



July 19, 2017

Honorable Martin E. Nohe
Chairman, Northern Virginia Transportation Authority
3040 Williams Drive, Suite 200
Fairfax, Virginia 22031

Dear Chairman Nohe:

The McLean Citizens Association (MCA) applauds the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) "Transportation Action Plan for Northern Virginia" (Plan), particularly the support of new ramps, bridges and access roads projected for the Beltway between the American Legion Bridge and I-66.

However, we are concerned that the Plan does not address the most serious traffic problem in Northern Virginia: the American Legion Bridge. Traffic congestion at the Bridge is at a crisis point. Hour-long backups 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 American Legion Bridge suffers from the worst congestion of all bridges crossing the Potomac River, and has the largest projected growth in volume through 2040. VDOT staff recommended in that study that the top priority for addressing Potomac River crossings should be extending additional lanes across the American Legion Bridge to the I-270 interchange.

It is not only the backup on I-495 that has reached a near-breaking point. Many cars attempt to bypass the I-495 backup by cutting through local McLean residential streets and intersections. A considerable number of residents in areas abutting Georgetown Pike report extreme difficulties even getting out of their neighborhoods as cars back up for miles snaking through residential side roads. We believe this cut-through traffic has been exacerbated by Apps like Waze, which prompt commuters to take side routes to avoid the backup. This congestion is having a fundamental impact on the quality of life of McLean-area residents.

Simply stated, the current American Legion Bridge is functionally obsolete because it cannot handle today's traffic. It is a "bottleneck," clogging the Tysons-Route 270 corridor and surrounding road network. Our situation will only worsen given the urbanization of Tysons and projected growth in the area.

The MCA has long been on record advocating that local and state governments in Virginia and Maryland work together with the Federal government to identify funding and build another span adjacent to the current American Legion Bridge. Given its role in allocating revenues resulting from the passage of HB 2313, the NVTAs should play a critical role in helping to effectuate a solution to this transportation crisis. With further widening of the ALB impracticable, and maybe impossible from an engineering perspective, the best alternative is to build another span directly adjacent to the east side of the current bridge. Publicly-owned land on both sides of the river is already available. The supporting road network is already in place. The need is already obvious to all who live here or work nearby.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Dale M. Stein
President, McLean Citizens Association

cc: Governor Terry McAuliffe
Senator Mark Warner
Senator Tim Kaine
Congresswoman Barbara Comstock
Senator Barbara Favola
Senator Janet Howell
Delegate Kathleen Murphy
Delegate Rip Sullivan
Delegate Mark Keam
Delegate Marcus Simon
Chairman Sharon Bulova, Fairfax County
Supervisor John Foust, Fairfax County
Supervisor Linda Smith, Fairfax County
Councilmember Roger Berliner, Montgomery County