

*The University of Maryland's Independent Student Newspaper*

# THE DIAMONDBACK



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## THE DIAMONDBACK

Founded 1910,  
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since 1971.

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# MICROMOBILITY BY THE NUMBERS

By Devon Milley and Kyle Russo | @Devon\_Milley and @kylerussss | Editor in chief and engagement editor

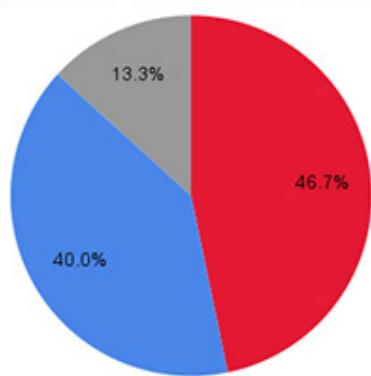
*The Diamondback's engagement team surveyed our readers on Instagram.*

## WACKIEST MODES OF TRANSPORTATION SEEN ON CAMPUS

- Unicycle
- Pogo stick
- E-unicycle
- Parachute
- Scooter
- E-scooter
- Heelies
- Shopping cart
- Swivel chair
- Wagon
- Mini segway
- Lawnmower
- Rollerskates
- Move-in cart

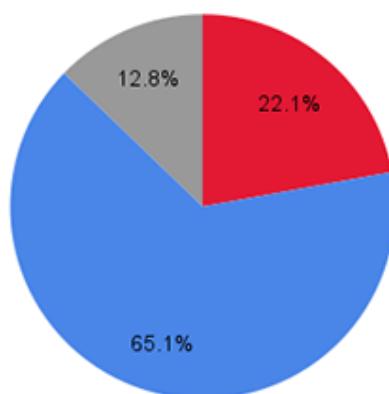
## WHAT'S THE BEST "BOARD"?

● Skateboard ● Longboard ● Penny board



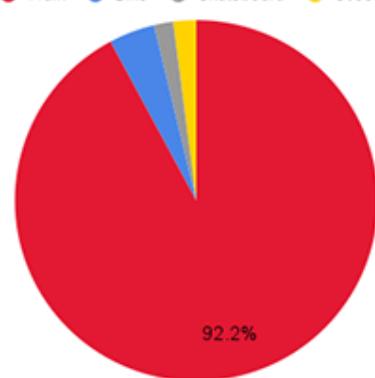
## WHICH MODE OF TRANSPORTATION IS MOST LIKELY TO HIT A PEDESTRIAN?

● Bike ● Scooter ● Skateboard



## HOW DO YOU GET AROUND CAMPUS?

● Walk ● Bike ● Skateboard ● Scooter

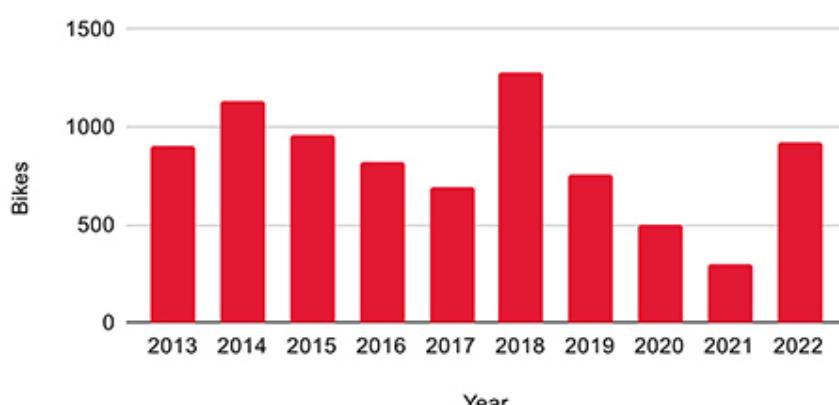


## ZOOMING OUT: REGISTERED BIKES AND SCOOTERS ARE UP SINCE 2021

*The Diamondback obtained data on bike and e-scooter registration.*

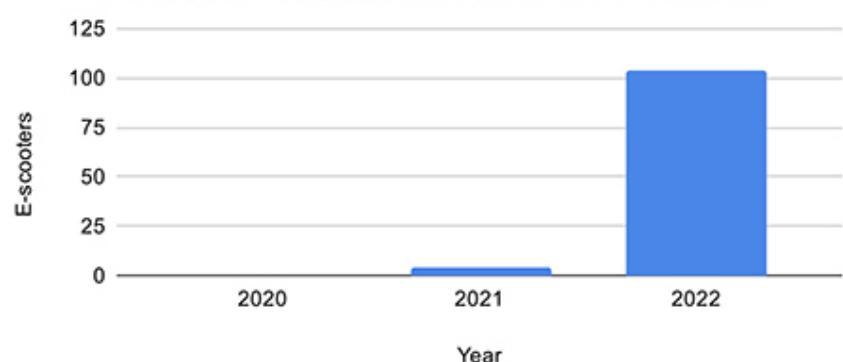
By Amanda Hernández | @amandavhernan | News and DBK en Español editor

## NUMBER OF BIKES REGISTERED WITH DOTS



## NUMBER OF E-SCOOTERS REGISTERED WITH DOTS

DOTS began collecting data on e-scooter registrations in fall 2020.





# YOUR GUIDE TO BIKING ON CAMPUS

By Auzinea Bacon | @auzinea | Staff writer

DARYL PERRY/THE DIAMONDBACK

So, you've got a bike on campus. Maybe you've been riding before you could walk. Maybe this is the first bike you've owned in your life. Either way, here's what you need to know about biking at the University of Maryland.

## WHERE CAN I PARK?

The university's Department of Transportation Services offers uncovered and covered parking around the campus. Bike racks can be found from South Campus, near Van Munching, to as far on North Campus as Xfinity Center. Don't worry, they're all free.

Since Maryland weather can be unpredictable, take note of the covered bike parking spaces across the campus. There aren't as many covered bike racks, but they've got a few around campus for safe-keeping. You can find covered bike parking at the Mowatt and Union Lane garages and academic buildings, such as the chemistry and architecture buildings. If you live in a dorm, you may have access to one in your building. For example, Oakland and Prince Frederick halls have indoor bike rooms for

students who live there.

## WHAT IF MY BIKE NEEDS A REPAIR?

There are six bike repair stations across the campus, including the Mowatt Lane Garage and Washington Quad. According to DOTS' website, the stations have tools for basic bike maintenance, from changing a flat tire to adjusting brakes.

You can also get free repairs at the RecWell Bike Shop, located in the Jones-Hill House. If you want a repair with support from a student mechanic, you can go to the shop and get help on a service. On a first-come, first-serve basis, you can work with a mechanic in real-time.

There are also independent repair opportunities if you're comfortable working on your bike alone. You can go to the independent repair stand if a mechanic says it's available. If you just need to borrow a tool, you can check with a mechanic.

## I NEED TO KEEP MY BIKE ON CAMPUS OVER BREAK. HOW DO I DO THAT?

For \$10 a month, you can reserve an indoor, secure space for your bike. After

filling out the form, stop by the cashier's desk in the Regents Drive Garage lobby. DOTS staff will take your bike and store it. If you're storing your bike for three to seven months, the cost drops to seven dollars. You can also pay \$50 to store your bike for the entire year.

## ARE THERE BIKING SAFETY EXPECTATIONS?

It's a good idea to wear a helmet when riding your bike. DOTS' BikeUMD initiative recommends a helmet for anyone riding a bike. However, Maryland state law doesn't require anyone older than 16 to wear a helmet while biking.

## I RAN OUT OF AIR. WHERE CAN I PUMP UP MY TIRES?

No worries, there are a couple of air pumps scattered throughout the campus. The pumps at A.V. Williams and the Iribe Center are available 24/7. At McKeldin Library, you need to have a student UID to use the bike pump. You can also go to the DOTS office in Regents Drive Garage, the Maryland Adventure Program desk or

the RecWell Bike Shop to pump your tires.

## DON'T FORGET TO REGISTER YOUR BIKE.

If you ride a bike around campus, you're required to register your bike through the Bike Index, according to the DOTS website. It's free, and as long as you have a UID, you can register your bike. This comes with some benefits, too:

- If you ever need your locks cut, you can have it done for free.
- If your bike goes missing, you'll have a registration number to help track it down.
- If your bike is relocated by DOTS, or is at risk of being relocated, you'll be notified.
- You'll automatically get updates on campus bike events, amenities, policy changes and safety issues.

# YOUR GUIDE TO SCOOTERING ON CAMPUS



By James Cirrone | @JamesCirrone | Staff writer

JOE RYAN/THE DIAMONDBACK

Ever since fall 2019 when the University of Maryland partnered with Veo, scooters have become much more common on the campus. If you want to ride the trend and start using these small electric vehicles, here's what you should know.

## RENT OR BUY?

It depends on how you plan to use your scooter. If you're going to use it every once in a while to get from your dorm all the way on North Campus down to visit a friend on South Campus, then it's more cost-effective to find a nearby scooter and pick it up.

Veo scooters are all over the campus and College Park, and they cost \$1 to unlock and 25 cents per minute after that. That might seem cheap, but it's not if you ride them frequently.

If you're planning to ride a scooter every day, it might make more sense to invest in one. There are scooters out there such as the GoTrax GXL V2 Electric Scooter that costs \$349 new and potentially under \$300 used.

But Sri Kanipakala, a sophomore computer science major, who owns a more expensive scooter, warned that getting a discount scooter might not be a good idea.

"They tend to not be as reliable, so they're gonna keep breaking down, battery life won't be as good," Kanipakala said. "I would recommend getting kind of in the mid tier of scooters around like, \$500 I would say would be a really healthy investment."

## WHAT SAFETY PRECAUTIONS DO I NEED TO TAKE?

Scooters cannot ride on sidewalks or in crosswalks, according to the Department of Transportation Services. It's recommended that you use bike lanes when

they're available, but if not, you can ride a scooter on the road.

Since the speed limit on the campus is 20 miles per hour, scooters can be driven safely on this university's roads. And just like when riding a bike, DOTS recommends wearing a helmet when operating a scooter.

## WHERE CAN I PARK MY SCOOTER?

There are tons of places on the campus to park your scooter. There's designated parking throughout campus to park Veo scooters. However, if you have a personal scooter, you can lock it up on any of the bike racks on campus.

## WHAT KIND OF LOCK SHOULD I GET?

It's a good idea to lock up your scooter to protect against theft. Kanipakala, who owns a Ninebot ES4 scooter, uses a coil lock to secure his scooter to the bike racks. On the campus, he's had no problems with anyone trying to cut his lock. But for people who commute from off-campus, he recommends getting a U-lock, which is much stronger than a coil lock.

Sgt. Rosanne Hoaas from the University of Maryland Police Department said cable and chain locks are easily defeated by a pair of cutters. She recommended a U-lock for scooters used both on and off the campus.

## WHERE CAN I CHARGE MY SCOOTER?

Students who live on campus aren't allowed to bring scooters into dorms for charging — but Kanipakala says there are workarounds.

For instance, you could buy a scooter with a removable battery. That would prevent you from having to sneak your scooter around your dorm.

But if your scooter doesn't have a re-

movable battery, Kanipakala said it's common for students to charge their scooter while they're getting a meal at the North Campus Dining Hall and 251 North, where there are plenty of outlets.

"People just connect the charging port to those outlets and then tie it to the bike rack which is really close," Kanipakala said.

## DO I NEED TO REGISTER MY SCOOTER WITH DOTS?

Yes! Just like if you had a bike, you are required to register your scooter — but no worries, because registering won't cost you a dime. And you get the same benefits as someone with a registered bike.

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# YOUR GUIDE TO SKATING ON CAMPUS



By Parker Leipzig | @leipzic\_parker | Staff writer

A STUDENT skateboards behind the School of Public Health building on April 3, 2022. AUTUMN HENGEN/THE DIAMONDBACK

All skaters — roller, regular, penny or long — have a place on the University of Maryland campus. If you're thinking about whether or not to bring your skates or your board to campus — or whether to get started with any skate sport at all, here's what you should know.

Aside from electric skateboards or hoverboards being prohibited in dorms, this university can be a skateboard-friendly environment whether you choose a motorized or regular skateboard.

## CAN I SKATE TO CLASS?

Skating to class is doable, but it's best to plan your route beforehand. The university's campus has many hills that may make going to class difficult or even a safety hazard.

Safety gear can make a new skater more comfortable with the hilly terrain, but skater and junior computer science major Atem Benanzea-Fontem said falling is also part of the process as a beginner. Knowing how to fall safely and not on your arms can reduce the chance of a serious injury.

Students can usually bring their skateboards into classrooms with them rather than secure them outside like bikers and e-scooter users do. But electric skateboards and hoverboards are prohibited in dorms.

## WHERE ARE GOOD PLACES TO SKATE ON CAMPUS?

For beginners, any of the flatground parking lots on campus can be great for practicing how ride a board correctly.

Benanzea-Fontem recommends the space around Pyon-Chen dorm and outside the new dining hall, parking lot by the public health school, the Leonardtown basketball

court, the Shoemaker Building and the Memorial Chapel parking lot.

## I'M THINKING ABOUT TAKING UP SKATEBOARDING.

### WHAT KIND OF BOARD SHOULD I GET?

First time skaters should start off using a traditional skateboard, as opposed to the larger shaped longboard or the smaller penny board, and getting softer wheels for the board can help users ride over cracks on pavement easier.

You can head to Crushed Skate Shop in D.C. to get all things you might need to start practicing the sport in Washington, D.C., is Crushed Skate Shop. Located at 1342 U St. NW, the store sells skateboards and mending products like griptape and other hardware, in addition to extra accessories such as skater-friendly footwear and apparel.

## WHAT DO I DO IF I'M HAVING A PROBLEM WITH MY BOARD?

Bethesda Scooters and Boards, located at 7900 Woodmont Ave. Bethesda, MD, is a Benanzea-Fontem approved repair shop. The Vigilante Coffee shop at 8200, Baltimore Ave. College Park, MD also has a limited number of skateboards and parts.

The campus bike shop does not help with traditional skateboarding repairs

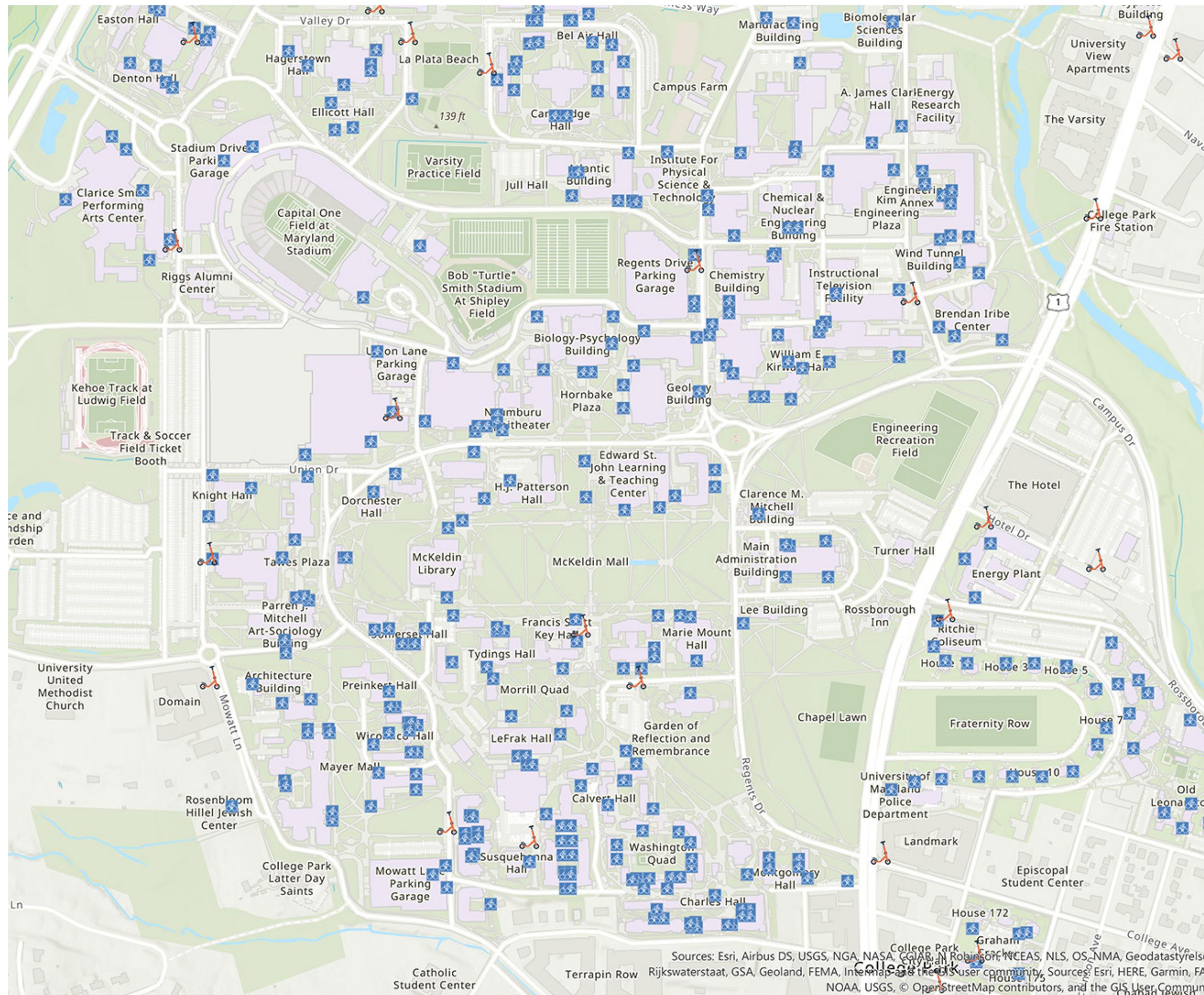
## WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

Both new and more advanced skaters should be wary of practicing late at night or in crowded areas so as to not injure themselves or others by running into pedestrians or cars.

Skaters of all levels are welcome to practice and learn with clubs on campus such as We Skate at UMD, UMD Skateboarding Club and Longboarding Club at UMD.



JAROD BRITT, junior, blades in a parking lot behind the UMD Memorial Chapel on April 6, 2022. FRANCES O'CONNOR/THE DIAMONDBACK



## PARK YOUR RIDE

By Shreya Vuttaluru | @shreyavut | Assistant special projects editor

HERE ARE THE BIKE RACKS AND HUBS THROUGH COLLEGE PARK

E-SCOOTER/VEO HUBS



BIKE RACKS



# TAKE A TRIP TO THESE LOCAL TRAILS

By Sofia Garay | Staff writer

Photographs by Joe Ryan | @Joe\_Leo\_Ryan | Assistant photo editor



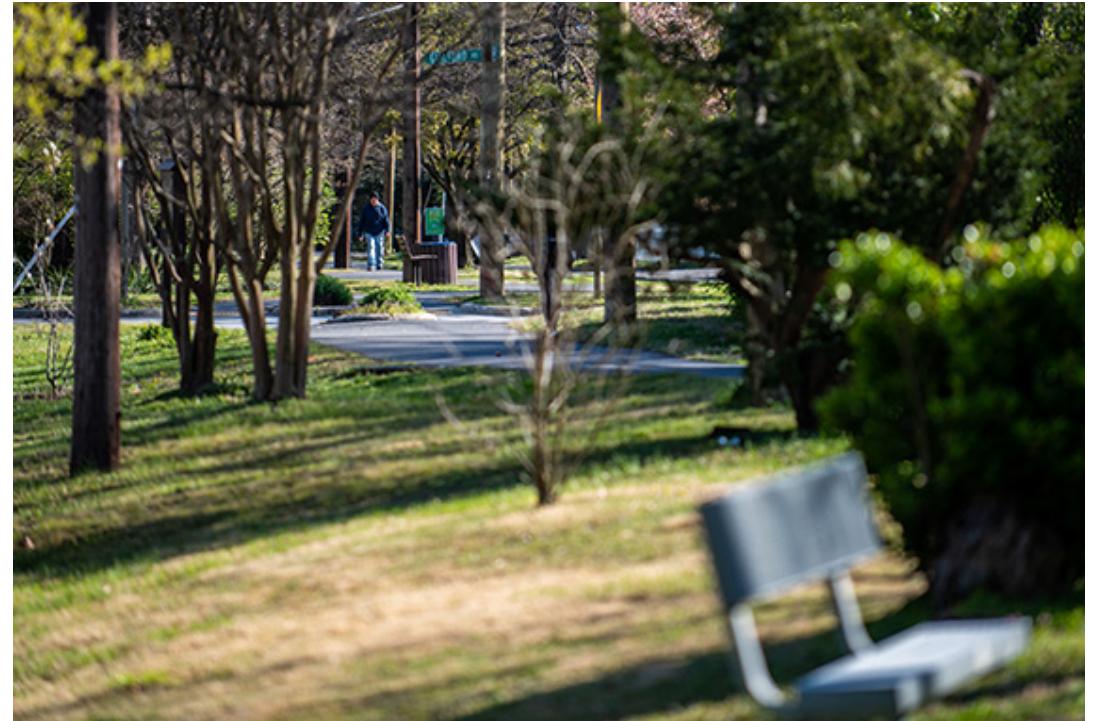
**LAKE ARTEMESIA NATURAL AREA TRAIL** - This trail is just less than 2.5 miles and has lively scenery that circles the 38-acre lake with a fishing pier. The paved trail is accessible to bikers, walkers and runners.



**INDIAN CREEK TRAIL** - This trail connects Berwyn Heights and Lake Artemesia. At a mile and a half, the trail runs through a wooded area that provides plenty of shade.



**PAINT BRANCH TRAIL** - This 3.5-mile trail connects with three trails — Indian Creek, Lake Artemesia and Northeast Branch — and is perfect for walking or running with your dog as well as biking.



**TROLLEY TRAIL** - This asphalt trail is about four miles and runs from College Park to Hyattsville. The trail passes through many shopping centers with restaurants and a bike shop along the way. It also has trees to provide plenty of shade.



**NORTHEAST BRANCH TRAIL** - The three and a half mile trail connects to three other trails in the area and runs along the Anacostia River. The trail passes by the College Park Airport and some wooded areas as well as neighborhoods in Prince Georges County.



**ROCK CREEK PARK** - This park, which extends to Washington, D.C., has 19 trails great for hiking, biking or running. Just a short metro ride away or a 20-minute drive from the university, this trail is great for a weekend trip to Washington, D.C.

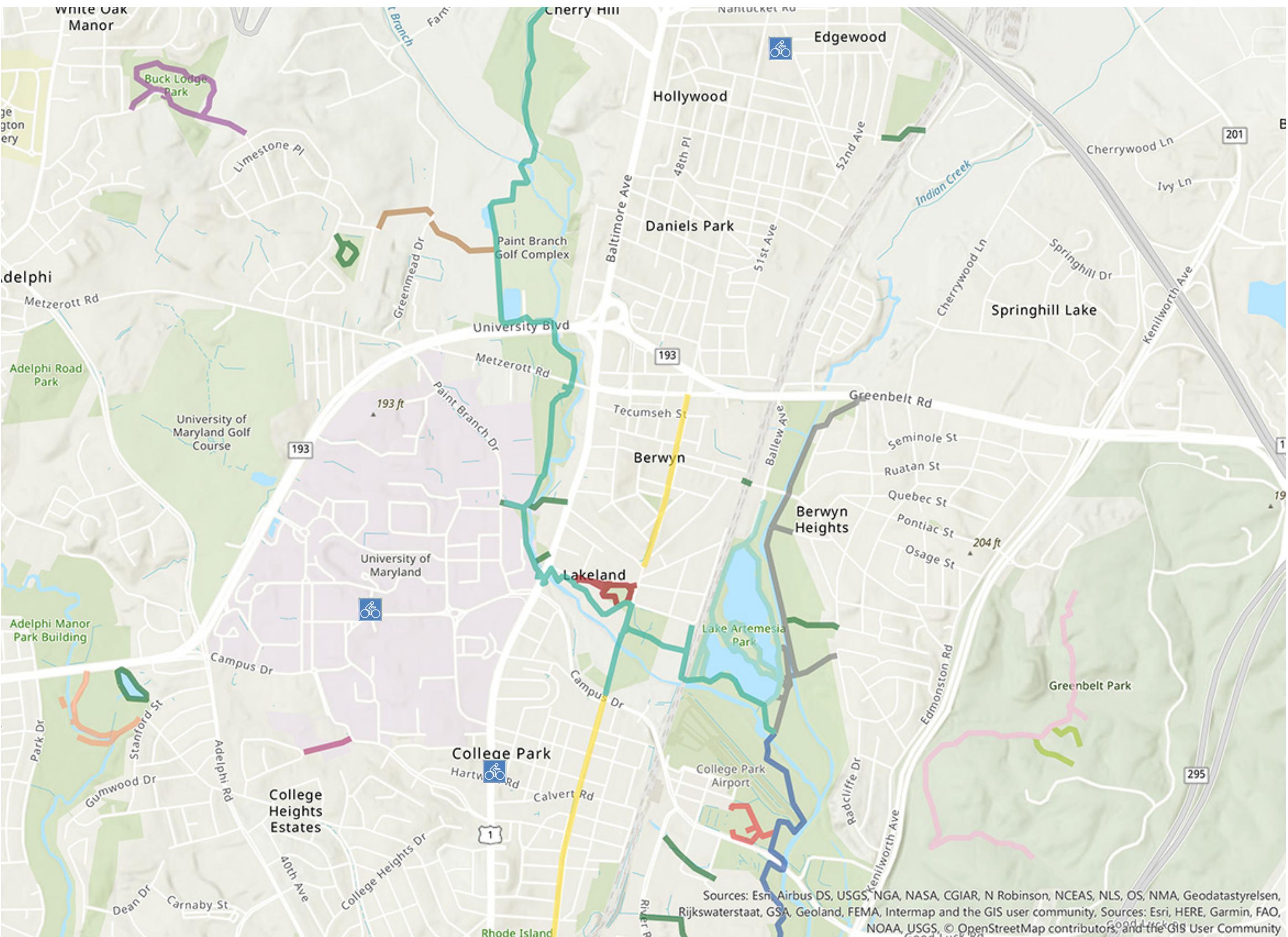
# TAKE A BREATHER

HERE ARE THE TRAILS THAT RUN IN AND AROUND COLLEGE PARK

By Shreya Vuttaluru | @shreyavut | Assistant special projects editor

- Blueberry Trail
- Buck Lodge Community Park/School Trails
- Cherry Hill Road Community Park
- Trolley Trail
- College Park Woods Trail
- Indian Creek Trail
- Greenway Center Bike Lanes
- Junior Tennis Champions Park
- Lake Artemesia Natural Area Trail
- Lakeland Neighborhood Park
- Lane Manor Park Trail
- Northeast Branch Trail
- Perimeter Trail
- Paint Branch Trail
- Other Small Trails

## BIKE SHOPS



# AS CLIMATE CHANGE TIGHTENS ITS GRIP, UMD COMMUNITY MEMBERS BIKE TO CAMPUS

By Shifra Dayak | @shifradayak | Assistant news editor



TANEEN MOMENI/THE DIAMONDBACK

When Nicole Mogul, who lives in Washington, D.C.'s Capitol Hill neighborhood, first started her job at the University of Maryland, she was eagerly awaiting the end of construction on the Anacostia River Trail. Once the project finished, the trail provided almost a straight shot from her house to campus. Mogul has biked to work ever since.

"I really like the way it makes me feel. I like the way I arrive on campus with a better attitude," Mogul said. "And I really dislike the feeling that I'm using fossil fuels for getting me to my work."

For Mogul, a senior lecturer in this university's engineering school, the motivation to start biking was sparked simply by the ability to do so — and a desire to live more sustainably. She's part of a growing number of people, which includes members of the university community, who are opting to bike to school or work.

Biking instead of driving can decrease household emissions by up to 6 percent. Bikes also produce no pollution, whereas cars can create 0.97 pounds of pollution per mile annually.

Nick Webb, a senior civil engineering major, started biking because it was more convenient for him than taking a crowded Shuttle-UM bus or walking from his apartment to class. Seeing the environmental benefits of biking pushed him to keep using

his bike as much as possible in College Park.

"The environmental benefits are sort of why I challenged myself to go car free," Webb said. "A lot of our transportation is just moving people around one at a time in 2,000 pound to 4,000 pound boxes of steel and glass."

Stuart Thomas, a first-year graduate student in this university's physics department, also bikes to campus most days.

Thomas says biking brings him to campus twice as fast as driving would. He also likes the exercise.

Thomas says biking to work is a sustainable choice. More people biking or scootering to campus means more open parking spaces. He hopes more community members forgoing driving for biking means that as these spaces free up, the university can use the lots to develop housing and other projects, instead of resorting to developing Guilford Woods and the Wooded Hillock — forested areas on campus that have been the subject of much controversy.

"Everyday I [bike] is an extra parking spot that someone else can have," Thomas said. "I sometimes think, you know, if there was more bike infrastructure ... we could instead replace the current parking lots with the graduate housing or whatever needs are necessary for the campus."

To Thomas, living sustainably is not in-

dependent of safety. Making the decision to bike often is not easy because of the many barriers to safety and convenience that exist, he said.

Webb said the lack of bike-friendly infrastructure in and around College Park has shown him that sustainable living is not often about individual action, but about creating the systems necessary to make climate-friendly choices.

"It's like, 'you should bike to work,' you know, but if we don't make our society so that you can do these things safely and conveniently, then you're sort of not enabling people to do that," Webb said.

For him, creating a society that allows for sustainable choices like biking means prioritizing safety, from more bike lanes around campus to adequate bike parking in front of businesses.

Thomas thinks prioritizing safety brings a circular benefit. With more infrastructure that lends itself to micromobility comes more environmental sustainability and economic benefit, he said.

"The cost of maintaining a road is so much higher than the cost of maintaining a bike path. And then environmentally, it's a lot of exhaust and also noise pollution."

Chester Harvey, director of the Transportation Policy Research Group at the National Center for Smart Growth — a university ini-

tiative focused on sustainable development — says the key to safety and sustainability lies in generally accommodating infrastructure, outside of just bike lanes.

"My personal preference as a planner and designer actually tends more toward designing streets that are really kind of low speed and low volume, so that you don't need a bike lane, but it's just a safe and comfortable place for folks to share with different modes [of transportation]," Harvey said.

Harvey also mentioned the need to create places where biking and other forms of micromobility could reasonably replace driving. That means fostering affordable communities where commodities are accessible by bikes, scooters and the like.

"We have to create places that have those diverse transportation modes that people can move to if they want," he said.

While the path to accessible sustainability takes shape, Webb said it's important for people to keep incorporating sustainable choices like using micromobility into their everyday lives.

"If there aren't some people who take individual actions, start pursuing things, people are going to be like, 'Oh, we don't need bike lanes,'" he said. "But we need to sort of show that we're interested in this stuff in order to make things speed up and happen."

# A YEAR AFTER ITS INCEPTION, WE SKATE AT UMD HAS FLOURISHED

By Jenna Bloom | @jennabloomm | Layout designer

On a sunny Friday, clusters of skateboarders bearing colorful name tags spread out in the Xfinity parking lot as they learned skills and practiced tricks tailored to their skill levels.

It was We Skate at UMD's second "edusk8," designed to teach new skaters how to become more comfortable on their skateboards. The club aims to alter the skate scene by creating an empowering and inclusive space for women, nonbinary, gender nonconforming and LGBTQ+ skaters.

Now, nearing its first anniversary, the group has grown to more than just a group of people learning how to skate, but to a social "web" of people.

"It's like a connection point ... for people to talk to each other and interact," said Emma Yockman, We Skate's interim president.

The group is a mix of a social and activity club, with events such as edusk8 where members have time to learn while meeting new people.

Ryan Vu, a junior mechanical engineering major, attended edusk8, and spent the event helping people get started with skating. He began by teaching beginners how to stand on a board, and then gave advice on how to fall properly.

"You're gonna fall at some point. That's always gonna

happen," they said. "So if you're gonna fall you might as well know how to do it safely."

Vu, the club's social media manager, says it's important to let skaters progress at their own pace, whether that means holding onto a



ATEM BENANZA-FONTEM at We Skate's edusk8 event in the Xfinity Center parking lot on April 1, 2022. KURT LEINEMANN/THE DIAMONDBACK

friend or standing stationary on a board in the grass.

Eunice Hawkson was in Vu's group of beginners. Hawkson, a junior physiology and neurobiology major, is a semi-experienced skater and had never attended a We Skate event before. She decided to come to meet new people and have fun skating — something she's been wanting to do for a long time.

Hawkson said Vu was "very patient," adding she has plans

to return to another We Skate event in the future.

Since the group's inception in April 2021, the club has seen substantial membership growth. With over 430 members in the GroupMe and about 150 active mem-



SKATERS at the We Skate "edusk8" event in the Xfinity Center parking lot on April 1, 2022. KURT LEINEMANN/THE DIAMONDBACK

bers, students have flocked to this skating community.

"People were ... joining the GroupMe left and right," Yockman said. "It's just sort of blown up."

Before they started the club, some of its founders discussed why We Skate needed to exist alongside other skate clubs at this university. While other clubs hold more competitive skating events, they wanted to gear their programming toward skaters who want to get started with the sport, Yockman ex-

plained.

The skateboarding space is male dominated. About 77 percent of all skaters are male, and the percent of male "core skaters" — people who skate at least once a week, on average — is even higher at about 83 percent, according to a Public Skatepark guide.

"Women and LGBTQ people are always gonna feel a little bit out of place in the normal skateboarding environment," Yockman said. "So we exist to make it a little bit more comfortable."

Jade Brown, the club's communications chair, says the sport is "dominated and shaped by straight white men." She remembers what it was like trying to join the sport as a 10-year-old Black girl from West Baltimore.

"It was very hard for me to break into the sport because there weren't a lot of people like me, and I didn't have many people to look up to," the sophomore communications major said.

We Skate gave Brown friends in the skating community that she was able to bond with in a relatively short period of time, something she is extremely grateful for.

"I'm also hoping that the organization leaves a legacy of one that is welcoming and diverse, and includes people of all backgrounds," Brown added.

# SKATEBOARDING COMMUNITY FIGHTS TO PRESERVE DC'S FREEDOM PLAZA

By Hannah Ziegler | @hannahziegler | Staff writer

Photographs By Julia Nikhinson | @julianikhinson | Photo editor

For skateboarder Arthur Lisi, Freedom Plaza has long been a space that fostered a love for the sport. At age 13, Lisi went for the first time in 1989, and remembers watching in awe as Washington, D.C., skaters did things nobody thought were possible.

"The spot itself ... it's like it was made for skateboarding," said Lisi, now 47 years old. "The innovation of skateboarding that was going down there at the time, was the most progressive you would ever see."

Thousands of skateboarders have flocked to Freedom Plaza since 1980. Washington, D.C., skaters have called the plaza home for decades and, in the process, coexisted with civil rights protestors, event organizers and dancers.

Now, the thousands who consider the plaza the "skateboarding mecca" of the world are fighting to preserve it. More than ten thousand people — including some students at the University of Maryland — have signed a petition opposing plans to eliminate it.

"It's really endearing that people are coming together, differences aside to ... say that this is not okay," said Atem Benanzea-Fontem, a junior computer science major and the president of the University of Maryland Skateboarding Club.

**A proposal to eliminate the space**  
In February, the National Capital Planning Commission — the federal government's planning agency for the National Capital Region — announced three proposals for the Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative, which seeks to revitalize the street linking the White House and Capitol. And Freedom Plaza — located off the northwest part of the avenue — could bear part of the renovation's burden.

Each proposal on the initiative's website would either reroute Pennsylvania Avenue's traffic through the plaza or make the plaza into a green space. So far, plans are not finalized, according to the commission's director of physical planning Elizabeth Miller.

"What we're trying to do is make the space more inclusive than it is," Miller said. "We need to expand and make that space more usable, more comfortable and actually more flexible."

The NCPC will hold three public meetings where people can ask questions and voice their opinions on each proposal in April and May. The commission will also consider responses they receive during a 120-day public comment period, which runs through July 13, before crafting a final proposal for the avenue.

Miller said that there is no guarantee

that the plaza will be affected in a way that prohibits activities like skateboarding, even if it is changed as part of the initiative.

Karin Schierhold, an urban planner with the commission, said the plans outlined by NCPC aim to "inspire people's imagination" for what Pennsylvania Avenue could be. None of the proposals are fully realized designs, and exist to give people a sense of the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor and its character, Schierhold said.

The finalized version of the plan will likely be "a mix and match" of ideas gathered now, Schierhold added.

## A threat to a "magical place."

Brian Aguilar, who owns Crushed Skate Shop in Washington, D.C., and started the petition to preserve the plaza, said he "instantly felt threatened" by three proposals.

Aguilar grew up listening to his brother tell stories about Freedom Plaza long before he landed his first trick there. The plaza provides a "home base" for the skateboarding community and Crushed, which is the last skate shop remaining in the District.

"People come from all over the world just to skate the marble," Aguilar said. "It's a magical place."

A quick transfer to the Orange or Blue Metro lines at L'Enfant Plaza gives University of Maryland community members a straight shot to Freedom Plaza — which is just 10 miles away from the campus and located closest to the Federal Center SW Metro stop. And members of the University of Maryland Skateboarding Club utilize the space often, Benanzea-Fontem said.

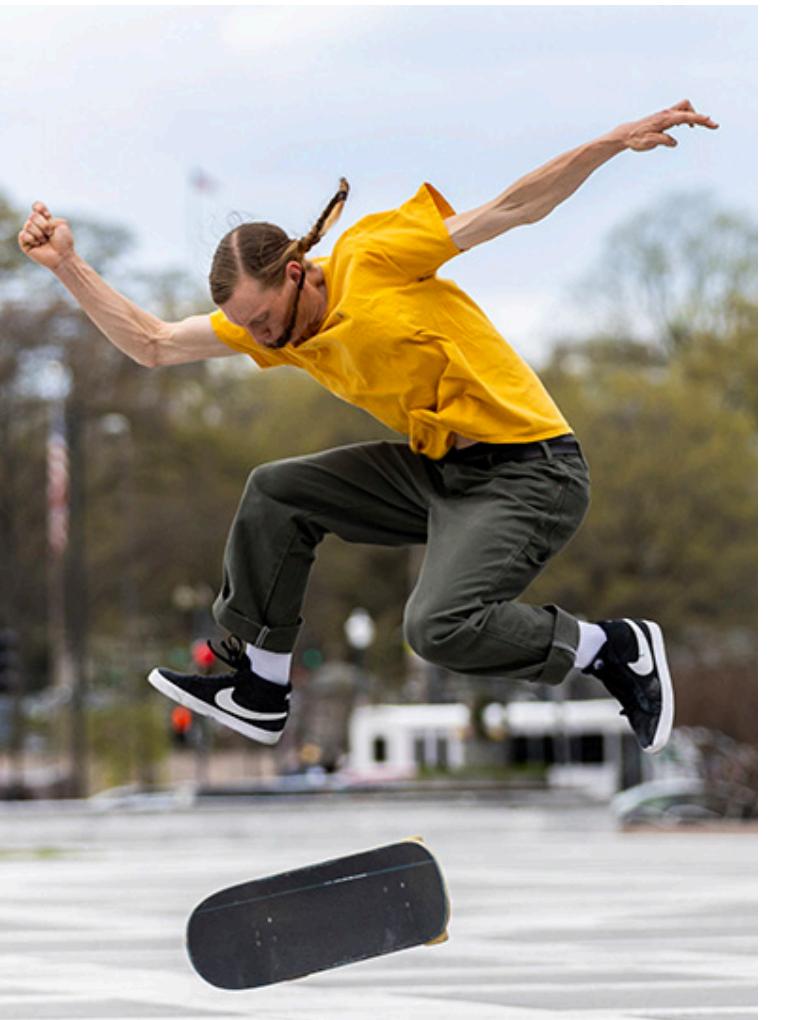
Skaters at this university have also collaborated with other students to host events at the plaza — including a "Game of Skate" competition between this university and Georgetown University skaters.

"If you're planning to skate the entire day, people usually meet up there because that's the most open space you can access in downtown D.C.," he said.

## Treasured memories

Many skaters have made their most cherished memories in Washington, D.C., at Freedom Plaza. Nnamdi Ihewkwoaba remembers a decade of warm summers spent watching the sunset reflect off the plaza's marble.

"It's just the warmth of being around people, the warmth of being in the city and actually feeling connected with the



city," Ihewkwoaba said. "As skateboarders and people who go downtown a lot and spend a lot of time at Freedom Plaza, you become intimate with the city."

Freedom Plaza provides a home for everyone, Ihewkwoaba said. Many who occupy the space may have never visited Washington, D.C., if it weren't for the plaza's significance, he added.

Ihekwoaba has lived through protests and dances during his years skating at the plaza. He remembers older people who would descend to the marble on Wednesday nights in the summertime to dance.

"It's all because there's a space that was created for that kind of thing," Ihewkwoaba said. "If historical things that are meant to represent the people, and are for the people ... are being destroyed, it really is taking away a lot of value and a lot of morality out of the city."

When Maen Hammad moved to Washington, D.C., in 2015, one of the first things he did was skate at Freedom Plaza. He was raised just outside of Detroit and watched professional skaters dance across the marble at Freedom Plaza from hundreds of miles away.

Professional skaters who rose to prominence in the '80s and '90s, including Sean Sheffey, Brian Tucci and Mike Kepner, used the space as a proving grounds early in their careers.

During his time skating at the plaza, Hammad has realized how important it is for the DMV skateboarding community to have a central hub. Public spaces don't often overlap with professional sports, but the physical space where someone skates is a crucial part of the activity, Hammad said.

"The relationship to Freedom Plaza with the skaters in particular probably has a little less to do with skating than it actually does with this idea of community," Hammad said. "This is really a very vital and nourishing space for the exact community who lives in D.C."

## Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy

Some have also wondered about the fate of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy if Freedom Plaza is destroyed. The plaza is named in honor of King — who wrote part of his "I Have a Dream" speech nearby and whose time capsule is supposed to remain buried beneath the plaza until 2088.

Benanzea-Fontem believes a plan that destroys Freedom Plaza would serve as a metaphor for "destroying freedom" itself because of King's impact on the space.

Freedom Plaza is intrinsically tied to

King's legacy, Ihewkwoaba added.

"Martin Luther King was such a huge pivotal part of our country, and he's a huge part of Freedom Plaza, and to just simply think about destroying it, to maybe add some grass, or something far less significant, is kind of a slap in the face to a lot of people," Ihewkwoaba said. "It's a lot deeper than just skateboarding."

The plaza is also a focal point for a long history of First Amendment demonstrations in the nation's capital. Eliminating the plaza would stifle a number of important gatherings in Washington, D.C., Ihewkwoaba said. From Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in 2011 to pro-Trump "Stop the Steal" protests last year, the plaza is a "landmark and host" for civic discourse.

Miller said once they have realized a plan for the avenue, the NCPC will undergo environmental and historical resource analysis, with public meetings during that process. Making the space more usable to all communities in the District promotes diversity and inclusion, she added.

Black and brown people nurture Freedom Plaza the most, Hammad said. That, paired with King's legacy at the plaza and the NCPC's sudden announcement of the space's possible destruction, signaled to him that some people refuse to see how communities engage with the plaza.

"I would encourage any sort of policymaker or city planner involved to go on their own on a weekend and hang out at Freedom Plaza by themselves for like an hour and just see the number of people, the types of people, the variety of conversations, the smiles, the cheers, the kids, the elderly, who are all really having a quite beautiful interpretive dance with an already existing public space," Hammad said.

In addition to sharing the petition on social media, many skaters have reached out to the commission via email to raise their concerns. Others plan to attend one or more of the public meetings on the initiative.

Longtime members of the skateboarding community like Ihewkwoaba are not surprised by the outcry of public support. Freedom Plaza has touched different communities over the last four decades. Now, the communities who use the space are protecting it in its moment of need, Ihewkwoaba said.

"This is our time to actually stand up and fight for something that we do care about," Ihewkwoaba said. "We can all agree on one thing: this place is extremely important to everybody."

# UMD STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OPT FOR ALTERNATE MODES OF TRANSIT ON CAMPUS

By Shreya Vuttaluru | @shreyavut | Assistant special projects editor  
 Photographs by Jordyn Salow | @jsalowphotos | Staff photographer



As a wheelchair user, the hills scattered around the campus tend to be inconvenient at best and impossible to navigate at worst. Perry, a computer science major, attempted to wheel around campus his first year after transferring to this university but found it extremely difficult – even wheeling to get a meal at the South Campus Dining Hall was an exhausting ordeal.

For many students with disabilities at this university, getting around the campus can be arduous, particularly because of hills, bumpy sidewalks and construction. As a result, some have opted for alternate modes of transportation – and those systems are far from perfect, too.

“It’s kind of like accessibility is just an afterthought,” Perry said. “A lot of people just ... aren’t aware of these things.”

Carolyn Fink, director of this university’s disabilities studies minor, teaches classes on the importance of universal design, which puts accessibility at the forefront of design concepts.

Many campus buildings were built well before the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, when accessibility was an “add-on” and not something designers actively kept in mind, she said.

“If you make a reasonable design choice, then it benefits everybody, not just people with disabilities,” Fink said.

Buildings that predate the ADA often require retrofitting, Fink said. But hills, Fink noted, are

something the university can’t change, which is why paratransit and public transportation are vital.

Reagan White, a senior microbiology major, elected not to bring her wheelchair to campus because of how difficult she believed it would be to get around. She’s an ambulatory wheelchair user and can walk around, but doing so can cause physical stress.

“It’s about a million times more difficult to wheel yourself up a hill than it is to walk,” White said. “And so I was like, ‘This just isn’t going to work.’”

Because of her decision, White has to take much more time out of her day to recover from walking around – time she could be using to work on schoolwork or be social around the campus, she said.

White knows the bus system like the back of her hand to minimize the amount of time she spends walking. To avoid Stamp Hill, she gets off the bus at Regents Drive, takes the elevator up Regents Drive Garage and walks across the bridge to the Plant Sciences building. From there, a right turn and a short stroll straight past the Biology-Psychology building lands her at the bottom of Stamp Student Union.

But cuts to certain bus routes have left White standing around for up to 20 minutes, she recalls. For her, that’s especially egregious, because her heart condition can cause her to pass out if she stands for too long. She thinks a stronger public transportation system would help the campus become much more

accessible.

“That’s the easiest way to increase accessibility without putting the burden of accessibility on your disabled students,” she said.

White has tried to use the university’s paratransit services but feels the service isn’t adequate for social purposes because rides need to be scheduled in advance.

Shuttle-UM runs up to five paratransit vans at a time, providing an average of 130 rides per week when the university is in session, according to a statement from a university spokesperson.

Perry, who now prefers to use a car with hand controls, previously took advantage of both paratransit services and public transportation. He’s found Shuttle-UM bus drivers are very accommodating and are more knowledgeable than other public transportation drivers about securing wheelchairs.

Construction can also be a barrier to getting around the campus comfortably. Noah Hanssen, a junior public policy major, said construction often cuts off sidewalks that are necessary for getting to classes, causing him to seek alternative, sometimes longer routes.

“There are definitely places around here where ... my routes to get to a class [are] limited,” he said. “A lot of it is just the issue of how hilly campus is, and there aren’t very many ways around it.”

Perry has also rerouted his commutes across the campus because of unexpected sidewalk closures due to construction. But aside from



creating a barrier to travel around the campus, construction and a lack of sidewalk maintenance can also be dangerous, Perry pointed out. He’s fallen out of his wheelchair multiple times because of bumps on sidewalks, he said.

“The cracks in the sidewalk between the slabs of concrete are sometimes really uneven, and it’s really easy to catch an edge on one of the little front caster wheels on my wheelchair and fall out,” he said.

The university is taking some steps toward making sure people with disabilities on campus can report inconveniences and inaccessible spaces due to construction, said Georgina Dodge, the diversity and inclusion vice president at this university.

Since March, Facilities Management has been placing signs on areas under construction that list a point of contact to report barriers, she noted. Facilities Management works closely with Accessibility and Disability Services and other services across campus to notify the community of all planned sidewalk, pathway and egress closures, according to a university statement.

Despite some efforts to improve accessibility on campus, Hanssen thinks the university needs to be more proactive and rely less on students with disabilities to advocate for accessible spaces.

“I feel like they probably don’t think about having people with disabilities on their campus very much,” he said. “I don’t think that they do enough.”

# BLACK WOMEN BIKE: THIS D.C. CYCLING COMMUNITY EDUCATES AND EMPOWERS

By Hannah Ziegler | @hannahzziegler | Staff writer



TANEEN MOMENI/THE DIAMONDBACK

When gas prices were ballooning about 10 years ago, Laurie Williams set out to navigate her Prince George's County neighborhood without a car.

Williams grew up riding her bike around her home in Washington, D.C., but the hobby fell out of habit due to limited biking infrastructure near her current home in Clinton, Maryland. When gas prices exceeded \$4, she started to ride her bike around her neighborhood to offset the costs.

As she coped with the county's meager cycling infrastructure, Williams also struggled to find a community of riders who shared her passion. Most people in the biking advertisements of 2011 were skinny, white people wearing spandex, she said. She rarely saw women of color being lauded as bikers.

It was this frustration that prompted Williams to become an early member of Black Women Bike D.C. Founded in 2011, Black Women Bike supports women and girls of all ages to ride their bikes for fun, health, wellness and transportation, Williams said.

Over the last decade, the group has organized group rides, taught master classes in bike maintenance and safety and developed partnerships with other area cyclist organizations, all while empowering Black women across the DMV to ride confidently.

"We just wanted everybody to know that yes, Black people and Black women and girls do bike, and we wanted to give them a safe place to bike," Williams said. "Every month, I look forward to riding with them."

Williams is now part of the organization's leadership team and has helped the group's following grow to more than 24,000 Facebook group members. Black Women Bike is open to all women, but the group's main focus is providing representation to women of color in the cycling community.

Anica Allen joined Black Women Bike after she found a flyer about the group in her local bike shop.

"It sounds silly. You're like, 'Oh, man, I thought I was the only one,'" Allen said. "I mean, you know you're

not obviously the only one. But when you don't see a whole lot of people that look like you, it kind of feels like, 'Oh, cool. There's a club for people like me!'

The group started as a Twitter message between three friends in 2011, Allen said. Black Women Bike co-founder Veronica Davis was riding her bike to meet some friends for a movie. She passed through a predominantly Black housing complex and heard a young Black girl exclaim to her mother, "Mommy, mommy, there's a Black lady on a bike!"

"I had the realization that I looked like her and she was very excited to see someone who looked like her riding a bike," Davis told Momentum Magazine in 2012, shortly after the group's founding.

Many programs that promote sustainable transportation options, such as biking, are not accessible to communities of color, Allen said. One event in the District called Bike to Work Day takes place every spring, but doesn't

always coincide with a morning commute. In Allen's eyes, those types of events are geared toward workers who want to bike as a hobby, rather than those who bike to work out of necessity.

"Earlier than a lot of people often would get up for work, you will see people on bicycles," Allen said. "We don't often get seen, but there's oftentimes lots of people of color riding bicycles, you just have to know when to look."

The lack of a biking community for people of color has opened a door for Black Women Bike to teach members the basics of cycling. Efforts to promote safe cycling such as bike tune-up lessons and carefully crafted bike buying guides have boosted the group's influence for beginner cyclists across the D.C. metro area.

These lessons are catered to bikers of all skill levels, Allen said. Women who were once afraid to ride on the road have transformed into ride leaders. Others who had not biked in more than 20 years have become regular attendees of group rides.

"You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to be not afraid," Allen said. "You learn what to do by doing it."

For Allison Saunders, Black Women Bike has provided a "safe space" for her to follow her cycling passion. Saunders joined the group during the pandemic, and later became a part of the leadership team.

Members feel the positive impact of Black Women Bike in many aspects of their lives, Saunders said. Learning to take up a lane while biking on the road is a metaphor for members feeling empowered to take up space in the world, she added.

"That's something that I don't know we're necessarily trained to do as women and women of color," Saunders said. "It's having a group of people you can learn from and take up space with and sort of feel powerful."

# One Ride at a Time

By Khushboo Rathore | @kboorath | Staff writer

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- 23** Fix some walls
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- 30** Popeye's girlfriend
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- 13** Concealed
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- 47** What all the shaded answers help save
- 48** Crow's cry
- 51** Rapper Dr. \_\_\_\_
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