporated into these programs. In addition to the healthy snacks provided, our vending machines have been stocked with healthy snack options. A fitness component has also been added to after-school programs which encourage youth to engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

We continue to partner with local agencies that educate youth on fitness and nutrition. In partnership with the Girl Scouts, leaders and volunteers we provide health, nutrition, and science-based programs for girls and boys at several of our after-school programs.

7. What's being done to improve the quality of school lunch offerings to include healthier menu choices?

Although we understand the "perception" that school lunch is low quality and unhealthy, nothing could be further from the truth in Prince George's County. Prince George's County Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services Lunch Program leads the state of Maryland in lunch participation. Participation by student customers is a key indicator of quality.

We work every day to improve the quality and the nutritional integrity of school meals. We are happy to compare our meals to any school district in the country.

Prince George's County Public Schools has a number of vendors who process food to our specifications. Specifications are developed based on nutritional integrity and student taste test panels.

Food and Nutrition Services is amongst the leaders in the country in the nutritional integrity of our meals. We exceed all state and federal requirements. We challenge you to find a school district that has responsible levels lower than ours of fat, saturated fat, and sodium.

8. Is there any legislative support to assist vendors in reducing cost for healthier food choices?

Several Maryland General Assembly Delegates are working to develop access to healthier foods, and menu labeling within Prince Georges. Regarding purchasing costs, this issue should be raised with the purchasing office which is affiliated with the Prince George's County – Nutrition Council.

9. What are the current Physical Education and recess requirements for Prince George's County Public Schools? Are there plans to increase those requirements to enhance the physical activity of our children?

Physical Education requirements for PGCPS are as follows:

- High School graduation requirement is .5 Your personal fitness 1
- Middle School - must have Physical Education each year; the recommendation is a semester
- Elementary School – must have each year. Recommendation is Pre-K – grade 3, 20 minutes. Grades 4-6, 30 minutes

It has been recommended to increase the days and amount of time for physical education

10. What is the County's position on the Child Nutrition Re-authorization Act?

The Health Department supports and provides services through the WIC funding. Additionally it supports and has knowledge of several federal programs to alleviate child and adult hunger 12 months a year. The Health Department can be contacted about WIC services. Information about childhood and adult hunger mitigation programming can be gotten through the WIC office.

11. What is being done in Prince George's County to assist families who cannot afford the healthy alternatives available in their local supermarkets?

The Health Department staff has been investigating working with local farmer's markets to work to bring costs down within the community and make healthier alternatives available. The Kellogg's Foundation funded Community Health Initiative is considering the development of an "urban vegetable farm."

12. What course offerings and degree programs are currently available on nutrition at the Prince George's Community College?

The Prince George's Community College (PGCC) offers a wide array of nutrition courses and programs. The web link connects <http://academic/pgcc.edu/nutrition/> directly to the courses and program information, providing a comprehensive description of the courses and programs. This information can be easily accessed via the web link.