

Mazda Sports Cars of Washington (MSCW)

2025 Drive Guidelines



MSCW is a social group based out of the Washington (DC), Virginia and Maryland area.

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Welcome

This short guide should tell you all you need to know about going out for a drive with MSCW. It contains basic principles that keep us together and safe, as well as notes on our regular starting locations. If you have any questions after reading this guide, please bring them up at a monthly meeting, or contact the drive coordinator with an email or a phone call.

Drive Basics

Formats

Our drives are categorized as scenic drives, destination drives, or excursions. They usually take place on a Saturday or Sunday, and may last only a few hours or take as long as a whole summer day for a destination, or three or more days for an excursion.

- A scenic drive is usually a route that takes us out on roads where there are lots of curves and elevation changes for spirited driving, or a fun “drive in the country” where we enjoy fresh air and interesting sites, such as trips along the Potomac River or visits to nearby lighthouses. There is often a meal planned along the route.
- A destination drive has a focus on getting to a specific destination. The route chosen may include spirited segments or great views, but the focus is on visiting an interesting location. Examples include our trip to the AACA museum in Hershey, Pennsylvania, or the balloon festival at the Flying Circus Airshow in Bealeton, VA. Meal(s) are included in the planning. Occasionally, we may have a destination drive that will include an overnight stay, like our visit to Niagara Falls or the Watkins Glen racetrack.
- An excursion trip takes some cars to a specific area to behave like tourists for a day or two - there will be at *least* two nights on the road. Basically, I'll publish an excursion, and we'll all go to the destination as a group. But once we're there, folks are on their own as to where they stay, what they do, and when they go home. I'll share my plans and folks are welcome to join me on activities or follow me home, but there's no requirement - leave early or stay longer as you see fit!

On longer drives, fuel/bathroom breaks are planned so that any given leg of the drive is typically no longer than two hours.

We have a web page - <https://www.midatlanticscenicdrives.com/mscwdrives.html>, that shows the drives planned for the current season. When a sign up is ‘live’ for a drive, the drive name will be a web link.

Annual Drives

While MSCW tries to mix it up, we do repeat a few drives every year. There are generally no limits on the number of cars on these drives.

- Every year in June, we visit the AACA museum in Hershey, PA, for an open-air “car show” held on their lawn. This destination drive event is free, and includes complimentary admission to the museum, normally, there is a great mix of cars in attendance.
- In the Summer, there’s a drive to Ocean City Maryland to see the Airshow. We get up VERY early so we are in OCMD by 7:00 AM and can find free parking and stake out a spot on the beach.
- In July or August, we have a spirited scenic drive along Fort Valley Road in Northern Virginia, West of Front Royal and the Shenandoah mountains. This is our annual “go-fast” event, due to the speed limit on the roads being set high enough that we can enjoy the drive without exceeding the speed limit.
- Sometime during the drive season, we may do a short-notice trip to Wallops Island to see a rocket launch from their visitor center.
- In December, we try to visit a “Christmasy” location, such as Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania or Baltimore’s “Miracle on 34th Street”. This trip will take place when the roads and weather are expected to be clear.

Group Sizes

We usually limit the size of the group on a drive based on the capacity of our planned meal location, and the complexity of the route. This ensures that we don’t get split up as we go through urban areas and that members do not get lost (see *How We Stay Together* later in this guide).

Subgroups

On some drives, the group may be divided into subgroups of four or five cars. Each subgroup leader will have their own GPS or borrow one from me, and a radio to stay in touch with the overall lead. This ensures that if we do get separated (by a train, or urban traffic) there’s a lead with each subgroup who knows where we’re going. It’s a lot easier to keep track of four cars behind you than nineteen cars behind you.

The Signup Process

The planned routes are published via our mailing list and Facebook group weeks or months in advance of the drive. In the narrative describing the route and the details (date/starting point/length), there will be a link to a “SignupGenius” page for that route, this is where you should register for the drive. If the drive is full, re-check the signup every now and then, as folks drop out, or additional slots may be added. When you sign up, you’ll be asked for your contact information (email and mobile phone), a description of your car, and how many people will be coming (useful for letting restaurants know how many people to expect). There is a quantity field on the signup page. This is usually left at “1”, because it represents how many CARS are associated with your signup. But if you are signing up for two cars (perhaps a couple each has their own sports car), that’s ok. Each signup will get an email confirmation from “SignupGenius”, and the drive coordinator will send information to all registered participants, usually a week or so before the event. This information will include contingencies for bad weather, and more details specific to the route. There is a special “practice” signup that you can use – just point your browser to <https://bit.ly/mscw-practice-signup>.

The Day of the Drive

We typically get together at the starting location 30 minutes before the drive starts. That gives us time to socialize and talk about the route. Everyone registered will get the drive leader's mobile phone number, and should call or text the leader if they aren't going to make it to the start on time. The group may wait if someone is 5-10 minutes behind schedule and they reach out ahead of time, but otherwise the group leaves on time. The starting locations are chosen to be fairly easy to find public spaces, with sufficient parking for the group. Usually they are public schools, shopping centers, or parks. See the *Starting Places* section of the guide for descriptions of our common starting points. There's also a map – https://bit.ly/mscw_starting_points. Please arrive with sufficient gas and have used the restroom beforehand. Typically, we say to arrive with full tanks and empty bladders. As previously noted, there will be planned stops every two hours or so for bathroom/fuel breaks.

How We Stay Together

The key to keeping the group reasonably together is for *each driver to take responsibility for the driver behind them not getting lost*. That means that you periodically check your rear-view mirror and ensure that you can see the car behind you. This is particularly important when you make a turn onto a new road. Ensure that the car behind you can see you make the turn, even if you have to make the turn and stop there until he sees you. If you are losing the car behind you on straight segments (it's normal to lose it for a few seconds in turns and in the mountains), slow down and let it catch up. Don't worry, the car in front of you will slow down as well and this reduction will make its way up the line to the lead car. You should always stay on the same road unless you see the car ahead of you making a turn. So don't panic if you lose the car ahead of you for a short period of time, it will be waiting for you somewhere ahead. The routes are published in advance so that you can decide whether to go or not, maps and GPS files are also available (see the *Technology* section). If we do get separated, the leader will usually find a safe place to pull over and wait, or will drive slowly in the right lane of a multilane road until folks catch up. So if you get stuck at a light or a stop sign, know that the group will be waiting for you. With the radios (*Technology* section), you can let the leader know that the group is split, and hear the leader announce where the lead group is waiting. For safety reasons, remain in your vehicle. When you come upon the group slowed down or stopped, you can signal by flashing your high beams so they can pull out in front of you and travel as a group once more.

Rules For the Drive

These rules are based on over fifteen years of experience driving in groups and have been altered slightly to match our use of convertibles.

1. Safety is first. Your first job is to protect your own personal safety. After that you need to worry about the safety of other drivers in the group. Then comes your car, and finally other property. Don't hesitate to drop out of the drive if you need to (see *What If Something Bad Happens*), and once you're safely stopped, then you can worry about contacting the leader.
2. Be sure your car is reliable. Our drives are typically hours long and hundreds of miles, often in remote/mountainous areas. This is not the time to bring a marginal vehicle.
3. Pay attention to the drive and the road. Don't spend time talking on your phone, and absolutely no texting. The roads we drive require your vigilance!
4. Do not tailgate. Keep a good cushion between you and the car you are following. Don't worry if you lose sight of it, it will slow down if it loses track of you. Frequently we may come across animals or

debris in the road and have to slow down or swerve suddenly, and you'll be grateful you aren't riding the bumper of the car ahead of you. In urban areas, please keep up with the group while still maintaining a safe distance. That will reduce the chance of us getting separated at traffic lights.

5. Be sparing of your use of the horn and headlights. During the day, please keep your headlights off unless you are deliberately trying to signal the car(s) ahead of you, such as when you come on a group waiting on the side of the road after you've been separated. We want folks who see us to enjoy the experience – once we were in urban Maryland and kids started chasing us down their sidewalk, telling all their friends to “check out the cool convertibles”. We don't want to be the people other drivers denigrate.
6. Speed – Typically we try to keep the speed to no more than the posted limit plus 5 MPH. Exceptions to this are congested areas (don't want to hit a child or a pet) and places where there is a known police presence, particularly on Federal property. In those places we strictly observe the speed limit or even go slower than the limit. On our Fort Valley Road drive we may go a little faster, but only on clear areas.
7. Signal your turns. Typically, the leader will signal a turn a quarter mile in advance. If you see the driver ahead of you signal a turn, put your signal on so that he'll know you saw his signal, and thus you'll pass the signal to the car behind you.
8. If the group must make a left turn, and there are two left turn lanes, then using both lanes can get us all through in a single signal window. We can always get back in a single line once the turn is made.
9. When approaching a blind corner or blind crest of a hill, slow down and stay to the right. There's nothing worse than coming over the top of a hill and finding a farm vehicle doing 20MPH on the other side, or finding a fallen tree across the road.
10. In a convertible, MOO AT THE COWS. You get bonus points if they moo back at you. Talking to other animals (oinking at pigs, Baa-ing at sheep, whinnying at horses) is encouraged.

The End of the Drive

All the drives have a programmed ending spot. Sometimes the drive is a loop, and other times the destination may be the “end” of the group drive. Generally, you are on your own from the end point. If you need to leave a drive earlier than the programmed end, let the leader know at the start of the drive, and then you can break off at the agreed-upon spot. If the end doesn't have a stop planned, the leader will usually signal “this is the end” by waving at the following cars.

What If Something Bad Happens?

If you hit a critter, blow a tire, or have a mechanical problem, get off the road safely and then take steps to work the issue. While we follow “Top Gear” rules and generally won't abandon the drive for a mechanical issue, do contact the leader (via radio or mobile phone) and together you can work out a solution. Many of us travel with tools, jumper cables or starters, so we may be able to get you going. Of course, if there is a serious accident, the entire group should get off the road safely, call 911, and render assistance.

Technology

Route Planning and Maps and GPS files – When planning a route, I use Garmin's BaseCamp application, as this lets me build a route, adjust the roads (shaping points) used by the route, and export them to directly to a Garmin GPS, or to a GPX file (used by many GPS units), or a Keyhole Markup Language (KML) file which is used by Google Earth and Google Maps. If you have a Garmin GPS, you can download BaseCamp and import a GPX

file to edit it and transfer it to your GPS. Maps (created in Google Maps from BaseCamp KML files) are published on the web at www.midatlanticscenicdrives.com/maps.html. This web page also has a link to a public OneDrive site where you can download the GPX or KML files for the drive.

A note on GPS units – you will want a mobile GPS that supports routes rather than just selecting a destination and giving you the most direct way to get there. In general, if a Garmin GPS has a Trip Planner app on it, it will communicate with BaseCamp and be able to accept a route that includes shaping points to force the GPS to follow a specific route. You can also generally upload a GPX file to the unit if you don't have BaseCamp and it will show up in the Trip Planner. Nearly all the current Garmin automotive GPS units have this feature. I also have some Garmin GPS units to loan out for the drive.

Communication and Radios – We are using GMRS (Generic Mobile Radio Service) for car-to-car communications. We've had good luck with Midland GXT1000 handheld radios, though we can communicate with other GMRS radios as well. The leader usually has a few extra radios, but if you want to purchase your own GMRS handheld, you can buy a Midland GXT1000 for less than \$50.00. If you use a Midland radio, we usually use Midland channel 30, which is Midland's preset for GMRS channel 21 (462.7000 MHz) with CTCSS privacy code 17 (frequency of 118.8 Hz). If you have a different brand of GMRS radio, as long as you can tune this frequency and CTCSS privacy code, we'll likely be able to communicate. One caveat – the privacy code doesn't "encrypt" anything you transmit. It merely keeps your radio from receiving any transmissions that don't have that privacy code set. So don't say anything you don't want others to hear over the radio. Someone listening on Channel 21 with no privacy code set will hear everything said on that channel.

Glympse – We've tried many different applications for smartphones, including *Rever* and *RoadStr*, but the one that seems to work reliably across multiple platforms (Apple and Android) is *Glympse*. We have a couple of tags that we can use to share our location with the group. "mscw_cruise" is used for our group drives, and "mscw_scouting" is used when some of us are out scouting roads. How to share your location with the tag? If you're familiar with Glympse, you simply start the app, start to share your location, specify "!mscw_cruise" as the recipient, and be sure you specify a long enough time to cover the drive (often we just specify six or more hours). Generally, the group leader will help set up Glympse at the start of each drive. Your friends or family can track the group with a browser at https://glympse.com/!mscw_cruise.

How To Contact the Drive Coordinator

Timothy (Tim) Metzinger coordinates and leads nearly all the drives for MSCW. Tim can be reached at (703) 963-3015 or by email to tim.metzinger@outlook.com.

Our Common Starting Locations for Drives

This section lists our common starting points, and includes a map, some narrative on ways to get there, and information on the nearest fuel and restrooms. There is also a Google Map available at https://bit.ly/mscw_starting_points. If you've got web access while reading this, then definitely use the Google Map as it will let you zoom in and move the map around. When looking at the maps in this document, just look for the **P** symbol, as it will mark the place where we gather.

Maryland Starting Locations

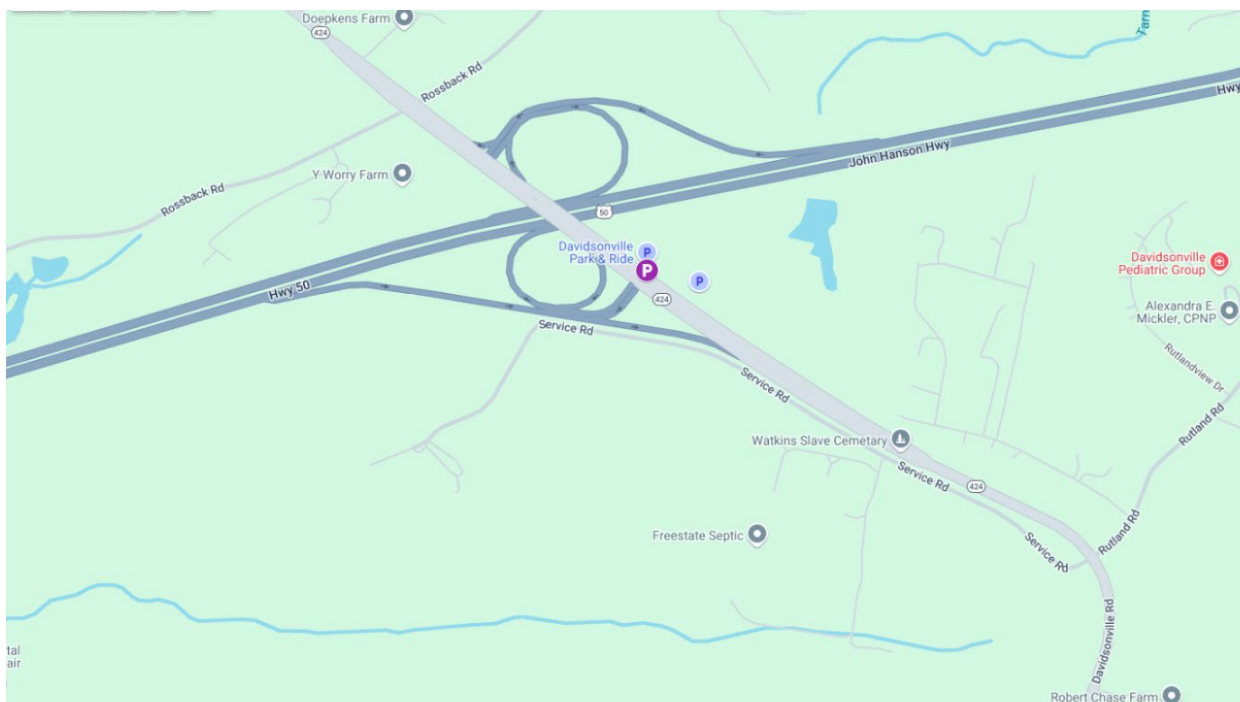
Annapolis – Kohls

Annapolis is convenient to US50 when we need to cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge to visit the shore. Exit 23 off US50 In Maryland will take you to West Street where you'll see an Exxon and a Shell, and the Kohls Lot is off Solomons Island Road.



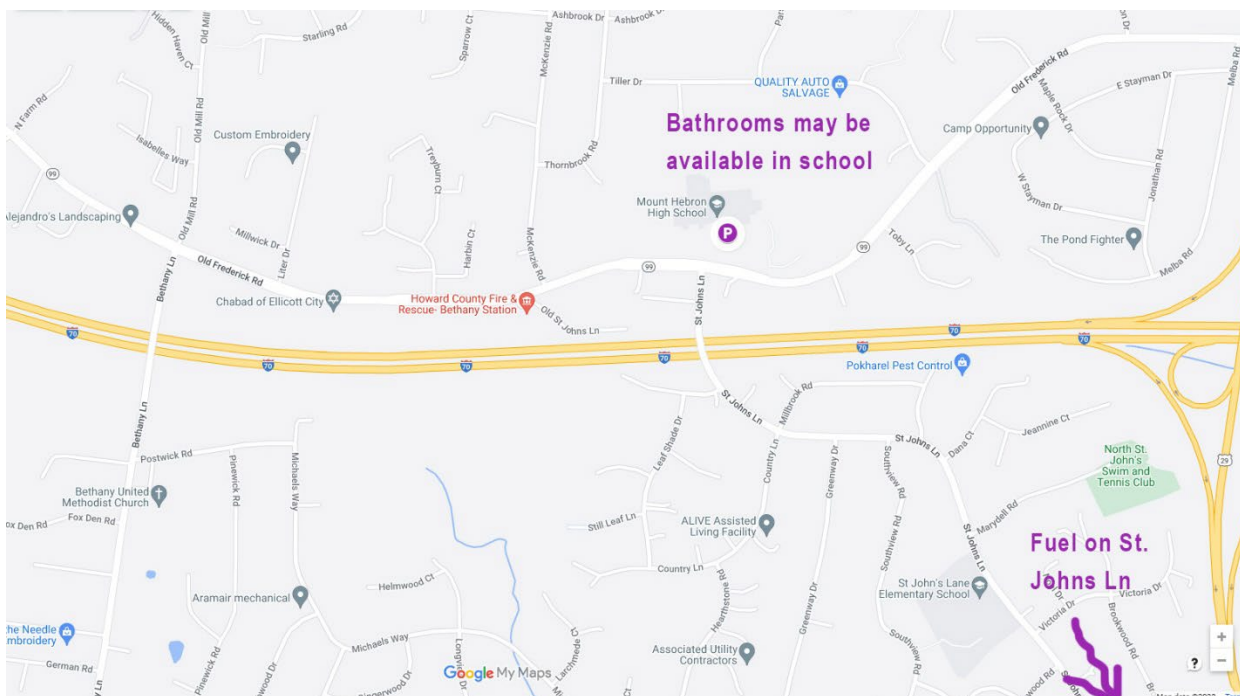
Davidsonville – Davidsonville Park and Ride

This is a commuter lot on US50 where it intersects with MD424 (Exit 16). Fuel is available in Davidsonville by taking MD424 south from US50.



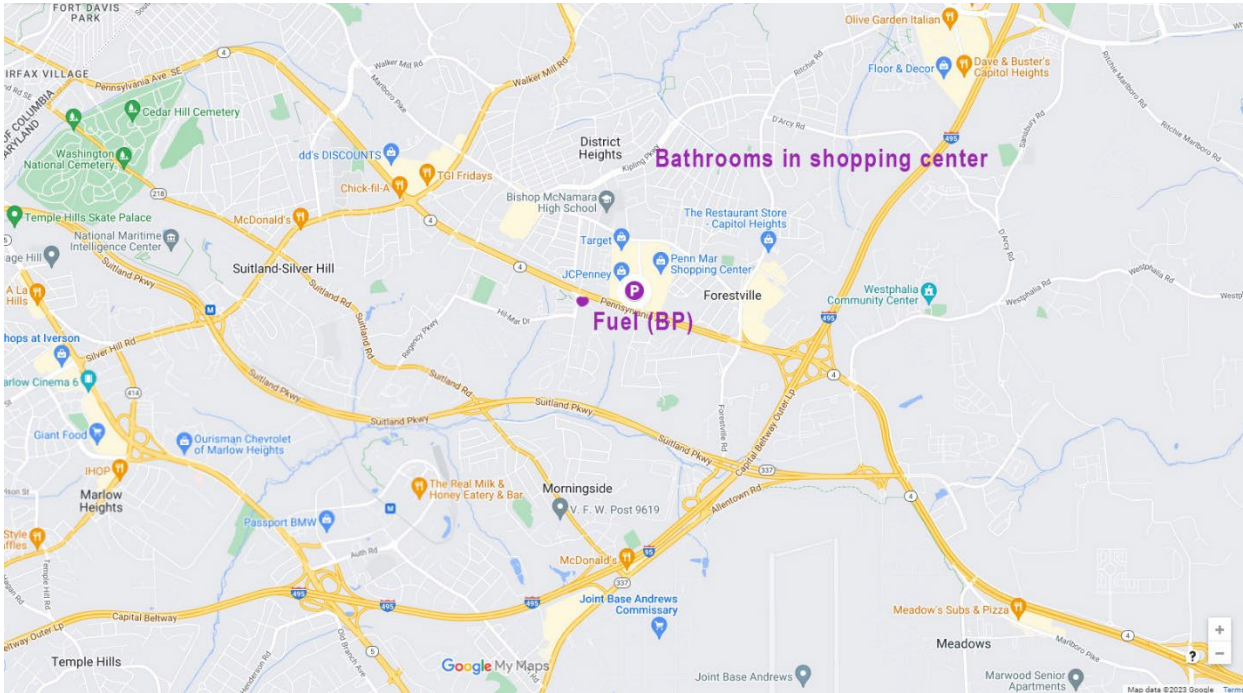
Ellicott City – Mt. Hebron High School

The school is best reached from US29 in Maryland, getting on MD99 (Old Frederick Rd) and heading west to the school. Near the school is St. Johns Lane, which can be followed southeast to find fuel and bathrooms.



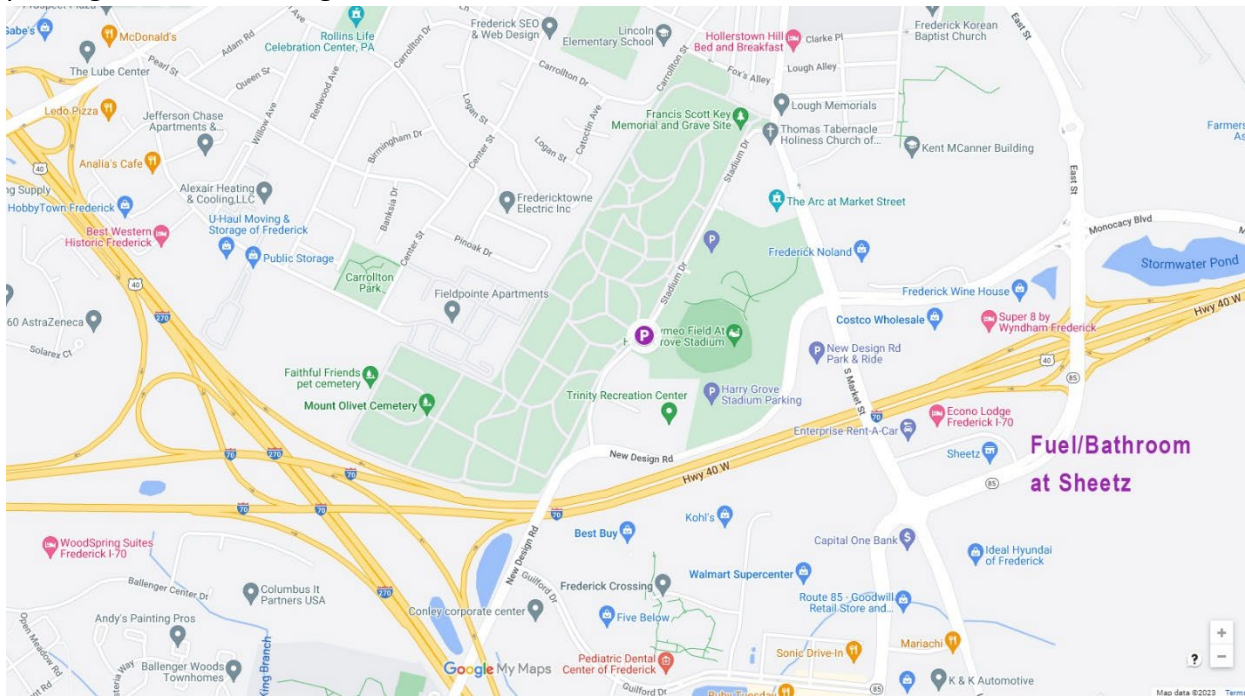
Forrestville – Centre at Forestville

Located off MD4 (Pennsylvania Ave) is a shopping center convenient to our drives along the Chesapeake Bay. Convenient to the Beltway, there is fuel/bathrooms available at a BP very close to the center. We will normally assemble close to JCPenney.



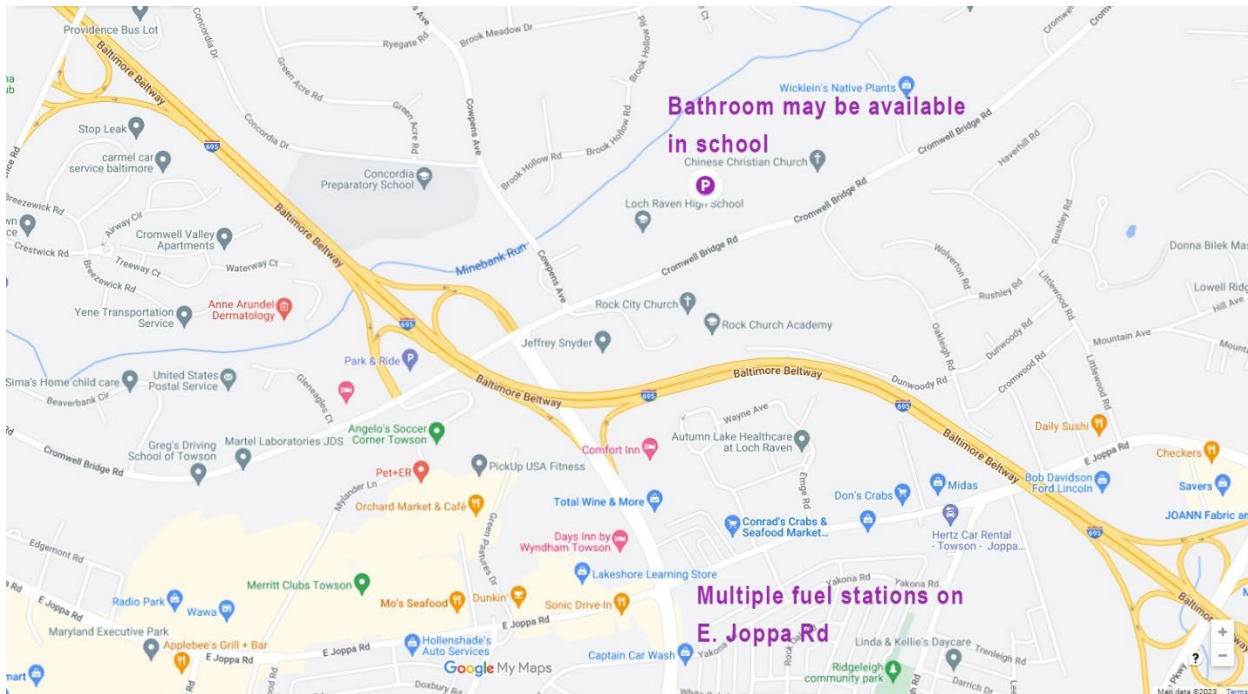
Frederick - Harry Grove Stadium

The home of the Frederick Keys, we start in the general parking lot across the street from the cemetery. The stadium can be reached via I-70 (Exit 54) to MD85 South (Buckeystown Pike) to make a right on MD355 (S. Market Street) with a left on New Design Road, followed by a right on Stadium Drive. Don't be fooled by the parking lot off New Design Road. Restrooms and Fuel are available at the Sheetz on MD85.



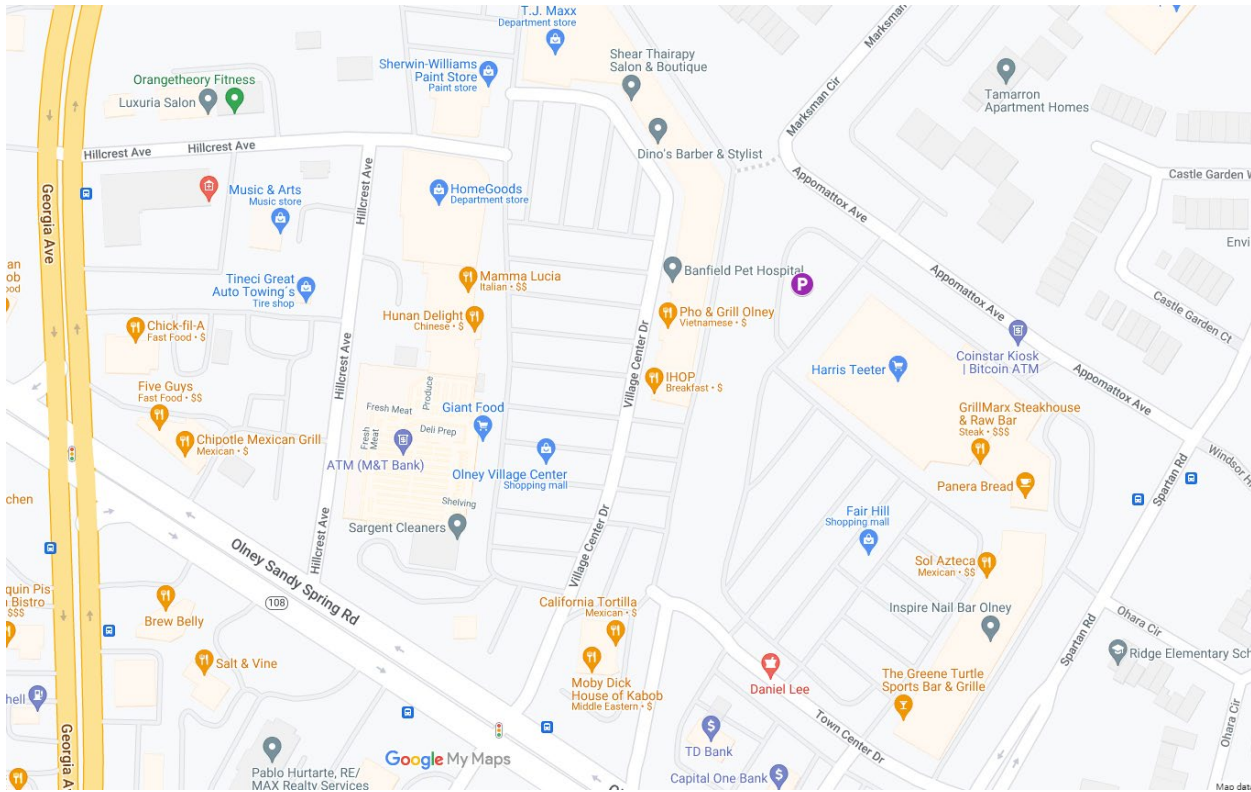
Loch Raven – Loch Raven High School

You can reach the Loch Raven High School by taking Exit 29 b/a from I-695 and then taking a left on Cromwell Bridge Road. Fuel and bathrooms are available within a few miles on E. Joppa Road south of the school on Loch Haven Blvd. Note that the parking lot is a satellite lot on the EAST side of the school, not the main entrance to the school



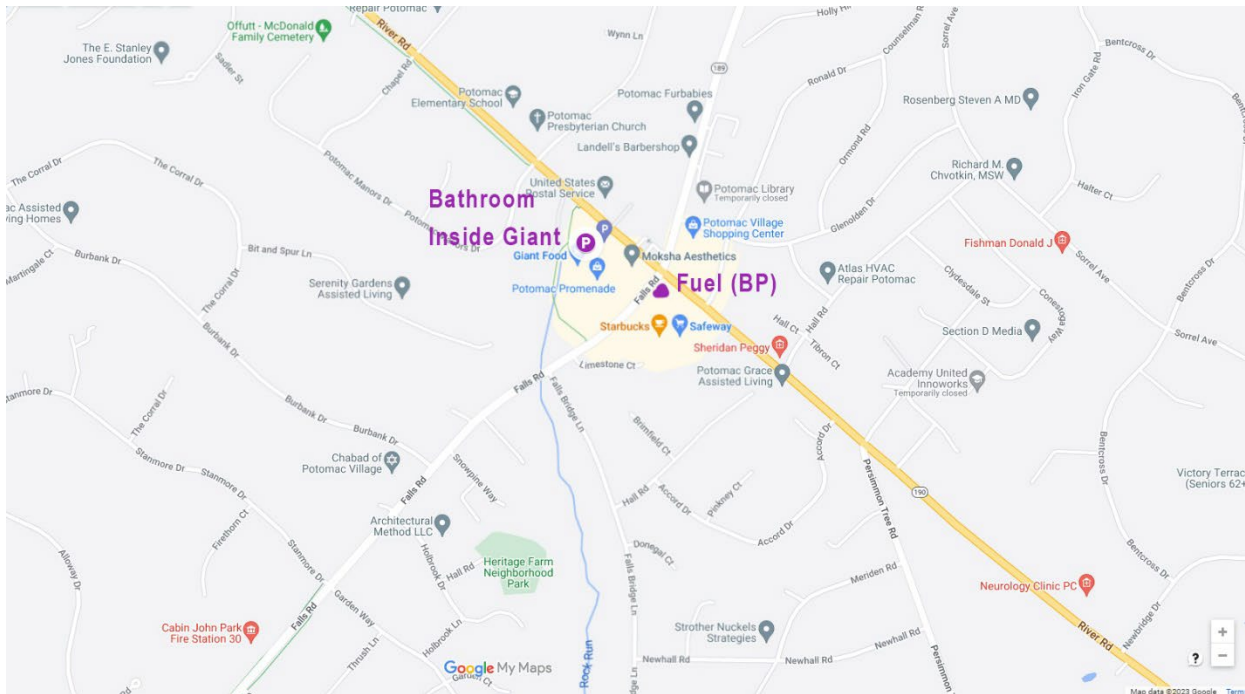
Olney – Harris Teeter Fair Hill

The Harris Teeter supermarket, located in the Fair Hill plaza in Olney MD, is a convenient place to start Country drives outside the Beltway. Getting there from Virginia generally involves getting on the Beltway to I-270 to Rockville, then getting on MD28 Northeast until you cross MD97 and then heading north on MD97 to Olney. The shopping center is just east of MD97 (Georgia Ave) on MD108 (Olney Sandy Spring Road) in the Fair Hill Center. We still generally assemble in the small triangular lot to the left (east) of Harris Teeter. A good way to get there is to take Spartan Rd to Appomattox Ave. Fuel is available at a nearby Shell off Georgia Ave, and there are other stations on MD108. Restrooms are available in Harris Teeter.



Potomac – Giant

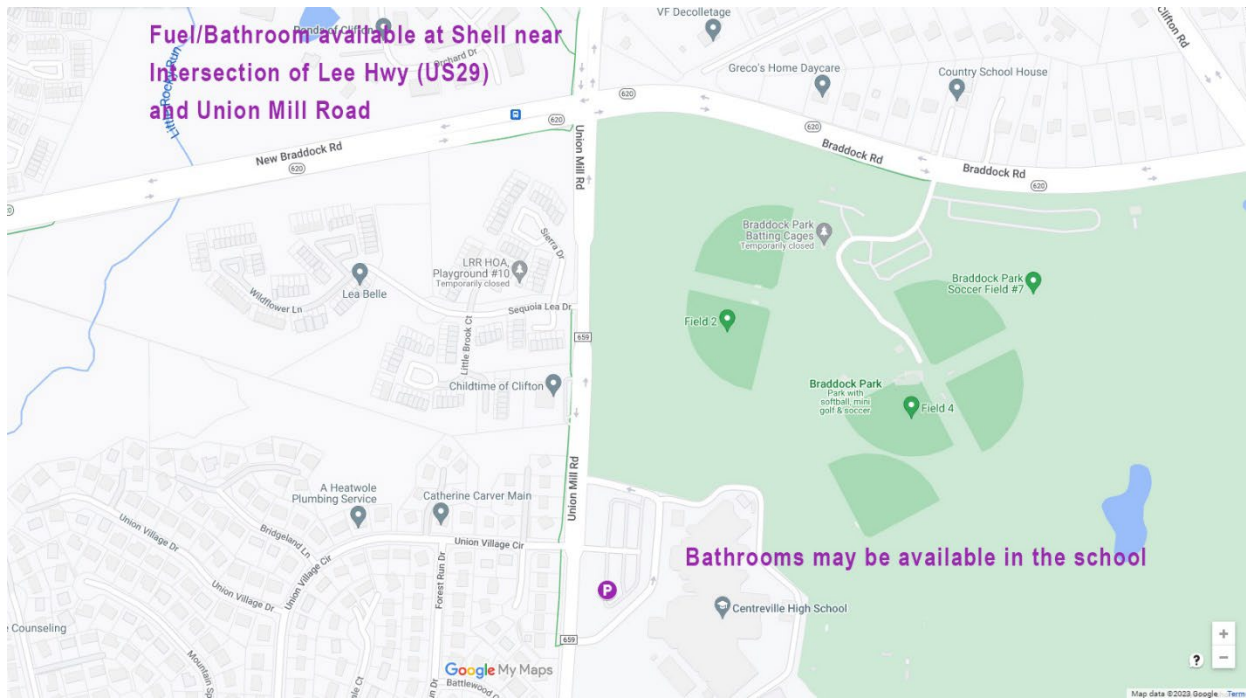
Potomac MD on River Road is often used to start our scenic drives along the river to Frederick or to Sugarloaf Mountain. Getting on River Road from the Beltway and heading west will bring you to the town, with gas stations at the intersection of River Road and Falls Road.



Virginia Starting Locations

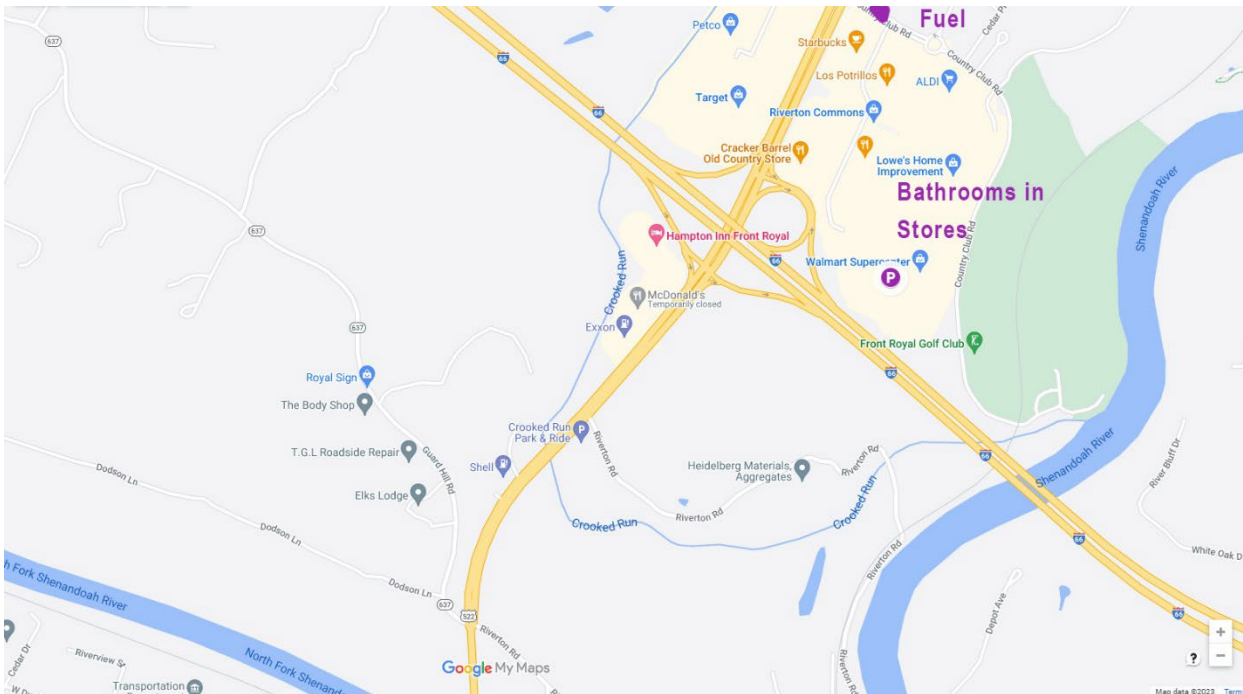
Centreville – Centreville High School

Located off US29 on Union Mill Rd, this parking lot is a starting point for our drives in Clifton and to places like Quantico. There is a Shell station with fuel and bathrooms at the corner of US29 (Lee Hwy) and Union Mill Rd.



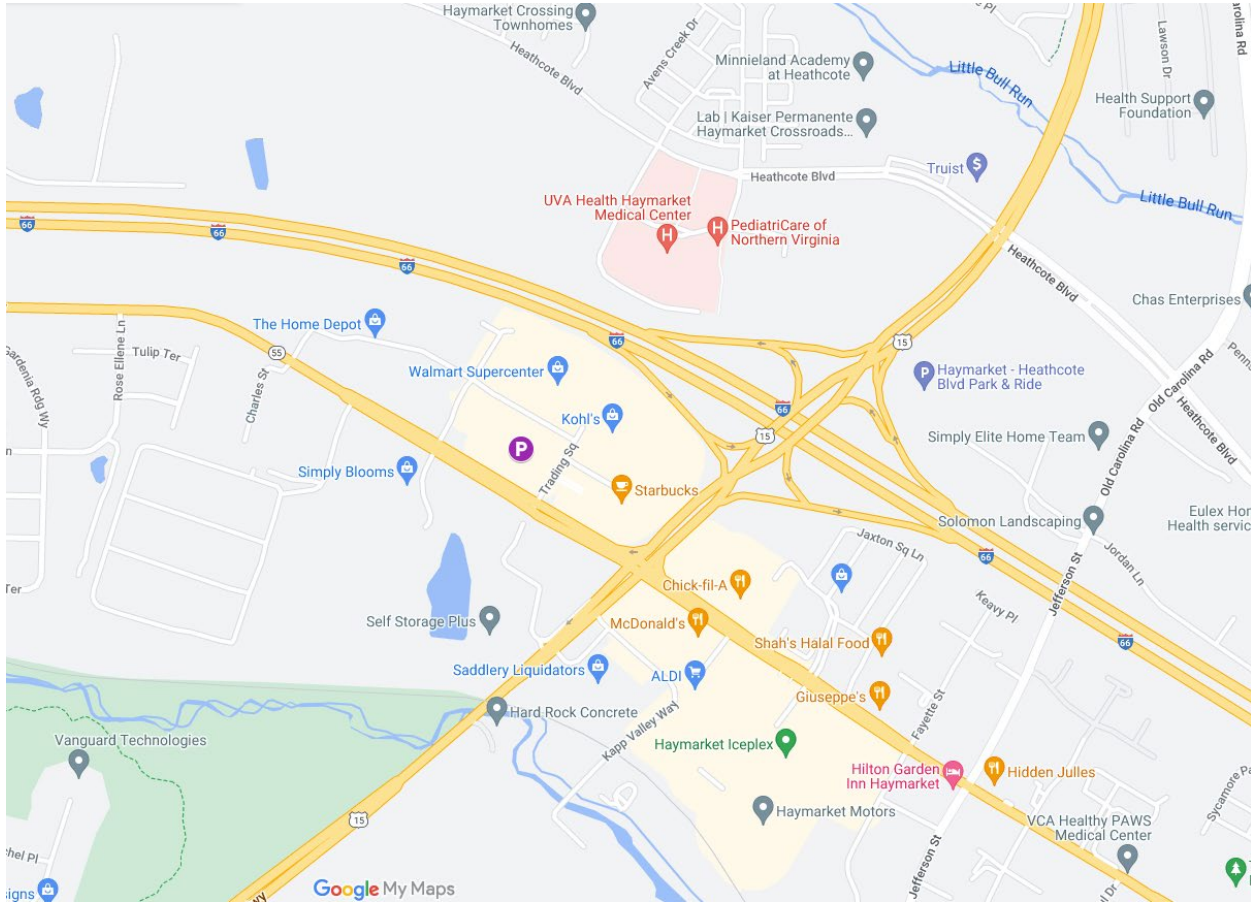
Front Royal – WalMart Supercenter

The WalMart in Front Royal is our usual starting point for drives to the Virginia Mountains, Fort Valley Road, and other points west. It's on US522 just north of I66 (exit 6). There is fuel available when you turn into the shopping center on Country Club Rd, and we normally assemble in the southern part of the lot next to WalMart.



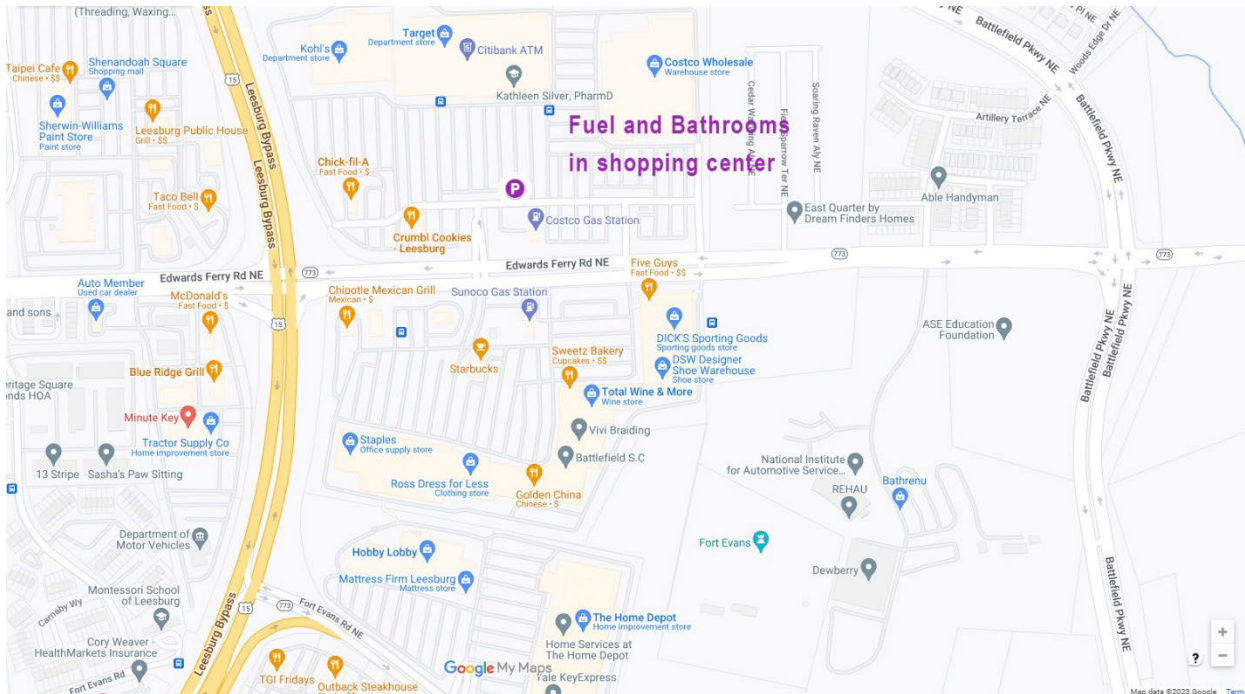
Haymarket – WalMart

In Haymarket, we tend to start at the WalMart Supercenter off VA55, right near the US15/I-66 intersection.



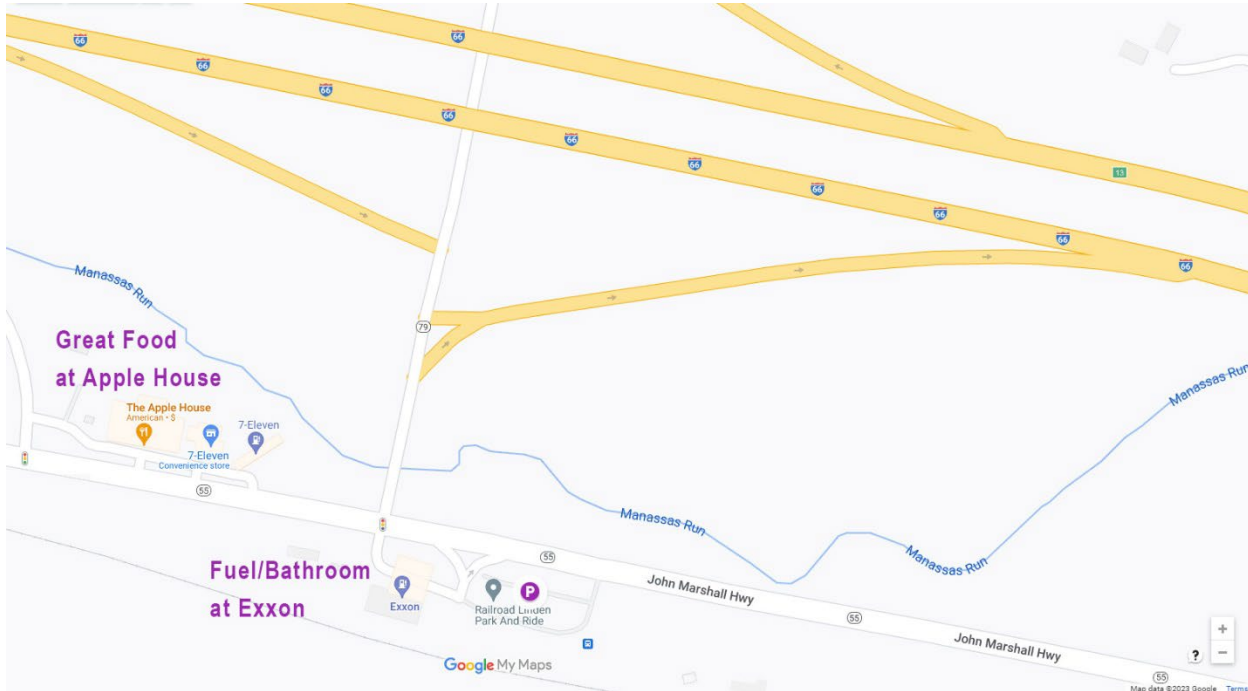
Leesburg – Target

The shopping center near the US15 bypass just north of the Dulles Toll Road and VA7 is best reached by getting on Edwards Ferry Rd, either from the US15 bypass or from Battlefield Parkway NE. Fuel and Bathrooms are available in the shopping center. This point is convenient for trips heading to West Virginia or Pennsylvania.



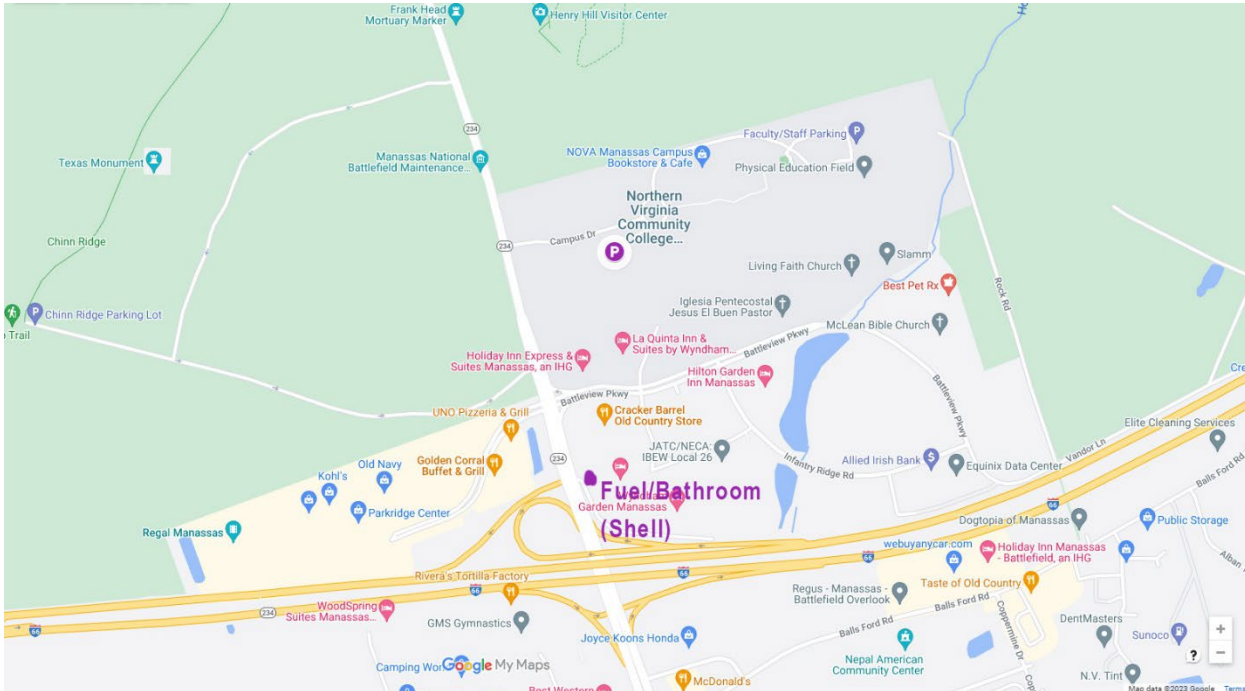
Linden – Linden Park and Ride

Located on VA55 (John Marshall Hwy) near Apple Mountain, you can get here by taking Exit 13 on I-66 and heading south on VA79. The park and ride is just east of the Exxon. Great food is available just west at the Apple House. This stop is convenient for drives in the nearby hills, as well as along the Shenandoah River.



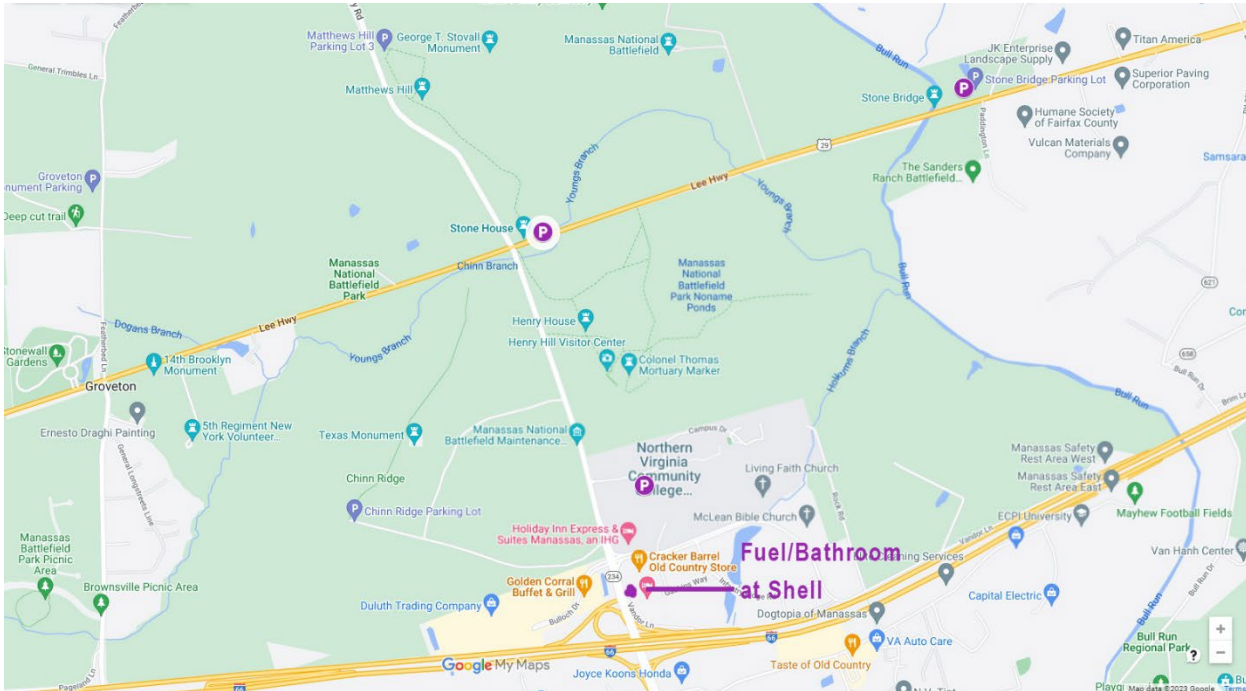
Manassas – NOVA

The Manassas Northern Virginia Community College is reached by taking I-66 (exit 47B <westbound> or 47 <eastbound>) and getting on VA234 Northbound. You'll pass a Shell station (Fuel and Bathrooms) and shortly you'll see a sign for the College (Campus Dr). This space is used when the nearby Stone Bridge or Stone House lots may not be available.



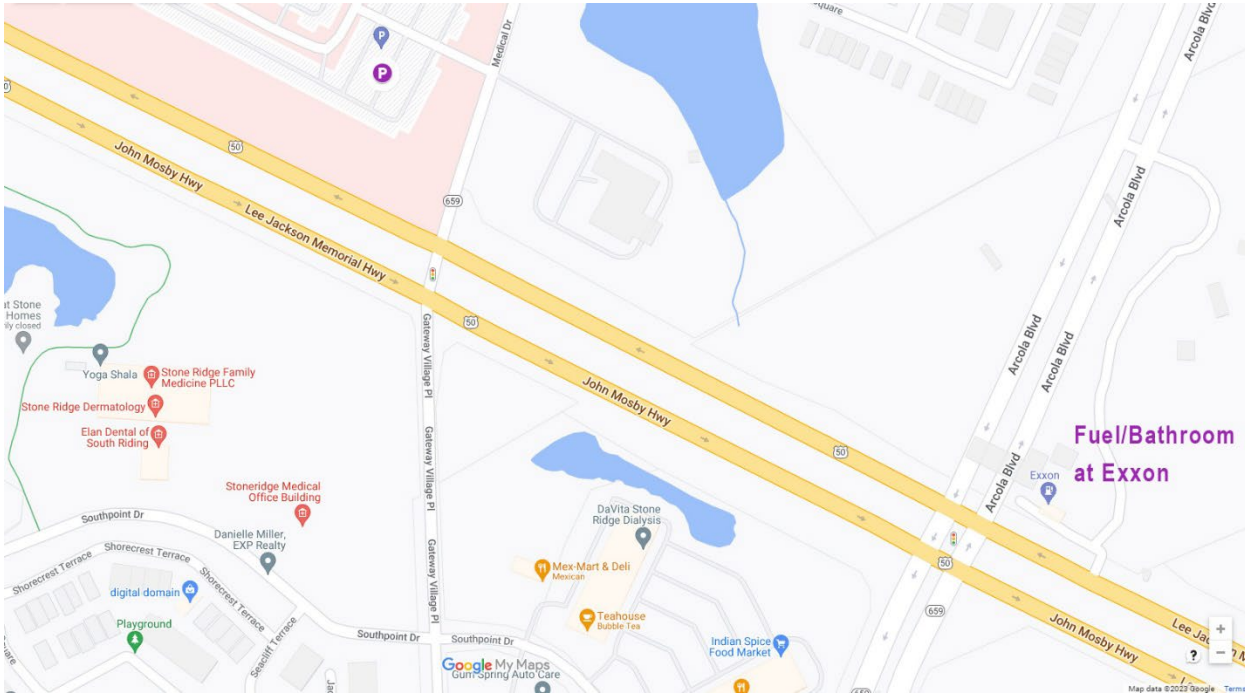
Stone Bridge and Stone House

Near to each other on US29(Lee Hwy), these lots are convenient for drives along US29 to head southwest in Virginia. They are both served by the same Shell on VA234 near I-66. Normally the Stone House is used for small groups (limited parking), the Stone Bridge (it's an actual stone footbridge across Bull Run) is used for larger groups, and when neither of them is available we use the Manassas-NOVA parking lot as an alternate.



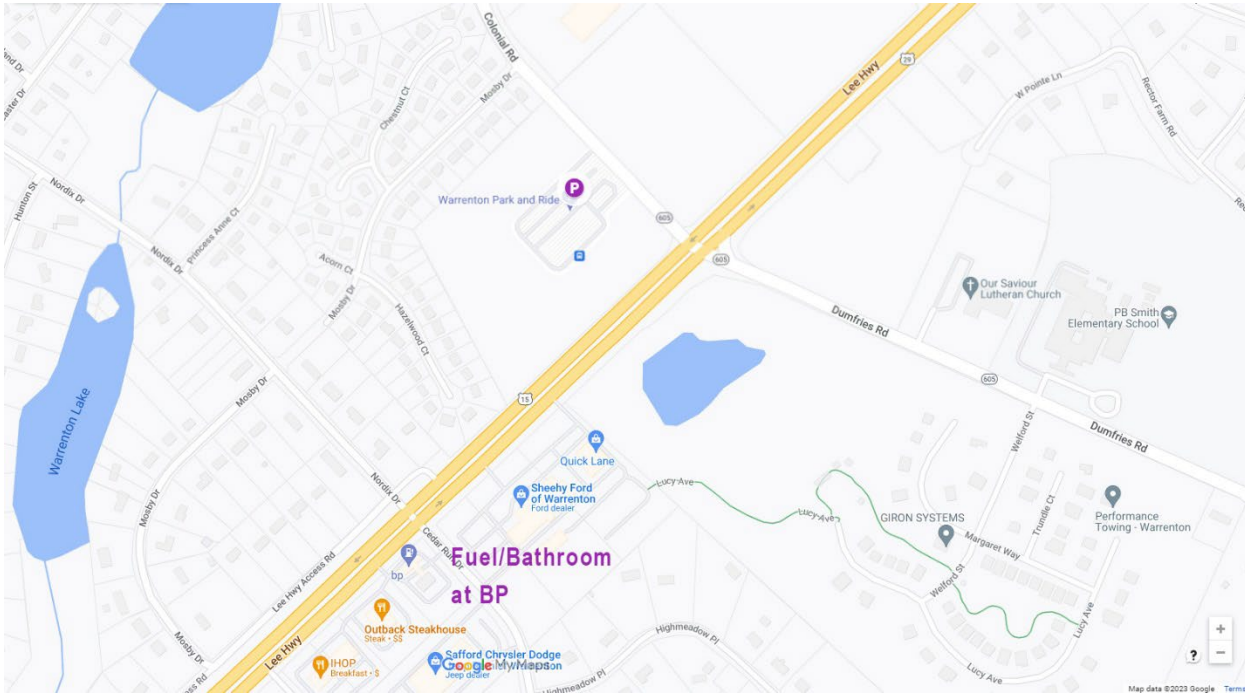
Stone Springs – Stone Springs Medical Center

The Stone Springs Medical Center is a great starting point for drives heading West along US50. It's reached from US50, there is an Exxon just east of the hospital, and you take VA659 (Medical Drive) North to park on the east side of the hospital.



Warrenton – Park and Ride

This starting point is used for our trips to the Skyline Drive, or other trips on the east side of the Shenandoah Mountains. It's on US15/US29 (Lee Hwy) northeast of Warrenton, and you take VA605 (Colonial Rd) Northwest to find the parking lot on the Left. There is a BP station on US15/US29 nearby.



Document History

Version	Release Date	Changes in this version
1.0	February 2023	Initial Release
1.01	March 2023	Revision to Loch Raven starting location.
1.5	February 2024	Revision to Olney starting location, and revisions to tech section.
1.51	March 2025	Correction to Haymarket Map, addition of starting locations weblink, more details about CTCSS codes in tech section, addition of the drives/events weblink. Discussed subgroups. Deleted the Carderock location, as our annual party has moved, and the location may vary from year to year.
1.52	June 2025	Formatting Changes