



April 10, 2023

Gerica Goodman
Virginia Passenger Rail Authority
919 E Main Street, Suite 2400
Richmond, VA 23219

Ms. Goodman,

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and our more than 6,000 members in the Washington region, I write to comment on the preliminary engineering and design of the Long Bridge Project. WABA enthusiastically supports this project for its potential to expand options for getting around the region without a car and to dramatically improve the connectivity of the regional off-street trail network for walking and biking around and across the Potomac River.

As your team progresses into the next phase of design, we would like to highlight two issues for your attention:

1. Expand Maine Avenue underpass for a wider Anacostia River Trail

Maine Ave SW is a key right of way for the District of Columbia's Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, a heavily traveled off-street bicycle and pedestrian trail that begins in the Tidal Basin, follows Maine Ave past the Municipal Fish Market to the Wharf, and extends up the Anacostia River into Prince George's County in Maryland. This trail is key to both the regional Capital Trail Network and the East Coast Greenway. On Maine Ave SW, the trail is signed to follow the narrow sidewalk under the 14th St Bridge, the two-track rail bridge, and the pedestrian bridge. These bridge portals significantly narrow the sidewalk, leaving insufficient width for a multi-use trail. The narrowing is most acute under the two-track rail bridge at the 14th St off-ramp.

The trail frequently exceeds capacity during the busier tourist seasons, with people walking and biking often risking falls into the adjacent high-speed road. It functions poorly as a multi-use space, often forcing people on bikes to walk behind pedestrians. This section is signed as the interim route, and DDOT staff have been considering opportunities to create separate spaces for walking and biking on this corridor. Horizontal space remains the most challenging constraint for realizing this trail's full vision.

The Long Bridge Project will reconstruct the existing two-track rail bridge into a new four-track rail bridge and build a new pedestrian span further south. This construction is the best and only opportunity to remove the pinch point in the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail along Maine Ave by pushing the bridge abutments back from the roadway. During the recent public meeting, VPRA staff suggested that the planned sidewalk may be as wide as 15' under the new rail span. While this would be wider than existing, we believe that 20' is a more appropriate width.

20' would allow for a multi-use trail that can easily handle the future volume of trail users. 20' allows for an 8' sidewalk for walking, a 10' two-way trail for bikes and faster-than-walking vehicles, and 2' buffer from

the high-speed road. Additionally, the geometry of the 14th St off-ramp must be redesigned to upgrade the trail crossing, including squaring up the off-ramp approach to Maine Ave for safer driver interactions, creating better visibility around the corner, and reconfiguring the curb ramps with space to pass or ride side by side through the intersection.

Since the Long Bridge Project's trail bridge and bike/pedestrian facilities will not extend past Ohio Drive to connect directly to downtown DC, it is especially critical that the project remove this barrier so that future Long Bridge trail users can safely reach all the destinations served by this trail link.



Maine Ave SW under the existing 2-track at 14th St bridge exit ramp

2. Bike/Pedestrian Trail Bridge Width

As we expressed following the February stakeholder meeting, we deeply appreciate the VPRA staff for listening to and incorporating feedback from future trail users on the design of the trail bridge. The new railing design and expanding the width of the trail from 14' to 16' will help this bridge carry substantially more people by bike and foot across the river and do so more safely and comfortably. However, to be truly future-proof, we still believe that a clear-width of 18' would be far preferable to allow separate spaces for walking and separate spaces for biking, scooting, and other faster-than-walking wheeled travel along with sufficient room to safely stop.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns. We look forward to working with you on the future phases of this project.

Sincerely,

Garrett Hennigan
WABA Organizing Manager

CC:

Sandra Marks, Chief Project Delivery Officer, DDOT
Michael Alvino, Trail Program Manager, DDOT