



September 14, 2015

The Honorable Aubrey L. Layne, Jr.
Secretary of Transportation
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street, Third Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Re: Potomac River Crossings

Dear Secretary Layne and members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board:

We are writing in response to the August 24, 2015 letter by CTB members Gary Garczynski and James Dyke, Jr. regarding their proposal that VDOT pursue a western Potomac River crossing. We understand that the two CTB members may present a resolution to you during the September meeting. However, since this issue is not noticed in the agenda, it is not appropriate to bring up for vote. If it is discussed, we hope that you will consider the following information.

The clear findings of VDOT's Origins and Destination Study of Potomac River Crossings, briefed to you in July, do not support a new upriver crossing. The VDOT study demonstrates that the American Legion Bridge and Rosslyn Metro Tunnel are where the highest demand and need exists. These two facilities are critical to connecting Northern Virginia to DC and the federal jobs engine, and to Montgomery County, Maryland's most important economic centers. Leadership and staff resources spent pursuing Maryland and doing yet another study of an upriver bridge are resources not being dedicated to our critical priorities, and contrary to state efforts to set priorities for the efficient use of scarce tax dollars. Therefore, your resolution regarding the Potomac River crossing study should be limited to the American Legion Bridge and Rosslyn Tunnel.

1) VDOT's Origins and Destinations Study of Potomac River Crossings is definitive. It shows that that just 5% of Virginia trips crossing the American Legion Bridge today, and 4% in 2040, are the "U-shaped commutes" that might use an upriver bridge. All of the other trips (60%) illustrated in the study are "L-shaped," and are best served by the location of the American Legion Bridge and its alignment with the largest job centers in Fairfax and Montgomery Counties, or are trips that cross the American Legion and have destinations along and inside the Beltway (the remaining 35% not discussed in the briefing).

2) The study demonstrates that the American Legion Bridge has the worst congestion and need for improvement among Potomac River road bridges.

3) The VDOT findings confirm the previous Origin and Destination Study for the American Legion

Bridge (2003/2004), which tracked both Virginia and Maryland commuters crossing the American Legion Bridge and found a similarly low percentage of "U-shaped commuters."

4) The current study also shows the Metro Rosslyn Tunnel is at capacity. We are in urgent need of railcars for 8-car trains, and require future expansion of tunnel capacity.

5) The study shows the Rosslyn Tunnel carries 35% of Virginia morning commuters across the Potomac, compared to 14% on the American Legion Bridge and just 1% at Point of Rocks. In the a.m. peak, 71,000 commuters are crossing in both directions on the Metro at Rosslyn, compared to about 48,000 on the American Legion and 4,000 at Point of Rocks.

6) Given the high potential cost of a new upriver bridge, including the 10 to 15 miles of highway that Maryland would need to build, these scarce resources are better used fixing existing congestion problems at the American Legion Bridge and the Rosslyn Metro Tunnel.

7) The bridge and highway would impact significant natural and historic resources, including the Potomac Heritage Trail, the C&O Canal National Historic Park, Broad Run, Seneca Creek, the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, and neighborhoods in eastern Loudoun and throughout North Potomac, Maryland. As a result, and not surprisingly, Montgomery County remains adamantly opposed to the bridge and highway. In fact, when last proposed the bridge generated a powerful outcry from residents on both sides of the Potomac including Great Falls, Reston, and eastern Loudoun.

8) In its recent letter to you, Fairfax County clearly expressed its desire that the focus be on fixing the American Legion Bridge and Metro Rosslyn Tunnel.

9) Spending billions of dollars on highways for Dulles Airport can't be justified based on the actual challenges faced by the airport. Reports show that changes in airline operating structure (i.e. United) have been a contributor in reduced boarding.¹ In addition, a recent report showed Dulles ranks poorly on service and delays within the terminal,² something which prompts many to seek out Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. Lastly, a George Mason University study showed that claims of potential growth in cargo demand don't add up because of the structure of the cargo market and general decline in air cargo shipping.³ There are simply better things we can do for Dulles, particularly focused on the quality of the passenger experience, including completing the Silver Line Phase 2, fixing the Route 28/I-66 interchange, and fixing the passenger service and delay issues within the airport itself.

10) Northern Virginia and the Washington DC region have committed to organizing new development around a network of transit-oriented centers. This is matched by a fundamental shift in market demand: 84% of new office development is within 1/4 mile of a Metro station; 92% of office leases over 20,000 square feet are within 1/2 mile of a Metro station;⁴ the CEO of Marriott will be moving his firm to a Metro station;⁵ and Hilton, Deloitte and Intelsat recently located in Tysons adjacent to Metro. Meanwhile traditional office parks are being abandoned. Therefore, to remain competitive, we need to prioritize investing in transit and the local street networks that support transit-oriented development (TOD), not

¹ MWAA Presentation to Dulles forum, January 2015, slide 11.

² "Dulles considered by some one of the worst airports in the world,"

<http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2015/09/02/dulles-considered-by-some-one-of-the-worst.html>; and "Dulles Among Most Frustrating Airports, Reagan National Among Least," Bloomberg,

<http://www.bizjournals.com/washington/news/2014/11/24/dulles-among-most-frustrating-airports-reagan.html>

³ An Assessment of Factors Affecting Air Cargo Operations at Washington Dulles International Airport, http://cra.gmu.edu/pdfs/CRA2013-6_DVersel.pdf

⁴ "Vast majority of new office in region near Metro." <http://planitmetro.com/2015/04/22/vast-majority-of-new-office-in-region-near-metro/>

⁵ "Marriott CEO: We will move our headquarters." <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/digger/wp/2015/03/01/marriott-ceo-we-will-move-our-headquarters/>

diverting scarce revenues to facilities that don't support an efficient TOD network. With direct connections between the Silver Line at Tysons and Montgomery County's job centers on the Red Line, a HOT lane and transit connection at the American Legion Bridge would significantly enhance commercial exchange between the jurisdictions.

For these reasons, the CTB should be endorsing cooperation with the surrounding jurisdictions on meeting the needs at the American Legion Bridge and the Rosslyn Metro tunnel, not diverting time and resources to an upriver crossing. We urge you to exclude the upriver crossing from any resolution that you may adopt.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stewart Schwartz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stewart Schwartz
Executive Director