



February 3, 2021

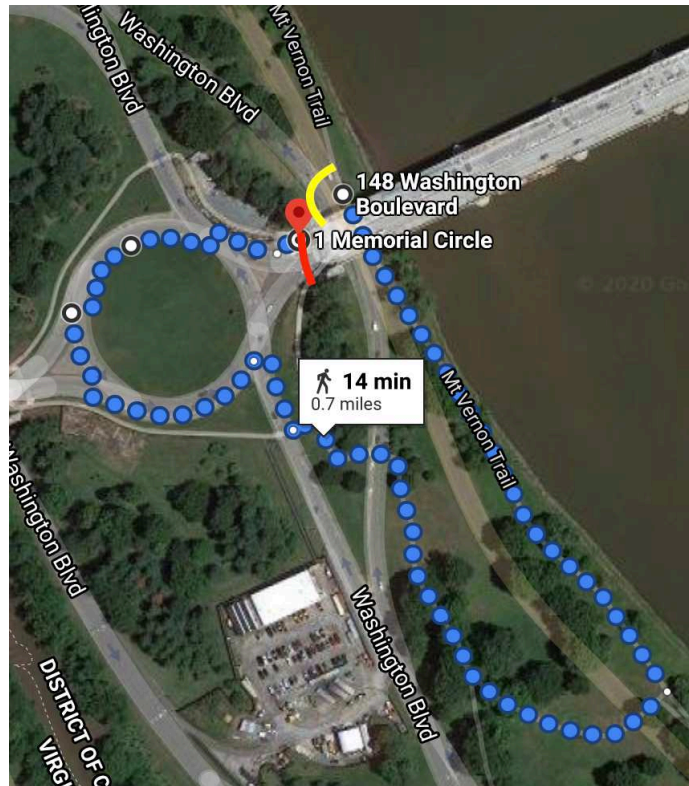
George Washington Memorial Parkway Headquarters
700 George Washington Memorial Parkway
McLean, VA 22101

Dear Superintendent Cuvelier:

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association's 5,000 members in the Washington Region, we want to thank you for the recent bicycle and pedestrian improvements made to Memorial Circle. This circle was notorious for being a challenging and dangerous place for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross safely. We urge you to make these new improvements permanent and continue the effort to increase access and enhance safety for non-automobile park visitors.

As you know, The National Park Service's network of multi-use trails allows thousands of residents to commute by bike or foot, serves as a major amenity for recreation and fitness, and as a destination for tourists who want to explore the area's natural and cultural resources without a car. While we are pleased with the current improvements, we would like to see more done to make this area even safer and more accessible for people walking and biking across the bridge and accessing the very popular Mt. Vernon Trail.

While visiting the circle to explore the new improvements, we observed people crossing from the north side of the bridge (on the VA side) to the south side of the bridge to access the Mt. Vernon Trail (MVT). In order to cross legally from the north side of the bridge to the MVT, pedestrians and bicyclists must go around the entire circle totaling .7 miles. We believe people will continue to take this dangerous shortcut in order to avoid traveling around the entire circle (the shortcut is shown in image below in red). Prior to the safety project, there was a very well used social trail that runners and walkers primarily used. Formalizing the social trail was excluded from the final safety recommendation which we raised at the time as an oversight. This problem could be remedied by creating a trail connection from the north side of the bridge to the MVT as outlined in the image below in yellow.



The inability to easily cross from the north side to the south side of the bridge is exacerbated by the fact that there is also no easy way to cross from north to south on the National Mall side at Lincoln Memorial Circle.

WABA believes that this immediate problem must be addressed as Memorial Bridge and Memorial Circle are key connections to the regional trail network as outlined by the Capital Trails Coalition.

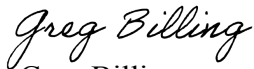
Now is the time to examine the roadway configuration of the Memorial Bridge. During the Environmental Assessment process for the bridge rehabilitation, WABA recommended reducing the total number of travel lanes from 6 lanes to 4 lanes and to construct protected bike lanes. A road diet on the bridge would address a few important safety issues. First, the current configuration of 6 wide open lanes encourages dangerous speeding by drivers as observed in very low compliance of the 30-mph speed limit. Second, during commuting hours, weekends and high tourist seasons, the bridge side paths can become very crowded. Trail engineering best practice would recommend splitting the two major user groups, people on foot and bike, into their own separate space. A set of protected bike lanes would effectively increase trail capacity for all trail users. Prior to construction and the pandemic, the bridge automobile traffic volumes would easily be handled with 4 travel lanes with only very minor delays or diversion to other bridges. And finally, with increased travel demand to access jobs in the National Landing neighborhood, we anticipate increased walking and bike commuting through this area. Cities around the world are repurposing roadway space on bridges from

automobiles to people walking and biking. New York City just announced it will reprogram space on the Brooklyn Bridge and Queensboro Bridge for dedicated bike lanes to increase overall capacity to move people.

We hope you will continue to improve bicycle and pedestrian connections and trail connectivity within the George Washington Memorial Parkway as well as continue to support some of the major trail projects neighboring your park, as you are already doing with the Boundary Channel Drive Interchange Improvement Project. Additional priority projects include the Cemetery Wall Trail, Long Bridge Bike/Ped Bridge, and the Columbia Pike Sidewalk Project. Bicycle and pedestrian improvements will be necessary as the use of the regional trail network continues to grow.

We hope you will take this into consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Billing".

Greg Billing

Executive Director

Washington Area Bicyclist Association