



## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board  
**FROM:** Lyn Erickson, Plan Development and Coordination Program Director  
**SUBJECT:** Public Comment for the July 2022 TPB Meeting  
**DATE:** July 20, 2022

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The Transportation Planning Board accepts public comment on a rolling basis. Comments can be submitted via email ([tpbcomment@mwkog.org](mailto:tpbcomment@mwkog.org)), online ([mwkog.org/tpbcomment](http://mwkog.org/tpbcomment)), and phone. Comments are collected until noon on the Tuesday before the TPB meeting. These comments are compiled and shared with the board at the meeting the following day.

Between the June 2022 TPB meeting and noon on Tuesday, July 19, 2022, the TPB received two comments submitted via email with attached letters.

The comments are summarized below. All full comments are attached to this memo.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **Eric Brenner – Email & Letter – July 17, 2022**

Brenner sent an email informing the TPB of a letter sent to MDOT by Senators Van Hollen and Cardin and Congressman Hoyer requesting the State to reconsider its plan to demolish the Harry W. Nice/Thomas “Mac” Middleton Bridge. The full comment and letter are attached.

### **Bill Pugh, Coalition for Smarter Growth – Email – July 19, 2022**

Pugh sent an email requesting TPB members to provide a schedule for the update to Visualize 2045 and consider updates to the TPB Bylaws for public participation. The full email is attached.

## Sergio Ritacco

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**From:** Eric Brenner <ericlewisbrenner@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 17, 2022 6:47 PM  
**To:** TPBcomment  
**Subject:** comment on the record (in writing, and verbally) at the Wed., July 20 TPB mtg.  
**Attachments:** 07.14.22 Sec Ports - nice bridge.pdf

I would like to submit the following in writing, and present these same opening remarks, at the start of this week's (July 20) TPB meeting. Is this sufficient notice or is there something else (or more detail) that might be required? Thank you.

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My name is Eric Brenner, resident of Silver Spring, wanting to make sure that the members of the TPB are aware that MD Senators Van Hollen and Cardin, along with Congressman Hoyer, recently submitted a letter <https://www.vanhollen.senate.gov/news/press-releases/van-hollen-cardin-hoyer-urge-mdot-to-halt-demolition-of-nice-bridge-study-recreational-reuse-options> (also attached) to MDOT with the modest request to hold off on destroying the old Nice/Middleton bridge until an independent study can be made on the costs/benefits of repurposing the old bridge as a bike/pedestrian recreation and transportation facility. The study should be done by an entity with experience on this topic, in part because a repurposed bridge would presumably be managed by some entity other than MdTA.

Given the TPB's history with the Nice/Middleton bridge, and the realization that the Environmental Assessment that was in place at the time of the TPB's review is now out-of-date, this seems like a responsible, forward-looking request that the TPB should support.

The original EA, the one seen by the TPB, did not anticipate the need for explosives, so MdTA now has the chance to avoid paying for a new EA, and the subsequent increased cost of the demolition that the explosives and fish-kill studies (and fish-kill penalties) would entail.

But the larger issue, and the reason the TPB should be interested, involves simply gathering accurate information on what a bridge repurposing might look like and cost. Making an informed public policy decision is in the best interests of all parties, including anyone who wants to see MdTA reduce the overall cost of this project.

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 14, 2022

The Honorable Jim Ports  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
7201 Corporate Center Drive  
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Ports:

With the work on the new Harry W. Nice/Thomas “Mac” Middleton Bridge across the Potomac River proceeding rapidly, we urge the State to reconsider plans to demolish the old bridge, and halt any immediate efforts to do so. These plans should not proceed until a study can be conducted on the feasibility as well as the financial and environmental costs and benefits of converting the old bridge to a non-motorized trail that could be used by pedestrians and bicyclists.

The demolition cost estimates made by the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) have ranged between \$15 million and \$23 million. Given that a new Environmental Analysis (EA) may now be necessary due to the modification of the demolition process to use explosives, which was not part of the original EA, an independent study to determine a common set of facts and costs would allow all parties the opportunity to consider the options for the use and ownership of the existing bridge.

An independent study, conducted by an entity with experience in similar bridge repurposing projects, is in the taxpayer’s interest to ensure that we are not wasting an opportunity to provide bicycling and pedestrian transportation options at a competitive cost or potentially lower cost than demolition. This study should include costs, safety and navigation impacts, and the potential economic and health benefits of alternative transportation and outdoor recreation uses. Premature demolition would squander the opportunity to repurpose the bridge if it is in the taxpayer and community’s best interest. We strongly urge you to undertake this basic due diligence before moving forward on demolition.

We would appreciate a response by July 22, 2022 regarding the State’s position and plans to secure an independent study and pause in demolition until this study is published.

Sincerely,



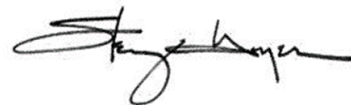
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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



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Steny H. Hoyer  
Member of Congress

## Sergio Ritacco

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**From:** Bill Pugh <bill@smartergrowth.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 19, 2022 12:01 PM  
**To:** TPBcomment  
**Cc:** Stewart Schwartz  
**Subject:** Comment for July 20 TPB meeting

Dear Chair Sebesky and TPB members,

The Coalition for Smarter Growth appreciates your vote last month for strong climate action standards. Going forward:

### **1. Provide the schedule and process for the early Update to Visualize 2045**

- The next important step in TPB's climate efforts is the early update to Visualize 2045.
- The recent setbacks to climate action at the federal level mean that our actions in this region are that much more important to address the crisis.
- We ask that TPB staff give a written update to TPB members and the public within the next couple weeks (not waiting until the September meetings) on the schedule and process for the Visualize 2045 update.

### **2. Update TPB Bylaws for Public Participation - Chat logs, Virtual live testimony**

- Regarding the TPB Bylaws and public participation in meetings, we have two asks:
  - Meeting video conference chat logs need to be posted for the public after meetings to provide the same level of transparency as in-person meetings.
  - Live comment of regional stakeholder groups and members of the public be permitted during virtual meetings similar to in-person meeting procedures.

Thank you,

**Bill Pugh, AICP CTP** | Senior Policy Fellow  
**Coalition for Smarter Growth**  
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[bill@smartergrowth.net](mailto:bill@smartergrowth.net)