



# Rock Creek Park Multi-Use Trail Rehabilitation

## FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT



**JUNE 2014**





**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
  
FOR THE  
  
ROCK CREEK PARK  
MULTI-USE TRAIL REHABILITATION  
WASHINGTON, DC**

Prepared pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c) by:  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration  
The National Park Service  
District Department of Transportation

*with the cooperation of  
The National Capital Planning Commission*

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*Text that has been added or modified since the release of the November 2011  
Rock Creek Park Multi-Use Trail Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment is  
denoted in bold and italic fonts.*



## PROJECT SUMMARY

### S.1. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Section 101(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, *the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the National Park Service (NPS), and with the cooperation of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)*, proposes to rehabilitate the Rock Creek Park multi-use trail in Washington, DC. The project area includes a 3.7-mile section of the Rock Creek Park multi-use trail from Broad Branch Road to P Street, NW; a 4,300-foot (0.8 mile) section of the Piney Branch Parkway trail from Beach Drive to Arkansas Avenue, NW; a 1,247-foot (0.2 mile) section of social trail from Broad Branch Road to Peirce Mill (referred to as the Peirce Mill trail spur); *a 1,929-foot (0.4 mile) section of the Rose Park trail from P Street, NW to M Street, NW; and a 363-foot ramp connecting the Rose Park trail to P Street, NW.* The proposed action includes resurfacing, trail widening where environmentally feasible, modifications to the trail alignments and road crossings, directional and interpretive signage, and connections to and from the trails to other pedestrian and bicycle facilities. *Rock Creek Park and the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway are under the jurisdiction of the NPS, but implementation of the proposed action will be administered by DDOT and funded by FHWA.* The majority of the proposed improvements are located on NPS land, with some improvements located within the District of Columbia right-of-way. A section of the trail also passes through National Zoological Park property. *The proposed action does not involve any transfer of ownership or change of jurisdiction of the trail or the land within the project area. Ownership of the trail and land within the project area will remain with the current owners.*

*DDOT in conjunction with the FHWA and NPS prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA), which evaluated the potential environmental impacts of the No Action Alternative and two Action Alternatives, in accordance with NEPA and implementing regulations, the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), NPS Director's Order #12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impacts Analysis and Decision-Making (NPS 2001), FHWA Technical Advisory Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental Documents (T6640.8a), and other applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The EA identified the agencies' Preferred Alternative and was released for agency and public review in November 2011. The public comment period ran from December 2, 2011 to January 13, 2012. A public hearing was held on December 14, 2011. Subsequently, this Final EA has been prepared to address agency and public comments received.*

### S.2. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

The purpose of this action is to improve the overall condition and connectivity of the deteriorating Rock Creek Park multi-use trail system in order to enhance visitor use and experience within Rock Creek Park. The proposed action would result in:

- improved visitor safety and experience and protection of park resources;
- improved access to the Rock Creek Park multi-use trail system from other pedestrian and bicycle facilities, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods; and
- more effective drainage and erosion control, thereby reducing trail maintenance.

The project is needed to improve safety conditions, protect park resources, and improve connectivity to the park from surrounding neighborhoods; to support the needs of diverse user groups who enjoy the trails and improve visitor experience; and to enhance opportunities for interpretation of park history and resources.

### **S.3. OVERVIEW OF THE ALTERNATIVES**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) analyzes the No Action Alternative along with two Action Alternatives for the Rock Creek Park Multi-Use Trail Rehabilitation. The project includes spot improvements for safety and visitor experience, as well as new connections to Rock Creek Park from the surrounding neighborhoods. Under the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), NPS would continue its current trail maintenance activities and no new construction would occur. Under Alternative 2, the Rock Creek Park multi-use trail would be resurfaced at its current width, which varies throughout the trail. Under Alternative 3, the Rock Creek Park multi-use trail would be resurfaced and widened to a minimum of six feet, up to a maximum of 10 feet, depending on physical and environmental constraints.

In addition to the Action Alternatives, *which involve the rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Park multi-use trail*, two Options for the visitor-made social trail from Broad Branch Road to Peirce Mill, and three Options for the Rose Park trail were analyzed *as part of this EA. The work being proposed for the Peirce Mill trail spur and the Rose Park trail options are included in this EA for the Rock Creek Park Multi-Use Trail Rehabilitation project to improve surrounding communities' access and connectivity to the Rock Creek Park multi-use trail.* For the Peirce Mill trail spur, under Option A, the trail would remain unchanged; and under Option B, the current social trail would be paved to an eight-foot width and connected to a recently improved pathway at the Peirce Mill complex. For the Rose Park trail, under Option A, NPS would continue its current maintenance practices and no new construction would occur. Under Option B, the Rose Park trail would be resurfaced at its current location to a six-foot width *through the length of the trail, as feasible.* Under Option C, the Rose Park trail would be resurfaced at its current location to an eight-foot width *through the length of the trail, as feasible.*

The Action Alternatives would also include a number of spot improvements to more effectively separate trail users from vehicular traffic; to improve safety at roadway crossings; to improve sight distance at approaches and curves; to improve user accessibility; and to improve drainage and erosion control. In addition, a number of new connections to Rock Creek Park from the surrounding pedestrian and bicycle systems are proposed, as well as connections to and from the Piney Branch Parkway trail, within Rock Creek Park.

### **S.4. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

*Based on the analysis of environmental consequences of each alternative and comments received from the public and agencies, the NPS determined that the Preferred Alternative is Alternative 3: Trail Resurfacing and Widening, with the Peirce Mill Trail Spur Option B: Eight-foot Paved Trail Spur, and Rose Park Trail Option B: Six-foot Resurfaced Trail. The NPS detailed their determination of the Preferred Alternative and options in a letter dated August 16, 2011 (Appendix A).*

*Alternative 3: Trail Resurfacing and Widening would enhance visitor use and experience, public safety, park operations and maintenance, and transportation in the project area better or equal to the other options. Also, soil and water quality would be improved through stabilization and drainage improvements under Alternative 3. This alternative is preferable to the No Action Alternative because resurfacing and widening of the trail would eliminate several adverse conditions associated with the existing trail.*



*This alternative improves the trail and fulfills the NPS's responsibility as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations. While Alternative 2 would result in similar impacts to those described in Alternative 3, the benefits to visitor use and safety resulting from spot improvements and trail widening associated with Alternative 3 would contribute the widest range of beneficial uses of the trail.*

*Alternative 3 assures for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surrounding and attains the widest range of beneficial uses. Other undesirable and unintended consequences are negligible under Alternative 3.*

*Peirce Mill Trail Spur Option B would enhance the use of Rock Creek Park by providing a new, paved trail surface to park visitors. Option B is preferable to Option A for the Peirce Mill trail spur because the No Action option would result in adverse impacts associated with the existing social trail on site.*

*Rose Park Trail Option B would enhance the use of Rose Park by providing a smooth, even trail surface at the standard width of a DDOT residential sidewalk. Option B is preferable to Option A for the trail in Rose Park because the No Action option would result in adverse impacts associated with the existing trail. When compared to Rose Park Trail Option C, Option B better addresses the nearby residents concerns with widening the trail and has less environmental effects because of less impervious surface.*

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***APPENDIX E: COMMENT ON THE EA AND RESPONSES***

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