



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

November 3, 2017 – **DRAFT**

Secretary Pete K. Rahn
Maryland Department of Transportation Secretary and
Maryland Transportation Authority Chairman
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Boulevard
Hanover, MD 21076

Re: Governor Harry Nice Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Secretary Rahn:

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) recently took action to amend the National Capital Region's Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) to accommodate Maryland's schedule acceleration of the Governor Harry Nice Bridge Replacement Project. Several questions and concerns were raised by TPB members regarding project development details. On behalf of the TPB, I am asking that a senior knowledgeable Maryland Transportation Authority representative meet and engage in a dialog with the TPB in the near future regarding aspects of the bridge replacement that are of concern to TPB member governments in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

The TPB appreciates and supports the State of Maryland's efforts to accelerate and accomplish the replacement and upgrade of this vital link in the Maryland, Virginia and National Capital Region transportation infrastructure, as evidenced both by the TPB's previous inclusion of the project in the CLRP, as well as our October 18, 2017 actions to approve an air quality conformity determination and amendment of the CLRP for this project. Before taking the actions at the TPB's October 18 meeting, however, a number of TPB members raised questions and concerns and provided comments for the record. These concerns were, in summary:

1. *Bridge Height:* District of Columbia and City of Alexandria representatives expressed concerns about the impact of the proposed bridge height reduction on movement of historic tall ships and other tall vessels that currently can access Washington and Alexandria ports. Inability for such vessels to reach Washington and Alexandria, among other destinations, could have negative community and economic impacts.
2. *Emergency Breakdown Shoulders:* The Charles County representative raised issues also noted in an (attached) October 6, 2017 letter to you from the Board of Charles County Commissioners. This letter was forwarded to TPB and is included in our official comment records as part of the conformity determination and plan approval. Charles County is concerned that a new bridge without adequate shoulder widths for emergency breakdowns "will not help relieve the congestion that is currently being seen on this bridge."
3. *Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations:* Also raised at the TPB and in the Charles County Commissioners' letter was the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian connections on the replacement bridge. With a planned 100-year lifespan of a replacement bridge, this represents a once-in-100-years opportunity to provide such a bicycle and pedestrian connection, with important community and economic benefits. Including such a bicycle and

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pedestrian connection would also be consistent with the TPB's adopted Complete Streets policy. Additionally, the Charles County Commissioners' letter asked for consideration of keeping and repurposing the existing Harry Nice Bridge as a bicycle and pedestrian facility.

The TPB would appreciate the chance for expert briefings and dialog as the project design proceeds given these major concerns from jurisdictions around the region. We appreciate the ongoing participation in the TPB by Maryland Department of Transportation representatives of the Office of the Secretary. However, it will be vital in this case also to have senior representation from the Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) for these discussions, given the role that the MdTA and its board have in this project.

The TPB is currently engaged in the update of our long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region, known as Visualize 2045. We look forward to providing our members with this opportunity for such a dialog which will enable support for a timely and cost-effective replacement of the Nice Bridge that best enhances the National Capital Region's community needs and development for 2045 and beyond. We appreciate your leadership and assistance on these important considerations.

Sincerely,

Bridget Donnell Newton
TPB Chairman

Attachment

cc: Mr. R. Earl Lewis, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
Mr. Kevin C. Reigrut, Executive Director, Maryland Transportation Authority



Charles County Government

CHARLES COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Peter F. Murphy, *President*
Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed., *Vice President*
Ken Robinson
Debra M. Davis, Esq.
Bobby Rucci

Michael D. Mallinoff, Esq., *ICMA-CM*
County Administrator

October 6, 2017

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Office of the Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Request for Assistance (Harry Nice Bridge Replacement Project)

Dear Governor Hogan:

I am sending this letter on behalf of the Board of Charles County Commissioners to relay some existing concerns regarding the Harry Nice Bridge Replacement Project.

Currently, the Harry Nice Bridge, located on Route 301, connecting Charles County, MD and King George County, VA serves approximately 6.6 million automobiles each year and is the second oldest facility in the Maryland Transportation Authority's inventory. The Harry Nice Bridge currently consists of one lane in each direction which tends to create major backups when there are accidents on the bridge. At this time bicycles and pedestrians have no access to usage of this bridge.

Initially, the Maryland Transportation Authority had planned to include a bicycle/pedestrian lane and road shoulders wide enough to accommodate vehicle breakdowns in the replacement bridge. However, recently it was announced that those plans had changed and there would no longer be vehicle breakdown lanes on the new bridge and possibly not a bicycle/pedestrian lane. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to build a bicycle and pedestrian connection across the lower Potomac, the only connection south of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. It is a connection that could serve as an important link between Maryland and Virginia.

It is understood that cost is a factor in the addition of the bicycle/pedestrian and vehicle breakdown lanes, however, this bridge is being built as a 100 year bridge and should be built with the idea of making it to better serve our citizens, both those in vehicles as well as those who chose to travel on bicycle or by foot. Without the addition of these additional lanes, it is thought that the new bridge will not help relieve the congestion that is

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currently being seen on this bridge, especially during high peak travel times. We must continue to improve the quality of life that our residents deserve and look forward to.

Please do not consider any options that fail to include pedestrian/bicycle access and breakdown lanes. A possible "Green" option would be to consider keeping and repurposing the existing Harry Nice Bridge as a Bike/Pedestrian Walkway over the Potomac alongside the newly constructed Harry Nice Bridge. We appreciate your time and attention to this matter and request your assistance with achieving the desired outcome.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,



Peter F. Murphy, President
Charles County Board of Commissioners