



November 12, 2021

Re: I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes SDEIS

Dear Mr. Jeffrey Folden,

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and our nearly 7,000 members across the Metropolitan Washington Region, we would like to thank MDOT SHA for including the shared-use path as a part of the I-495/I-270 Managed Lanes Study. Although we are not supportive of adding more vehicular lanes, we are pleased that the shared-use path was included in the project scope. The shared-use path will enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between Maryland and Virginia. This connection will encourage active transportation, help reduce CO₂ emissions, and increase and enhance recreational opportunities for VA and MD residents. This project should not move forward without the shared-use path.

Furthermore, we feel that it is very important to put Option 1, which includes the connection to the C&O Canal Towpath, back into the SDEIS. Without the direct Towpath connection, pedestrians and bicyclists must go 2 miles East along the MacArthur Boulevard Bike Path to access the nearest connection down to the Towpath. WABA would like to see the connection to both MacArthur Boulevard (as outlined in Option 2) as well as a bicycle and pedestrian connection down to the Towpath. The direct connection to the Towpath is important because the Towpath is one of the few areas that provides a separate walking and bicycling path completely separate from cars. Although MacArthur Blvd has a shared-use path, it is next to a very busy road and is not a pleasant experience for walkers, runners, rollers, or bikers.

The proposed shared-use path will also close a significant gap in the regional trail network (as defined by the Capital Trails Network), and serve as an important piece of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The closest bridge crossing over the Potomac River for cyclists and pedestrians is over 5.5 miles away at the Chain Bridge. Additionally, the proposed shared-use path will connect with the 2.9 mile shared-use path being built as a part of the I-495 Next project being managed by VDOT.

In order to make the shared-use path the best experience possible for all users, the path should meet AASHTO standards and be at least 12-feet wide (similar to that of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge). We would like there to be a sound wall separating the vehicle lanes from the shared-use path. Portions of the shared-use path along the Woodrow Wilson Bridge are protected by a transparent durisol noise barrier, which drastically improve the experience for pedestrians and bicyclists ([as seen in this video](#)). Finally, the running slope of the trail should meet ADA Accessibility standards.

Finally, popular sites along the C&O Canal Towpath, like Carder Rock and Great Falls are highly trafficked and are only accessible to VA residents by car. The National Park Service is concerned with overcrowded parking lots and illegal parking to access the Towpath, but the proposed shared-use path



connection, outlined in Option 1, could actually relieve parking congestion as the popular destinations would be newly accessible by walking, rolling, and biking!

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Piperno
Trails Coalition Manager
Washington Area Bicyclist Association