

INSIDENOVA

NORTHERN VIRGINIA'S LEADING NEWS SOURCE

Letter: I-66 still a health danger for those using nearby trail

Isabel Ruff
InsideNoVa
December 6, 2017

Editor:

Even though the proposed widening of Interstate 66 has been shot down, air pollution should still be a major concern.

The extreme vehicle congestion in the area has the potential to cause major health implications because a highway, such as I-66, has the space for a large number of vehicles, leading to an even larger amount of air pollution. The two biggest pollutants are nitrous oxides and particulate matter.

Particulate matter is harmful because when it's inhaled, it can lead to respiratory problems, but nitrous oxides are much more concerning. When nitrous oxides react with sunlight, they create ozone, and this ground-level ozone has major health implications, which greatly affect those using the Martha Custis Trail.

Although convenient, the bike path's proximity to the highway causes its users to breathe in more of these pollutants, exposing them to more health risks.

It's a complex issue, because the Custis trail is already a large benefit to the community, opening the door for more environmentally-friendly ways to commute and offering an easy way to exercise. Unfortunately, its downfall is the proximity to the highway, where there is a greater amount of air pollution.

The accessibility of transportation is important, but not at the cost of human health.

Although the Custis trail certainly isn't perfect, it does have its benefits. But users still need to be aware of the health risks accompanying their evening run.