

December 20, 2018

Ms. Katherine Youngbluth, AICP
Long Bridge Project
55 M Street, SE -- Suite 400
Washington, DC 20003-3515
info@longbridgeproject.com

Re: Long Bridge Project – Public Meeting #5

Dear Ms. Youngbluth:

On behalf of the Board of Directors and membership of Virginians for High Speed Rail, I would like to submit formal comments regarding the Long Bridge Project.

Long Bridge is of vital economic importance to the Commonwealth and we believe that rail capacity over the Potomac River must be expanded. This is a once in a generation project, therefore **we strongly support Action Alternative A** to expand the crossing to four tracks.

The reason that we are supporting Alternative A is because it is 32 percent cheaper than Alternative B, it can be completed over 3 years sooner, and it has far less impact on our environment.

This is not only a project that must be completed for the benefit of our future rail service, but it will also benefit today's passenger trains. Reliability and on-time performance over the current Long Bridge is about 8 percentage points lower than our intercity regional passenger rail trains overall reliability. And, on-time performance across the bridge is projected to drop even further to less than 10 percent by 2040. This is simply unacceptable.

We estimate that doubling the capacity of Long Bridge along with improved infrastructure south of the Potomac will remove 13 billion potential passenger miles from our roadways, reduce fuel consumption by 246 million gallons, and lower airborne carbon pollution by nearly 4.8 billion pounds over the expansion's first decade of utilization. This in return will lower the need to build and maintain over 2,500 lane miles of roadway saving the state's drivers and taxpayers more than \$132 million annually.

Expanding capacity across the Potomac River will also have substantial economic benefits for the Commonwealth's citizens, commuters, and visitors. It will allow for even more intercity and regional passenger rail service from the Northeast corridor to Richmond, Hampton Roads, the Piedmont and New River Valley corridor, as well as improved service to the Southeast.

This expansion of intercity passenger rail service will generate an estimated \$865 million annually in additional economic benefits for Virginia including increased tourism, consumer spending, and employment. The American Public Transportation Association estimates that the additional investment in expanded commuter rail will generate over \$747 million in economic benefits each year.

Combined the expansion of intercity and commuter passenger rail allowed for by the increased capacity over the Potomac River will create and/or sustain over 16,000 jobs each year.

One point that I would like to highlight regarding the new bridge's potential design is that it must be designed in a manner that will allow for it to be easily retrofitted for electrification. Electrification of intercity passenger rail service on the entire east coast is a priority of VHSR and we want to ensure that every major infrastructure project built allows for this potential when the time comes.

Thank you for taking the time to review our public comments, and if I can be of assistance, please let me know.

Regards,



Danny Plaugher
Executive Director

CC:
Secretary Shannon Valentine
Director Jennifer Mitchell
Board of Virginians for High Speed Rail