**Preserving Our Rural Roads: A Call to Action**

Dear Editor:

The gravel road network of Loudoun County is today’s reminder of the long history of our region. George Washington rode these paths as a young surveyor for Lord Fairfax. The armies of Lee and Hooker tracked each other as they maneuvered for their faithful showdown at Gettysburg. You can almost hear the creak of wagons and the yells of the teamsters as they maneuvered the cutbacks and fords that still exist today, unchanged for hundreds of years. Hikers, equestrians, mountain bikers and residents still use these roads, as do the limited numbers of cars that carefully maneuver their way on the gravel surfaces and narrow paths.

As our communities continue to evolve, it is imperative that we do not lose sight of the intrinsic value held by the roads that wind through our rural landscapes. These roads are not just pathways for transportation; they are threads that connect us to our past, represent the essence of our heritage, and offer a window into the serene beauty of our countryside. The "Protect Rural Roads Campaign," recently unveiled by Loudoun’s Future, a Political Action Committee (PAC) established to counter the forces of development, is a timely and vital initiative that calls for our collective efforts in safeguarding these irreplaceable treasures.

In an era marked by rapid urbanization and development, our rural roads face unprecedented challenges and threats. The desire of some people to pave our rural roads highlights the growing threat of increasing traffic, inadequate maintenance, and encroaching development. The consequences of altering these roads could be profound, stripping our communities of the historic charm that sets them apart and diminishing the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

The "Protect Rural Roads Campaign" aims to emerge as a beacon of hope and unity, rallying community members, local authorities, and stakeholders under a common cause. This campaign stands as a testament to our commitment to strike a harmonious balance between progress and preservation. By advocating for these roads' maintenance, restoration, and protectionwe acknowledge their significance in shaping our identity and nurturing our environment.

At the heart of this campaign is a call to action for all of us. As residents of these communities, we possess the power to advocate for change, influence decisions, and create a lasting impact. It is our responsibility to engage in meaningful conversations about the future of our rural roads, urging our leaders to prioritize their preservation in their policies and planning.

September 13th is an important day for us to stand as a community and say “Enough.” That is the evening that the Board of Supervisors will vote on the six-year plan for improvement of Loudoun roads. There are two important gravel roads that we must protect: Old Wheatland and Canby Road. Both roads have been moved up in priority without proper public input. Show up at the meeting. Sign up for public comment. Your voices matter. Let the Supervisors know that we need to explore alternatives to paving away our heritage.

Preserving rural roads isn't just a nostalgic endeavor; it's a pragmatic choice for sustainable development. We’ve seen previously that gravel roads can be treated to reduce dust but keep their historic nature intact. Paving our historic gravel roads will only lead to more traffic, higher speeds and a reduction of trails for equestrians, bikers, and residents.

This campaign serves as a rallying call for all of us to step forward and play a role in preserving the essence of our rural roads. Let us embrace this opportunity to shape a future that respects our past, sustains our present, and creates a legacy we can all be proud of. Our rural roads are not just pathways; they are pathways to our shared future.