



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

ROGER BERLINER
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 1

CHAIRMAN
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

November 30, 2017

Chair Jay Fisette
Long-Range Plan Task Force
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 N. Capitol Street, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chair Fisette and members of the Long-Range Plan Task Force,

Thank you for your work to identify, study, and evaluate potential game-changing transportation projects to increase mobility in our region. There is no doubt our region faces significant transportation challenges that will only worsen with anticipated growth. You and Transportation Planning Board (TPB) staff deserve praise for taking on the task of finding appropriate solutions that go above and beyond what is in the current Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

I write to you today to reiterate that the Additional Northern Bridge Crossing/Corridor initiative studied as part of your Technical Analysis is not an appropriate solution. **I urge you to reject moving this initiative forward for consideration by the full Transportation Planning Board.**

The Draft Results of the Technical Analysis of the Additional Northern Bridge Crossing/Corridor and nine other initiatives that you discussed at your November 15 meeting demonstrate this project would be *among the least effective* toward increasing mobility in our region. Compared to the other initiatives focused on improving our region's roads and highways, *the Additional Northern Bridge Crossing/Corridor performed the worst.*

- It was one of only three initiatives that was found to increase regional per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT);
- It ranked sixth in reducing daily vehicle hours of delay,
- It was among the lowest-performing when it came to increasing the amount of jobs accessible within a 45-minute auto commute, and
- It received a negative rating when it came to impacts on environmental quality and open space development.

The same analysis shows that expanding the American Legion Bridge with Express toll lanes and an Express bus service, components of the Regional Express Travel Network initiative, would be among the best performing when it comes to increased travel time savings, hours of delay savings, and use of reliable travel options including Express lanes and bus rapid transit. When it comes to addressing our region's traffic congestion, *our focus should be expanding capacity at the American Legion Bridge.*

It is time to move past the idea of another Potomac River crossing. In July, when I wrote to you with a unanimously approved resolution by our County Council opposing further analysis of this proposal, proponents of the project responded that TPB staff should be allowed to at least study it.

The results of that additional analysis are now in and underscore the concerns our Council shared with you previously. Another Potomac River crossing and highway corridor poses a serious threat to the environment, drinking water sources for much of the region, Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve, and existing neighborhoods. Nor would it address the real problem of traffic congestion at the American Legion Bridge.

Finally, in addition to the issues TPB staff studied, you should also take into account political realities: this project is opposed by Montgomery County and the state of Maryland, the local and state governments that would be most responsible for the project's funding and implementation.

Please do not recommend the Additional Northern Bridge Crossing/Corridor initiative for consideration by the full TPB.

Thank you again for your diligent work in addressing our region's real transportation challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Berliner", is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Roger Berliner
Council President
Chair, Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy
& Environment Committee

CC: Kanathur Srikanth, Director, Department of Transportation Planning, MWCOG
Lyn Erickson, Program Director, Plan Development and Coordination, MWCOG



November 29, 2017

McLean Citizens Association
P.O. Box PO Box 273
McLean, VA 22101

Jay Fisette, Chair
Transportation Planning Board
Long Range Task Force
c/o Arlington County
2100 Clarendon Blvd. Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Visualize 2045 – Long Range Task Force

Dear Chairman Fisette:

I am writing on behalf of the McLean Citizens Association (MCA) to express its support for including Initiative 1, Regional Express Travel Network, for further study and ultimate inclusion in the expanded 2018 Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) as unfunded, long range projects. We understand that at its upcoming meeting on December 6, the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Long Range Task Force will finalize its recommendation to the TPB of one (or more) of ten Initiatives under consideration for TPB endorsement in an expanded CLRP. Initiative 1 includes:

- Express toll lanes network on existing limited access highways through a combination of new capacity and HOV lane conversion;
- An expanded American Legion Bridge (ALB), including two new express lanes in each direction; and
- Express bus services, operating at 10-minute headways at peak periods and 20-minute headways at off-peak periods.

All the corridors included in Initiative 1 could function better with Express Lanes and on-route transit. This is consistent with experience with the Virginia Beltway Express Lanes, which have allowed for reliable express bus service to, and from, Tysons and alternatives to the general-purpose lanes for toll-payers and car pools. Further, Initiative 1 scores well on almost all the measures considered in the preliminary analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, especially when contrasted to Initiative 3, an Additional Northern Bridge Crossing/Corridor.

Initiative 1 reduces “Daily Vehicle Hours of Delay” over the 2040 built CLRP by 11% and increases Travel on Reliable Modes by 42% above the 2040 built CLRP. It also has the highest score on Reliable Access to Intercity Hubs of all Initiatives, and scores well on reducing Road Congestion, Inadequate Bus Service and Bottlenecks. Finally, Initiative 1 has the lowest expected cost of all road and transit Initiatives being evaluated.

While each of the routes included in Initiative 1 is very important and requires additional capital investments over the next 25 years, the situation at the ALB has reached critical status. The ALB is located not only on an important interstate travel and transport freeway, but also between two major and growing hubs of commerce (Tysons and Bethesda) and two of the Metro Area’s largest population centers (Fairfax and Montgomery Counties). Also, these areas today lack direct rapid and reliable transit.

Traffic congestion at the ALB is at a crisis point. Hour-long backups into Maryland and Virginia on I-495 are frequent, as cars crawl for miles before crossing the Bridge. As VDOT reported two years ago in a Potomac River Crossings Conditions study, the ALB suffers from the worst congestion of all bridges crossing the Potomac River and has the largest projected growth in volume through 2040.

It is not only backups on I-495 that have reached a near-breaking point. Many commuters attempt to bypass I-495 backups by cutting through local residential streets and intersections. Families report extreme difficulties even getting out of their neighborhoods as commuters race through residential side roads or are sometimes backed up 20 deep waiting to make a turn. In some situations, the ability for emergency services to have free ingress and egress to neighborhoods can be compromised. This dangerous congestion is having a fundamental impact on the quality of life of working families.

Simply stated, the current Bridge is functionally obsolete because it cannot handle today’s traffic volumes. It is a “bottleneck,” clogging the Tysons-I-270 corridor and surrounding road networks.

Therefore, the MCA strongly supports inclusion of Initiative 1 as a critical unfunded project in the expanded 2018 CLRP.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dale Stein, President
McLean Citizens Association

cc: Lyn Erickson, TPB Staff
Kanti Srikanth, TPB Staff