



THE MOUNT VERNON SIERRAN

The Newsletter of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club September/October 2002

Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

GROUP MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

For information on these meetings, contact Pat Soriano at psoriano79@hotmail.com or 703-671-3129.

September 10, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Topic: Air Quality and Sprawl in the Washington Region

Thirty years after the Clean Air Act was passed, our region still violates federal air quality standards. Why? Sprawl development means we drive more miles, emitting more pollution. Join us for the short film "Red Alert" followed by a panel discussion about the air pollution-sprawl connection in our area. **INVITED SPEAKERS:** DR. RONALD KARPICK, volunteer with the American Lung Association of Virginia, CHRIS ZIMMERMAN, Chair, Arlington Board of Supervisors, and STEWART SCHWARTZ, Coalition for Smarter Growth.

October 8, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Topic: The Sales Tax Hike — Will it Mean More Sprawl?

Join STEWART SCHWARTZ, Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, for a discussion of the upcoming sales tax referendum. Without smarter growth, pouring billions of dollars into transportation won't solve our traffic problems. Find out why the Coalition and Sierra Club are raising questions about the sales tax, why it will lead to more sprawl, and what we can do to promote smarter growth and better transportation solutions in the DC metro area.

November 12, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Topic: Four Mile Run

Four Mile Run is a nine-mile long urban stream that drains its Northern Virginia valley with 200,000 residents—adjacent to Washington, DC. The history, current resources and problems, and future possibilities for revival of this urban stream can be generalized as the story of thousands of urban streams throughout North America. Jim Fowler, the wildlife wrangler of Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom, grew up along Four Mile Run in the 1930s, and developed his love for the natural world there. Fowler returns to his home for the first time since 1946 to host this film and to provide a context for viewers to appreciate and seek to revive these abused, piped, channelized, and polluted urban waterways. The stream's surprising history and the bold plans for its future provide hope that our urban streams can be revived.

December 11, Wednesday, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. — 2002 Holiday Party and Silent Auction at the Shirlington Community Center in Arlington. If you would be interested in learning more or assisting in our Silent Auction, please contact Cheryl Zebrowski, Silent Auction Chair at jzzebrowski@worldnet.att.com.

Group ExCom Meetings

September 19, Thursday 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

In addition to going over routine MVG business, your volun-

Sierra Club Opposes The Referendum to Increase the Sales Tax for Transportation Projects

by **Andrew Nicholls**, Group Conservation Chair and **Bruce Parker**, Virginia Chapter Chair



When you go to the polling booth on November 5, vote "no" on the sales tax referendum to fund Northern Virginia transportation projects. The Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club is joining forces with the Piedmont Environmental Council, the Coalition for Smarter Growth and the Virginia League of Conservation Voters in a campaign to convince voters that a "no" vote on the referendum is a "yes" vote for both smart growth and protecting Northern Virginia's environment.

What are the "big" environmental challenges in northern Virginia? Two of the major issues are unhealthy air quality and the loss of open space and natural habitat to low-density, sprawling development. How will a tax referendum largely focused on road enhancements

and additions, instead of transit, affect each of these issues? Let's keep in mind that money is always scarce; if we spend money on roads, there's less money for transit.

AIR QUALITY. This has been a very hot summer, and the Washington metropolitan area has serious problems with ground level ozone pollution. EPA classifies this region as "nonattainment" for ozone, or "smog." That's why we've already had 8 "code red" days this year, the most since 1993, and the summer isn't over. (Code red is described as "unhealthy" air.) Ozone is formed when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants and other sources react chemically in sunlight. In our area, the principal culprit is the car. When inhaled, even at very low levels, ozone causes a number of respiratory

continued on page 7

MVG Member Survey: Results Are In!

by **Pat Soriano**, Group Chair

Ranked by importance:

1. Preservation of presently unprotected large tracts of land for open space
2. Protect stream habitats and improving local water quality in streams raining into the potomac
3. Clean up to area-protected space, parklands, streams and rivers
4. Improve (or least half the decline) of air quality in the metro area, including preventing large power plants near metro areas
5. Expand the Metro rail system, including development of the Purple Line
6. Protect remaining green habitat along the Potomac River from development

While we did not receive an overwhelming response to the survey in our last newsletter, even the small percentage of those of you that did respond was valuable to us. First of all, as shown in the listing to the left, the responses helped to confirm the priorities we on the MVG ExCom have long considered important. For example, since we have limited resources (time and active volunteers), we believe it is more worthwhile for us to devote greater or long-term resources to an issue such as the Lorton land swap than to oppose a Wal-Mart along a highly developed commercial highway. Note that survey respondents ranked the preservation of large tracts of land among the top two choices in terms of importance. In contrast, the preservation of small tracts of land in residential and commercial areas ranked 13th out of 15 choices. The survey also suggests that we should continue

continued on page 8

MOUNT VERNON GROUP Leadership

Pat Soriano

Chair/Treasurer
5405 Barrister Place
Alexandria, VA 22304-1949
(H) 703/671-3129
(W) 202/728-5878
psoriano79@hotmail.com

Andrew Nicholls

Conservation Vice-Chair
Alternate Del. to the Chapter
6914 Farragut Ave
Falls Church, VA 22042-1941
(H) 703/536-5047
(W) 202/646-5238

Robert Swennes

Secretary
6101 N. 22nd Street
Arlington, VA 22205-2103
(H) 703/532-6101
robertswennes@hotmail.com

Shannon Sullivan

Political Chair
7506 Hogarth Street
Springfield, VA 22151-2915
(H) 703-941-9059
(W) 703-556-6831
Sullivan@merrittgrp.com

John Koch

Membership Chair
Delegate to the Chapter
2905 Farm Road
Alexandria, VA 22302-2411
(H) 703/684-6849
(W) 202/720-4396
jandrkoch@comcast.net

Terri Lamb

Programs / Socials Chair
2818 Summerfield Rd
Falls Church, VA 22042
(H) 703/538-6065
terri.lamb@cox.net

Bruce Parker

Chair, Virginia Chapter
827 Fontaine Street
Alexandria, VA 22302-3610
(H) 703/549-5792
(W) 703/527-1260
(Fax) 703/527-2527
bruce@chesdata.com

John Powers

5903 Mount Eagle Drive
#1509
Alexandria, VA 22303-2533
(H) 703/317-9298
(Fax) 703/317-2175
jrpowers@us.net

Patrick Eddington

3001 Park Center Drive, #212
Alexandria, VA 22302
(H) 703/671-0295
eddington@mindspring.com

NON-EXCOM CONTRIBUTORS

George Lamb
Volunteer Coordinator
Vice Chair, Virginia Chapter
2818 Summerfield Rd
Falls Church, VA 22042-2035
(H) 703/538-6065
EMAIL: gwl@cox.net

Bill L'Hommedieu

Newsletter Editor
4013 N. 18th Road
Arlington, VA 22207-3006
(H) 703/527-4690
lhommedcom2@aol.com

Ro Pauline

Calendars Chair
8316 Tobin Rd, #12
Annandale, VA 22003-6835
(H) 703/876-2879
mzettler@mindspring.com

Scott Sarratt

Webmaster
4510 Mullen Lane
Annandale, Va. 22003-
(H) 703-425-3276
ssarratt@yahoo.com

Cheryl Zebrowski

Silent Auction Chair
2458 Garnett Drive
Alexandria, VA 22311-4908
703/824-3676
jzzebrowski@worldnet.att.com

Great Falls Group

Roger Diedrich, Chair
3322 Prince William Dr.
Fairfax VA 22031
(H) 703/352-2410
rdiedrich@netzero.net

Mid-Atlantic Field Office

Elise Annunziata
Senior Regional
Representative
200 N. Glebe Street,
Suite 905,
Arlington, Va., 22203
(W) 703/312-0533
elise.annunziata@sierraclub.org

The Mount Vernon Sierran welcomes articles, news releases, first-person experiences, poetry, photos and artwork. We reserve the right to edit all contributions for clarity, style, and length. Submissions are preferred in electronic format pasted into emails or as attachments. Photos can be scanned and emailed as JPEG files or mailed to the editor. Please contact Bill L'Hommedieu (703/527-4690) at 4013 North 18th Road, Arlington, VA 22207 or any Excom member for info. Views expressed by contributors are their own and may not necessarily be those of the Sierra Club. To place advertisements or classifieds in this newsletter, please contact Bill L'Hommedieu at 703/527-4690. The national Sierra Club web page can be found at: www.sierraclub.org. The Mount Vernon Group's web page is: www.sierraclub.org/mvg. The Mount Vernon Sierran is a publication of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club in Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, and Prince William County and is published 4 times a year for all Group members and the local public. Its primary mission is to inform and engage group members in activities for the protection and enjoyment of the local environment.

Notes from The Chair

by Pat Soriano



WHILE THIS ISSUE FOCUSES on the tax referendum, let me tell you about one small environmental success. Last year, we ran an article about the efforts of the non-profit Alexandria Waterfront Alliance along with other groups to preserve a rare piece of riverside open space in Old Town from its development, specifically, the construction of a building and parking lot. We were pleased to learn that in May, the Alexandria City Council voted to maintain 100% of the land as open space. The planned park will contain some hard-surface paths and bench areas, but will otherwise be retained as green space. While this new park, known as the Old Town Yacht Basin, is small at less than one acre, we were able to support its preservation through our newsletter. In fact, we were told that at one or two of the public meetings on this issue, a number of residents cited the article approvingly along with the MVG Sierran for running it. Thanks to those of you that took the time to write the Alexandria City Council about this issue, which has led to this success!

Call for ExCom Candidates

Are you interested in becoming more involved in the Sierra Club? Then consider running for the MVG Executive Committee. Interested candidates should contact Rob Swennes, Election Committee, at robertswennes@hotmail.com.

- Do you want to invest in publicly owned companies that demonstrate concern for our environment?
- Do you want to invest in tax-favored securities of public jurisdictions that are funding environmentally friendly projects?
- Do you need help identifying suitable investments?

If your answer is yes, please contact:
Clement Dinsmore
registered representative, A.G. Edwards and Sons, Inc. Friendship Heights, Washington, D.C., Member SIPC.
202-364-1611

Political Update

by Shannon Sullivan, Group Political Chair

Vermont or Virginia?

I was shocked. There in my in-box were notes from two political candidates asking why the Sierra Club did not endorse their candidacy. "Am I in Vermont or Virginia," I thought?

Times have changed in Northern Virginia. With sprawl, congestion and air pollution on the rise, the Sierra Club endorsement is no longer thought of as a pariah for local politicians, rather a necessity – regardless of party. This new clout is a direct result of aggressive action taken by Sierra Club members who are more vocal about issues such as mass transit and smart growth than ever before. It is your dedication to the environment and your willingness to participate in the political process that increased the importance of Sierra Club endorsements. *Thank you.*

Local Endorsements

While this year is considered an "off" year for elections there are a few local races that have caught the Sierra Club's attention. First, the Club endorsed incumbent Chris Zimmerman of the Arlington County Board. This is Chris' second endorsement and was based on his previous environmental record. Chris has worked tirelessly to bring new mass transit options to the Columbia Pike corridor in order to decrease congestion and was successful in bringing natural gas busses to Arlington. This just scratches the surface of Chris' environmental accomplishments but if you would like further information please check out our press release at: <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/> an-

continued on page 8

Important Contact Information

SIERRA CLUB HEADQUARTERS: 415-977-5500;
Membership info: 415-977-5653; Sierra Club
Legislative Hotline 202-675-2394; National
Headquarters: 85 2nd Street, 2nd floor, San
Francisco, CA 94105-3441; Sierra Club website:
www.sierraclub.org
ADDRESS CHANGES: Sierra Club Member Services,
P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968
U.S. Congress: Capitol switchboard, 202-225-3121;
SENATOR ALLEN'S OFFICE: 202-224-4024, email:
senator@allen.senate.gov; SENATOR WARNER'S
OFFICE: 202-224-2032, email
senator@warner.senate.gov; CONGRESSMAN TOM
DAVIS' OFFICE 202-225-1492, email
tomdavis@hr.house.gov; CONGRESSMAN
MORAN'S OFFICE: 202-225-4376, email
jimmoran@mail.house.gov;
THE WHITE HOUSE: COMMENT line 202-456-6213;
FAX line 202-456-2461, email the President and Vice
President by going to www.whitehouse.gov and
following the email prompts use

Northern Virginia Sales Tax Referendum: What the Legislation Says

by Andrew Nicholls, Group Conservation Chair

During the 2002 Session, the Virginia General Assembly approved two pieces of transportation legislation: a sales tax referendum, and the creation of a Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. The purpose of this article is to provide you with an overview of this legislation, with a minimum of editorial comment. In a related article on page 1, I will explain why the Sierra Club believes urges you to vote "no" on the sales tax referendum.

The first piece of legislation passed mandates a sales tax referendum in Northern Virginia to help fund transportation projects. This means that voters are being given the option of self-taxing. The exact language you will see on the ballot on November 5 is as follows:

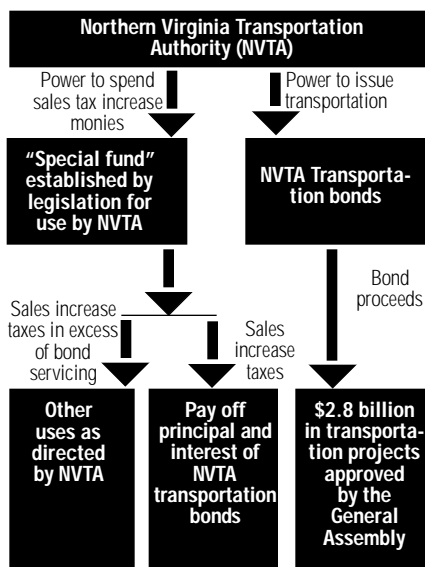
"QUESTION: Shall an additional sales and use tax of one-half of one percent be imposed in Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Prince William County, the City of Alexandria, the City of Fairfax, the City of Falls Church, the City of Manassas, and the City of Manassas Park, with revenues to be used solely for regional transportation projects and programs as specified in Chapter 853 of the Acts of Assembly of 2002."

If approved by voters in the jurisdictions noted in the ballot language, the sales and use tax in Northern Virginia will increase from 4 1/2 percent to 5 percent, starting on July 1, 2003. (It would not apply to food purchased for human consumption.) Revenues collected would flow into a "special fund" that would be used by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (hereafter "NVTA") to fund projects. These tax revenues are expected to generate an estimated \$140 million in the first year.

The crucial role of the NVTA is the ability to issue bonds or other debt to fund transportation projects. The General Assembly approved a long list of projects that would be funded with these bonds, \$2.8 billion to be exact. (See the chart at the end of this article for the list of approved projects, as well as *The Coalition for Smarter Growth's* estimate of transit and road shares.) In addition to issuing transportation bonds, the NVTA also is responsible for planning regional transportation projects; spending the money collected from the sales tax increase; recommending priority projects for federal and state funds; recommending use or changes in use of toll money; overseeing programs involving mass transit or congestion relief, including carpooling, vanpooling, and ride-sharing; and developing regional policies to improve air quality.

As illustrated below, the transportation projects will be directly funded from bond proceeds, not tax revenues. The purpose of the tax

revenues is largely to pay the principal and interest on the transportation bonds, although revenues in excess of bond debt service would contribute to the transportation projects. Governor Warner has said the tax increase is projected to raise about \$5 billion over 20 years, which means that \$2.2 billion will be available but not earmarked for anything. As noted above, the NVTA has the authority to spend these tax revenues as it chooses.



Clearly, the authority to control the spending of up to \$5 billion will create a significant new political and economic force in Northern Virginia. Who then will serve on this new body? The NVTA will be comprised of 14 voting members and 2 nonvoting members. The voting members are as follows:

- The chief elected officer in each of the nine local jurisdictions, e.g. the Chair of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the Mayor of Falls Church each get one vote;
- Two Northern Virginia members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- One Northern Virginia senator, appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections;
- Two citizens appointed by the Governor, a Commonwealth Transportation Board member from Northern Virginia, and someone in NOVA with "significant" transportation planning experience

The complex representation of the NVTA is designed to balance regional interests. Decisions will require an affirmative vote of 2/3 of the NVTA members present and voting; and 2/3 of the representatives of the local jurisdictions;

and 2/3 of the population embraced by the Population. As noted by the Washington Post in an article on August 3, "Fairfax County, with 55 percent of the region's population, cannot veto a proposal if that proposal is outside of Fairfax. Proposals under consideration by the authority would grant any jurisdiction veto power over proposals within its borders." In addition, on August 7, the new-formed NVTA adopted further guidelines to ensure the "fair share of funds" among the jurisdictions.

The sales tax will terminate when the Northern Virginia Regional Transportation Program is "completed and implemented" and when all principal and interest is paid off. The referendum therefore is a very open-ended tax and very open-ended program in the hands of a new political and economic force.

PROJECTS	ROADS	TRANSIT
Dulles Corridor Transit	---	\$350M
I-66 Improvements + Rail (1-495 to Rt. 15)*	\$150M	\$150M
I-95/395+Transit (HOV)	\$250M	---
Route 1 Fairfax/Prince William	\$150M	---
Route 1 Transit	---	\$75M
Arlington/Alexandria	---	---
Route 28 Improvements	\$50M	---
Fairfax/Loudoun	---	---
Route 28 Improvements	\$50M	---
PW to Fauquier	\$50M	---
I-495 + Transit (HOV)	\$200M	---
Fairfax County Parkway	\$125M	---
Gallows/Route29 Interchange	\$25M	---
Tri-County/Loudoun Pkwy	\$100M	---
VRE New Railcar	---	\$100M
Eisenhower Hwy + Transit(est)	\$15M	\$10M
Route 234/659	---	---
(Western Transport. Corridor)	\$50M	---
Metrorail Infrastructure	---	---
Replacement	---	\$250M
Secondary System Improvements	\$150M	---
Urban System	\$100M	---
Route 7 Loudoun	\$100M	---
Route 7 Fairfax/Falls Church	\$80M	---
Regional Transit Capital	---	\$75M
Alexandria Transit Capital	---	\$25M
Route 50/Columbia Pike	\$25M	---
Columbia Pike/7 Transit	---	\$75M
Rail Safety - Manassas	---	\$20M
TOTAL \$2.75 BILLION	\$1.62B	\$1.13B

% (assumes 50/50 split for I-66 between transit & road) 59% 41%

% Transit without Dulles Rail 72% 28%

Link to chart source: <http://www.smarter-growth.net/action/Virginia/SalesTax/Road&TransitShares.htm>

Other useful links on the sales tax referendum:

1. Washington Post's Transportation section at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/metro/va/government/legislature/transportation/>

2. Piedmont Environmental Council: <http://www.pecva.org/transportation/taxref.asp>

Viewpoints on the Sales Tax Referendum

Kris Amundson

44th District, Virginia House of Delegates

Although the next election is more than a year away, I have continued to knock on doors. Over and over, the voters in my district tell me their quality of life is being eroded by traffic congestion.

Parents miss soccer games because they're stuck in a traffic jam. The average Northern Virginia commuter spent 84 hours stuck in traffic last year. That's the equivalent of a two-week vacation.

Businesses pass along the cost of traffic delays to the prices they charge their customers. All in all, traffic congestion costs the region \$2.3 billion a year in lost time and other expenses, according to the Texas Transportation Institute.

Finally, all that congestion harms the quality of our environment. Recently, a judge struck down an Environmental Protection Agency decision that had extended our region's deadline to meet federal ozone limits. That decision ups the ante for all of us - requiring new investments in mass transit, HOV lanes, and other transportation projects that will mitigate congestion and improve air quality.

This November, voters will have the opportunity to vote on solutions to our transportation crisis. The referendum on the ballot will give citizens the opportunity to vote on a half-cent increase in the sales tax to pay for local transportation improvements.

From rehabilitating older Metro facilities to buying more railway cars for the Virginia Railway Express to adding flexible bus transit, the referendum provides hundreds of millions of dollars to encourage people to leave their cars at home.

Already, the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) carries the equivalent of one lane of rush-hour traffic on both Interstate 95 and 66. But today, VRE is almost at capacity - without additional funding, ridership will hold steady. The referendum will provide \$100 million for the purchase of new railcars for VRE. The late House Speaker Tip O'Neill correctly pointed out that all politics is local. So for the voters in my district, there is just one question: how will it affect us in southeastern Fairfax County?

Transit improvements are particularly important to those of us who live in established neighborhoods. We all benefit from the proposed redevelopment of aging areas like the Route One corridor. Instead of additional sprawl in distant parts of the region, upgrading transit in established neighborhoods is a way to promote smart growth.

For my district, these transit improvements are especially critical. Many of the residents in my community do not have cars. They rely on public transit to get to work and to take care of their everyday life activities. Of the \$150 million in improvements slated for Route One, a significant portion will allow development of a BRT (bus rapid transit) system.

Our former State Senator Joseph V. Gartlan, a noted environmentalist, has expressed strong support for the referendum. "Protecting the quality of our air should be a major concern of all of us who care about the environment," he says. He notes that a majority of the funds from the referendum will be devoted to reducing the number of one-passenger vehicles on our roads - 40% to mass transit and an additional 20% for HOV lanes.

Without a significant stream of new revenue, we are unlikely to see transit improvements of this magnitude for decades. Those of us who breathe the air in Northern Virginia... and those of us who care about our environment... can't wait that long. ☺

Paul Ferguson

Arlington County Board Member and Sierra Club Member

Thank you to the leadership of the Mt. Vernon Sierra Club Chapter for asking me to give my thoughts on a difficult issue, the November Transportation Sales Tax Referendum for Northern Virginia. My opinions are my own and not intended to represent the view of the Arlington County Board or any other organization with which I'm affiliated.

This referendum includes many projects with positive transportation improvements for Arlington and the Northern Virginia Region. Rail on Columbia Pike and in the Potomac Yards area of Rt. 1, and more Arlington Transit Natural Gas Buses with the ability to provide additional bus service are likely to happen with funding from the referendum if it passes. For the region, Rail to Tyson's Corner and Dulles Airport and purchase of new Virginia Railway Express Cars should happen with funding from the referendum. However, I will acknowledge there are road widening projects that I believe further contribute to land use patterns that will only increase road congestion. While I fully understand the Sierra Club

• PAID ADVERTISEMENTS •

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

**Timothy A. Reese
Buck & Associates**

Specializing in:
Arlington • Alexandria
Falls Church • District of Columbia

**703/528-2288 x13
timothyareese@aol.com**

SALES AND LEASING

position to oppose the referendum and take no issue with it, my first charge is to determine if on balance, the additional transportation dollars help Arlington.

Despite the land use issues that I also have concerns about, I have personally decided that it is in Arlington's best interest to support the referendum. Chris Zimmerman, Arlington's Board Chairman and representative on the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority successfully negotiated an agreement among Authority Members assuring that Arlington and other jurisdictions will receive close to an equal share of funding and that no project will be approved without consent of the jurisdiction in which the project takes place. After this agreement, I endorsed the referendum along with my other four colleagues on the Arlington County Board.

The current financial situation in Virginia is bleak. There is little money for transportation improvements. Some argue (I think they have a point) that if there were more funds available, given the past trends in Virginia, the funds would likely be spent on roads disproportionate to mass transit. Although there is little money available now, in future years there will be funding available. Given past history, not only would a disproportionate percentage be spent on roads compared to mass transit, Northern Virginia would receive only a fraction of the taxes that it contributes to Richmond. This referendum will allow the tax dollars to stay in Northern Virginia.

Northern Virginia jurisdictions have different transportation priorities. Despite these differences, local elected officials have worked well together through the Transportation Coordinating Council (now replaced by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority) to balance these different interests. The Transportation Coordinating Council came up

continued on next page

Join Sierra Club's Virginia Action Network

Virginia Sierra Club is one of the first chapters in the country to utilize a brand new activist tool - our web and e-mail based Action Network! If you have not yet signed up, please visit our web site at <http://virginia.sierraclubaction.org>

The Virginia Action Network is a free, fast and easy way to respond to important environmental alerts. Using the system, you can send an e-mail or a fax (even if you don't own a fax machine) to your elected officials with a click or two of your mouse.

Signing up for the Virginia Action Network is as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Go to our web site: <http://virginia.sierraclubaction.org>
2. Click on "sign up" at the top of the page
3. Enter your name, residential address, and e-mail address.

Once you're signed up, we will send you occasional alerts by e-mail that you can respond to with a couple clicks of your mouse. Don't delay, sign up today!

Ferguson, continued from previous page

with a 2020 plan that included transportation requests from the various jurisdictions. Arlington was successful in having rail on Columbia Pike and in the Potomac Yards Rt. 1 area put in the plan. We were also successful in having the proposed widening of I-66 inside the beltway left off the plan. This is why the elected officials who represent the localities on the current Authority (formerly Transportation Coordinating Counsel) are so important. This is where the Sierra Club has made a difference and will continue to do so in the future in being involved with local elections. Loudoun County is a great example where a change in leadership in 1999 resulted in better land use decisions and corresponding transportation requests.

Despite differences that local leaders may have in types of transportation projects, I believe that each locality will get the projects they ask for with funding from the referendum. Without the referendum, eventually future years will bring transportation funds from Richmond. If past history is a guide, a disproportionate amount will be spent on roads compared to mass transit.

This referendum is far from perfect. I wish that more funds were devoted to mass transit and that land use/smart-growth issues were addressed. I also believe the sales tax is regressive even if groceries are exempt. However, I think this is the largest percentage for mass transit funding in any transportation legislation we are likely to see in the near future. I also believe that given the anti-tax positions by a majority of Virginia Legislators, the sales tax is the only viable option for the near future. I also believe Governor Warner is a friend of the environment and that we will see positive initiatives coming from him in future years on other issues such as land preservation.

I certainly understand the Sierra Club position and the concerns raised about this referendum by the organization. I share your concerns about land use patterns and road expansion that will only make congestion worse. However, as a local official representing Arlington, I must balance the mass transit improvements Arlington can make with these regional concerns. Thanks, once again, for asking me to share my thoughts on this difficult is-



Addie Lamb enjoying sitting in a kayak at our June 2002 members picnic.

IN ARLINGTON

Improving Local Transportation with Bike Lane Retrofits

by Rob Swennes, Group Secretary

Arlington County has been recognized as a model for future Smart Growth development due to its careful planning over the past 20 years of residential and commercial density around several of the Metro stations in the county. Elected County officials and local activists have taken the lead again in the metropolitan area—this time by developing and installing a network of on-street bicycle lanes.

County leaders for years have recognized that the automobile is just one of several modes of transportation that must be accommodated in the street rights of way. Unless alternative means of transportation are reasonably made available to its citizens, they would be fated to wait in the long lines of backed up automobile traffic that are increasingly common in the Washington metropolitan area and in other cities. Thus the County's emphasis on biking, mass transit, and walking as realistic alternatives to climbing into the family car for trips away from home.

Two years ago the County Board encouraged the local, active bicyclist community to determine which streets in the community could reasonably be fitted with bike lanes. Up to that point only two miles of bike lanes had been installed in the County, and those were on lightly traveled streets in single-family home neighborhoods. The bike lane plan that eventually came back to the Board envisioned an 11-fold increase in bike lanes—to 24 miles total. The plan was based upon an on-site review of most arterial streets in the County. The curb-to-curb distance on the roadway was compared to the guidelines promulgated by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) for the installation of bike lanes.

The plan which came forward presented three categories of streets: (1) ones where bike lanes could be installed without any reduction in the current number of car travel lanes; (2) lightly traveled roads where bike lanes could be introduced by reducing either the number of travel lanes or the available curb-side parking; and (3) roads where it was difficult to introduce bike lanes within the curb-to-curb space due to significant current road traffic. Introducing bike lanes onto the first and second categories of roads was strongly endorsed by County officials when the plan was presented.

It was anticipated that the 22 miles of new bike lanes would be constructed over the next five years. But there has been enthusiasm for getting most of the lanes installed even sooner. Somewhat surprisingly, no meaningful opposition to the road reconfigurations has surfaced from any of the neighborhoods where the changes are taking

place. One reason for this is that bike lanes, by reducing the width and/or number of car travel lanes, tend to slow local traffic. Traffic calming is something that many neighborhoods have been pressing for over the past decade. Bike lanes have thus solved a neighborhood speeding problem while providing graphic on-road accommodation for cyclists.

Arlington has a large and ever-growing biking population. Thousands of residents bike to work on a regular basis, and many more enjoy riding for pleasure on the County's streets and trails. Key to this transformation of the local population has been the development of facilities that make cycling an attractive alternative to driving. For over a decade Arlington County has mandated that commercial office construction projects include bike lockers and in-building showers to encourage employees to bike rather than drive to work. Bike accommodation is also a regular feature in new apartment buildings. The results of this long-term investment and singular vision are a County population that is larger and more bike oriented than ever before. And the quality of life in this community has been significantly increased. This is evident from the high prices that savvy people are willing to pay for often modest homes in a community with an excellent, multi-modal transportation network.

Arlington's example can be replicated in any community in the metro area if there is the vision, the political will, an activist community, and patience. Retrofitting in features such as bike lanes onto existing streets may have less public appeal than installing off-street bike routes in "new" communities like Reston 30 years ago. But it is what the vast majority of our communities need to do since they are not developing a transportation system from scratch.

So view those overly wide roadways in your neighborhood in a new light. By installing bike lanes in your neighborhoods, the speeding traffic could be "calmed" and the roads made safer for cyclists, parked cars at the curb, and pedestrians.

For more information on how the bike lane conversion program is working in Arlington, call the County's Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator, Charlie Denney, at 703-228-3633. ☺



Sylvia Lang, "worm lady" of the Eco Stewards Alliance showing her composting worms to members at the April 2002 general meeting.

Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

continued from page 1

teer Group leaders will be discussing transportation issues and the related sales tax referendum. RSVP to host Rob Swennes, 703-532-6101, or robertswennes@hotmail.com who lives in Arlington County.

Group Political/Conservation Meetings

October 15, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Join us for a "Conservation/Political Discussion on Air Quality in our Metro Area." Andrew and Shannon will lead a discussion on the air quality challenges facing the Washington Metro area, including their possible impacts on transportation planning. Light fare will be served starting at 6:30 p.m. For directions and to RSVP, call Andrew at 703-536-5047.

Group Outings

August 24, 2002, Saturday, 8 a.m. to Noon.

Location: Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.

To help commemorate the 85th birthday of the National Park Service, the Mount Vernon Group will participate in a variety of activities at the Arlington House, the large, columned building at the top of the hill overlooking the Arlington National Cemetery, and at the adjacent "Woodlands," 24 acres of forest with the oldest and largest tract of eastern hardwoods in Northern Virginia. Many of these trees date back to April 1861 when Gen. Lee left his home here never to return. We will be removing invasive, exotic vegetation from two Woodlands tracts and planting trees in refurbished areas. Other events that day include the unveiling of new informational markers and exhibits describing the historical significance of the Woodlands and a re-enactment by a group from the Army's 3rd Infantry Division on "War's Effect on the Environment." Special tours of Arlington House will be available to participants. This event is open to all ages and levels of skill. Shuttle bus service will be available from the Arlington Cemetery parking lots (with nearby metro) to Arlington House. In addition, we will distribute t-shirts, baseball caps, and other items of appreciation to Mount Vernon Group participants. For more information, please contact John Koch, Membership Chair, at 202-720-4396 or 703-684-6849, jandrko@comcast.net.

September 21, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Location: Mason Neck State Park Morning Canoe/Kayak Tour in Lorton, VA.

Come join us for a leisurely trip up Kane's Creek to watch osprey, great blue herons, and eagles. This 2 hour, park ranger-led tour is an excellent time to see eagles searching for a morning meal. Mason Neck encompasses 1,813 acres bordered by the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, Pohick Bay Regional Park and the Gunston Hall Historical Facility.

Logistics: Meet at canoe box at left of Environmental Center 20 minutes before tour departure time. You may bring your own canoe or kayak or rent a canoe from the park. The ranger will provide you with a PFD and paddles. Bring a hat, sunscreen, drinking water, and shoes that can get wet. Visit their home page at <http://www.state.va.us/dcr/>.

Cost: \$6.00 per person whether you rent a canoe or not. Rentals are canoes only.

Contact: Faith Teitelbaum 703-519-4308.

Outdoor Leader Workshop in DC Area

Where: Elks Camp Barrett, in Crownsville, MD. 30 miles east of Washington, D.C.

When: Friday, October 4th, opening program at 8 p.m. sharp; check-in & dinner from 6 p.m. Sunday, October 6. Workshop ends with lunch at 1:00 p.m. Cost: \$45. Includes meals (Fri. dinner to Sun.

lunch) & bunk-style lodging Fri. & Sat. nights.

If you're a Sierra Club outing leader or you want to become a Sierra Club outing leader, join us for the Maryland 2002 Outdoor Leader Workshop. Leader training is a never-ending process, so whether you're an old hand or have never led before, this workshop is for you. It's part of the Outdoor Activities Training Program (OATP) - a Club-wide training initiative - being offered in the Mid-Atlantic. Join us for a weekend of interactive learning, networking with leaders from all outing programs, and of course, lots of fun.

Goals and Purpose

The goals of the workshop are to learn and enhance leadership skills, bring people and programs together to share and exchange ideas, to welcome new outdoor leaders, to learn what it takes to lead for other outings programs of the Sierra Club, and once again, to have a lot of fun. The purpose of this workshop is to bring together new and seasoned leaders from ICO (Inner City Outings), GCO (Group & Chapter Outings), and NO (National Outings). The agenda for the workshop will encompass an extensive array of leadership topics presented in both group and breakout formats.

To register, learn more about the workshop, and check for available space, go to the Training website at <http://mitchell.sierraclub.org/outings/Training/index.asp>. ☺

Create Your Own Backyard Wildlife Habitat!



The Arlington Community Wildlife Habitat Project (ACWH) is a registered community project within the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat program. The goal of the team working on the project is to create 1,000 wildlife habitats in Arlington within the next few years. In addition to providing food, water, shelter, and places for wildlife to raise young, the habitats will beautify the community and enrich and improve the local environment.

As part of the initiative, the ACWH team is organizing opportunities for the community, including workshops to educate and train those interested in creating habitat landscapes. "Working on the creation of these landscapes will teach the young and old alike about plants and wildlife around them, and expose them to the beauty of nature in their own backyard", according to Eleanor Hodges, executive director of **Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment**, one of the groups involved in the project.

Residents of Arlington County interested in helping the ACWH effort can contact Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment at 703-228-6247 or office@arlingtonenvironment.org Residents outside Arlington County can contact the National Wildlife Federation to certify a habitat in your neighborhood. For more information, check their website at www.nwf.org. ☺

November Ballot's Parks Bond

by **Andrew Nicholls**, Conservation Chair and **Shannon Sullivan**, Political Chair

November 5 will be about more than transportation tax referendums. Voters also will be asked whether they want to vote for or against the "Virginia Parks and Natural Areas Bond." The Bond would authorize a \$119 Million bond for state parks and natural areas. It would not raise taxes. If passed, the \$119 million would be allocated as follows:

- \$78 million for construction, improvement and repair projects (70 in all) in the State's 34 existing state parks, including Mason Neck, Leesylvania, and Sky Meadows State Parks;
- \$30 million for purchasing land for three new state parks and 10 new natural area preserves, including Northern Virginia Woodlands in Culpeper and Northern VA Appalachian Caves;
- \$6.5 million to purchase additional land for existing parks;
- \$4.5 million to protect park land from shoreline erosion;
- and, \$2.0 million for trail improvements statewide.

According to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia ranks 50th in terms of percentage of state budget spent on parks and 49th in per capita state park spending. Hardly cause for celebration, especially since so much open space has been lost to development's spade and backhoe. (Virginia's population grew from 3.8 million in 1970 to 7 million in 2001.) This November, we have an opportunity to devote more resources to the protection of natural Virginia and the enhancement of existing parks.

PLEASE VOTE "YES" ON THE VIRGINIA PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS BOND.

For more information, including a complete list of projects, go to <http://www.dcr.state.va.us/bond/index.htm>

Business- Advertise in The Sierran

Support the Mount Vernon Group's work and activities and reach 4000 homes in some of America's most prosperous Zip codes. **Call 703/525-4690 or email lhommecom2@aol.com** for information.

Products and services must be consistent with Sierra Club philosophies and principals



Referendum, continued from page 1

health problems, especially among children and individuals with asthma. Scientists suspect that ozone may also have other impacts on human health, including aggravation of emphysema and bronchitis. (Source: EPA, "Smog - Who Does It Hurt?")

Limit Driving

The Washington Council of Governments recommend on Code Red days. It advises us to "limit driving and refuel cars after dark." . Driving increases ozone pollution, which leads to unhealthy air and adverse human health impacts. Driving less includes using more transit, and that means building more transit and concentrating development near transit.

In addition, a federal appeals court unanimously held last month that since 1999, the EPA has illegally allowed the Washington area to have levels of ozone without being designated as in "severe" violation of the Clean Air Act. (Washington Post, July 3, page B01). A metropolitan area that is in severe violation of the Clean Air Act must reduce its ozone-forming emissions by at least 3% per year until it comes into compliance with federal standards, according to the Post article.

Does the tax referendum do to improve our air quality? Does a large share of the revenue go to transit?

No. Of the \$2.8 billion in new projects, supposedly 40% goes to transit but \$350 million of this simply replaces what business property owners along the Dulles Corridor would otherwise have had to contribute to Dulles Rail. As Stewart Schwartz, of the Coalition for Smarter Growth has noted, "We are also here to distinguish Dulles Rail from the sales tax debate. As Delegate Plum has noted and contrary to public perception, Dulles Rail has its own comprehensive financing plan that is independent of the sales tax funds. The plan relies on a variety of sources including the special tax district, tolls and federal funds."

Excluding the \$350 million Dulles rail replacement money, **the transit share is actually 28%**. (See the table in the accompanying article.)

Moreover, that 28% is only for identified projects in the first \$2.8 billion. **What about the next \$2.2 Billion which is not earmarked? How much of that will be transit?** That is unknown, but new projects can actually be added to by legislative action in Richmond without local approval. The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority can also spend as it wishes. If the known percent is 28% transit in the first \$2.8 billion, what do you bet the percent will be in the unearmarked amount?

In addition, as the Coalition for Smarter Growth notes, "many of the transit projects are one-time purchases of buses, whereas the highway projects often involve as little as 5 or 10% down payments on billions of dollars in projects. For example, \$50 million for the Route 234 Bypass (the next phase of the Western Bypass) is just the start

of a \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion project and \$200 million for the Beltway is just the start of a \$3 billion project."

Now let's turn to a different (but related) issue: the loss of forest and open space to sprawling development. A recent study by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the University of Maryland, and the U.S. Geological Survey predicts that more than 700,000 undeveloped acres could disappear by 2030 as the Washington area continues its low-density, auto-dependent pattern of growth. (Washington Post, May 1, 2002; Page B01.) That's an area larger than the two counties of Loudon and Montgomery, according to the Post.

The single biggest development threat to forest and open space in Northern Virginia is an outer beltway, sometimes called the Western Transportation Corridor, other times the Western Bypass, and by Governor Warner the "Techway." The Sierra Club and other local environmental groups are all in favor of good land use planning and transit and adamantly opposed to an outer beltway. If the goal is to induce development at the edge of the Metro area, and lose hundreds of thousands of acres of forest, farm and wetland, and destroy bird, mammal and amphibian habitat, then building yet another mega-highway, complete with Potomac crossings into Maryland, is certainly the best way to do it. As Trip Pollard of the Southern Environmental Law Center notes: "By building new road capacity, you encourage people to live further out; you make previously inaccessible land accessible. And you encourage people who are using other modes, like mass transit, to drive more often."

How might the tax referendum lead to construction of an outer beltway?

First, the project list already includes segments of such an outer beltway, such as the 234/659 project.

Second, the project list is not set in stone; the language of the legislation gives no guarantee that the money will be used for these projects. If the tax passes, projects may be added, deleted and reprioritized. It is predictable that business lobbies will push for addition of Outer Beltway projects. Then of course, there's that \$2.2 billion of unearmarked money.

New Potomac crossings can be added to the project list. The projects can be approved in Richmond without local input. River crossings would cause a flood of Maryland traffic onto our highways, and vice-versa, that would create development and commuting patterns.

The Sierra Club is for many things. We're for smart growth, complete with transit and integrated land use planning. We're for healthy air that fully meets the standards of the Clean Air Act. We're for preserving open space and forest habitat. Therefore, we're against the sales tax referendum. **Please vote no on November 5.**

Are You in the Holiday Spirit?

We're only in September, but it's time to start planning the **2002 Silent Auction and Holiday Party**. This year's event is Wednesday, December 11, 2002. We have collected some new ideas for this year and we want to hear yours, too. Do you have ideas or time to give? If you do, contact **Cheryl Zebrowski at (703) 824-3676** or jpzebrowski@worldnet.att.net. While item solicitation is a very key part of the auction preparation, there is other work to be done. Some areas where we need help are planning the food and beverage, the publicity, and the auction catalogue. Give it a try! We have lots of fun planning this event and we want to share it with other members. ☺

YES! I want to join the Sierra Club and help safeguard our

New member's name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ If this is a gift, giver's name _____

Membership category _____ Check enclosed Charge my VISA Mastercard Exp. date ____/____/____

Cardholder name _____ Card number _____

Signature _____

Membership Categories	Indvid	Joint
Introductory	\$25	-
Regular	39	\$47
Supporting	75	100
Contributing	150	175
Life	1000	1250
Senior	24	32
Student	24	32

Annual dues include subscriptions to SIERRA (\$7.50) and chapter publications (\$1); dues are not tax deductible. enclose your check and mail to: **Sierra Club, P.O.Box 52968,**

F94Q W5011 1

Survey continued from page 1

our river clean-ups and seek other opportunities for the MVG membership to actively work to improve the local parks, streams, and rivers. In fact, this topic garnered the greatest number of "3" responses, which was defined as "extremely important to me personally and something that I will commit substantive time to pursuing."

It was also interesting to see that expansion of local bike networks got the second lowest score in terms of importance to the survey respondents. However, this result could have any number of interpretations, including that while bike trails certainly are important additions to the quality of life in our area, other environmental issues may take precedence over expanding our bike trails. That said, if we can support bike trails through letters of support, we can easily do so, and will do so.

Finally, we are happy to report that our one "trick" question on the survey, widen the beltway, I-66, and other heavily traveled areas to reduce sprawl, got the lowest score in terms of importance. ☺

Political, continued from page 2

nouncing Chris's endorsement. *So if you are an Arlington Country resident please remember to vote on Election Day.*

On the Federal level, the Club, as with previous years did not endorse incumbent Jim Moran, a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Though Jim is supportive of many Sierra Club ideals he has voted on certain projects such as the Western Bypass study that we vehemently oppose.

Guest Politicians

In an effort to keep you more informed on the political front and as a way to include local politicians in the Club's activities, we invited two guest politicians to contribute articles to this month's news letter. Since this issue focuses on the tax referendum, we asked Arlington County Board Member Paul Ferguson and State Delegate Kris Amundson, 44th District, Virginia House of



Members enjoying brief hike at Pohick Bay Regional Park during the June 2002 member's picnic.

Delegates, to write about the effects it will have in their districts.

We hope to have a guest politician submit an article in each upcoming newsletter on varying environmental issues.

Political/Conservation Meetings

Food! Food! Food!

That's right, food, along with a variety of beverages are served at all Political/Conservation meetings that all members are invited to attend. These meetings are designed to update members on local politics as well as area environmental concerns and give you a chance to meet some of your fellow members. So we hope to see you at our next meeting. And did I mention there will be food? ☺

The Sierran

is printed by

**QUALITY GRAPHICS
& PRINTING**

4720E Lee Highway

Arlington, Virginia 22207

703 / 528-6161

**MVG Web site address changed to:
<http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/>**

The Mount Vernon Sierran invites members to participate by submitting articles, photos and first person experiences for publication. Also, if you're willing to attend and report on relevant area events and political meetings, contact the Group Chair for assignments.

Next issue:

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2002

Submission Deadline is October 15th.

Print and Electronic Marketing Solutions

DESIGNSENSE

4013

North 18th Road

Arlington, Virginia

222207-33005

Voice: 703.527.4690

Fax: 703.807.0512

eMail: lhommecom2@aol.com

Design and Layout of The Sierran

THE MOUNT VERNON GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB OF VIRGINIA

5405 Barrister Place • Alexandria, Virginia 22304

NON-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Merrifield, Virginia
22116
Permit 316