



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
Division of Transportation & Development

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January 12, 2018

Anna Chamberlin, AICP  
Long Bridge Project  
55 M Street, SE  
Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20003-3515

**Re: Long Bridge Project**

Dear Ms. Chamberlin,

I am writing to provide comments on behalf of Arlington County's Division of Transportation, regarding the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Long Bridge Project.

As the only intercity rail connection between the District of Columbia and Virginia, Long Bridge is among the Washington region's most important infrastructure features. Because the potential reconstruction and expansion of this crucial bridge is a once-per-century opportunity to improve cross-Potomac multimodal transportation, Arlington is vitally interested in planning and constructing the best possible project. We thank you for taking the lead in this years-long effort, and for giving us the opportunity to comment.

Arlington enthusiastically supports expanding cross-Potomac rail capacity. The more freight that can be carried via rail, and the more passengers who travel via Amtrak or commuter rail, the more environmentally sustainable and freer from congestion our region will become. The Long Bridge Project's proposed remaining alternatives, resulting in four through tracks across the river, seem appropriate to this purpose.

Additionally, Arlington strongly supports incorporating a cross-Potomac bicycle/pedestrian connection as part of the Long Bridge Project. Long Bridge occupies an ideal strategic location for such a connection, and bicycle/pedestrian trips are growing in importance as part of our region's transportation network.

However, Arlington has two specific concerns regarding how the existing draft study treats such a potential bicycle/pedestrian connection:

1. Although a bicycle/pedestrian connection is highly desirable at this location, we are concerned that given the inherent challenges of implementing any new Potomac crossing, such a connection may not be practical unless it is fully planned and funded as part of a larger multimodal effort. We would therefore dispute separating out the bicycle/pedestrian component of Long Bridge planning from the rail component.

To illustrate the point, it was difficult for the region and federal government to secure \$250 million to rehabilitate Memorial Bridge, a span that carries 68,000 motor vehicles per day. Although a stand-alone, purpose-built bicycle and pedestrian bridge would likely be significantly less expensive, it would nevertheless face severe funding challenges.

2. Although a bicycle/pedestrian connection from the District of Columbia to Mount Vernon Trail would be beneficial on its own merits, we are concerned that current proposed alternatives for that connection stop short of crossing the George Washington Parkway.

As with all transportation modes, the network effect is vitally important to bicycle/pedestrian travel; the larger the network of connections accessible, the more useful any single facility is for transportation purposes. Continuing the bicycle/pedestrian connection across the parkway—as the rail connection is already planned to do—is vital to the efficient functioning of the regional bicycle/pedestrian network.

A direct link from Crystal City and Long Bridge Park to the Mount Vernon Trail is an essential missing component of the region's transportation network. It would accommodate growth in Crystal City and Pentagon City, relieve overcrowding on Mount Vernon Trail, make trip planning more rational, complete the design of Long Bridge Park, and tie together the regional trail network. This connection would be made at a location on the parkway where a new crossing would be least aesthetically intrusive.

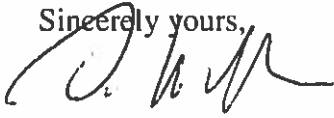
We appreciate the fact that one project cannot be all things to all people, and that increasing rail capacity is the primary goal of this project. To that end, Arlington supported ruling out early planning alternatives for Long Bridge that included automobile and streetcar lanes. However, we feel it remains appropriate to include a bicycle/pedestrian component that crosses the river and connects to (or anticipates a connection to) Arlington's Long Bridge Park. Such a connection would help to build out the regional trail network envisioned in NPS planning documents, accommodate growth in major activity centers, and promote the broad transportation, environmental, and recreational goals of Arlington, the District of Columbia, and the region. This project is one of very few realistic opportunities in which planning and funding mechanisms could be aligned to meet that need. Further information supporting our position is contained in Attachment 1.

We are grateful for the District Department of Transportation's (DDOT) ongoing commitment to sustainable multimodal transportation. We thank you and your team for your excellent work on this project over many years, and greatly value the opportunity to participate in this important process.

We look forward to working with you to further refine and advance this crucial project. Please do not hesitate to let me know how Arlington can be most helpful going forward. If you have questions or need to coordinate this issue, please also feel free to contact Arlington Regional Transportation Planner Dan Malouff (703-228-7989 and [dmalouff@arlingtonva.us](mailto:dmalouff@arlingtonva.us)), and/or

Arlington Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner David Patton (703-228-3633 and [dpatton@arlingtonva.us](mailto:dpatton@arlingtonva.us)).

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. M. Leach". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "M".

Dennis M. Leach, AICP  
Director of Transportation

## Attachment 1

### Regional support for a DC-to-Crystal City bicycle/pedestrian connection:

Greatly improved rail capacity will be one significant result of this project. But for a project whose costs will likely reach or exceed nine figures, it's appropriate to advance broader recommendations from adopted regional plans. Many make a compelling case for improved bike/ped connections between Arlington and the river, and across the Potomac:

NPS's National Capital Region Paved Trail Plan calls not only for better bike/ped connections across the river and between the river and Long Bridge Park, but also for highlighting Long Bridge Park as a regional trailhead. This can best be realized with direct bridge connections.

FHWA's (Eastern Federal Lands) 14<sup>th</sup> St. Bridge Corridor Draft EIS (unadopted) recognized the importance of connecting Long Bridge Park and the Mt. Vernon Trail even without a new river crossing.



14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Corridor Draft EIS, Appendix N

Arlington County's Long Bridge Park Master Plan and Public Open Space Master Plan both emphasize a direct Long Bridge Park – Mt. Vernon Trail connection. The Long Bridge Park aquatic center accommodates this extension of the park's esplanade feature.

### National examples suggest a shared facility is practical:

Long Bridge guidelines calling for 25' clearance between active rail lines and bicycle/pedestrian facilities are overly restrictive, compared to other locations in the US. Safe physical separation between trains and bicyclists/pedestrians is crucial, but achievable through good design. Among the most significant examples are the Big River Crossing on the Union Pacific over the Mississippi River between Memphis and West Memphis, and CSX's rail-with-trail facility over the Potomac River at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.



Union Pacific in TN & AR (left), and CSX in WV (right)