



# Long Bridge Project

## Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

### Summary of Public Hearing

December 20, 2019

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), jointly with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) and Section 4(f) Evaluation for the Long Bridge Project (the Project) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Section 4(f) of the United States Department of Transportation Act of 1966.<sup>1</sup> The Project consists of potential improvements to the Long Bridge and related railroad infrastructure located between the RO Interlocking near Long Bridge Park in Arlington, Virginia, and the L'Enfant Interlocking near 10th Street SW in the District of Columbia (the Long Bridge Corridor). The purpose of this report is to summarize the public hearing on the Draft EIS, Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation, and Draft Section 106 Programmatic Agreement (Draft PA) held on October 22, 2019. The Draft PA was prepared in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106)<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.0 Meeting Overview

On October 22, 2019, FRA and DDOT hosted a public hearing to obtain comments on the Draft EIS and Section 4(f) Evaluation. The meeting also served as part of concurrent consultation for Section 106 and provided opportunity for public comment on the Draft PA. **Figure 2-1** details key meeting elements.

The open house format allowed participants the opportunity to review the informational exhibits covering the following topics:

- NEPA, Section 4(f), and Section 106 processes;
- Project background;
- Action Alternatives;
- Comparison of the Action Alternatives;
- Selection of the Preferred Alternative;
- Railroad bridge design options;
- Potential mitigation for impacts to resources protected under Section 4(f) (bike-pedestrian crossing); and
- Section 106 adverse effects to historic properties and potential resolution of adverse effects.

The informational exhibits consisted of 18 display boards and two roll plots (**Appendix C**). The two roll plots depicted Action Alternatives A and B and highlighted key environmental impacts. At 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM, DDOT and FRA gave a presentation elaborating on the information included on the boards. The presentation was the same both times (**Appendix D**). Participants had the opportunity to provide formal comments following the presentations, by speaking with the court reporter at any time during the open house, by completing comment cards distributed at the meeting (**Appendix E**), or by submitting comments in writing to [info@longbridgeproject.com](mailto:info@longbridgeproject.com). These comments will be responded to in the Final EIS.

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<sup>1</sup> 42 USC 4321; 49 USC 303

<sup>2</sup> 36 CFR 800

**Figure 2-1 | Key Meeting Information**

### Date

- October 22, 2019

### Location

- DCRA Building Room E200, 1100 4th Street SW, Washington, DC 20024
- Meeting held at Americans with Disabilities Act compliant location

### Time

- 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM
- Formal presentations at 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM

### Statistics

- 82 attendees
- 25 Title VI respondents
- 12 comments (3 comment cards, 1 Title VI Questionnaire, 6 comments stated during the public comment session, and 2 comments made directly to the court reporter)

## 3.0 Outreach and Preparations

The Project team (FRA, DDOT, and consultant VHB) used several outreach and communication tools to inform the public about the meeting and to provide background information about the Project (**Appendix A** includes copies of the outreach materials). Outreach methods included:

- Posting information on the project website, [www.longbridgeproject.com](http://www.longbridgeproject.com), beginning September 5, 2019 when the Draft EIS was released for public review.
- Announcing the public hearing through a DDOT-issued press release on September 5, 2019.
- Publishing advertisements in two newspapers—*Washington Post* (English) and *El Tiempo Latino* (Spanish) – on October 2 and 4, 2019, respectively, to inform both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking public of the meeting.
- Distributing an e-blast notification to the Long Bridge public email listserv recipients on September 5, 2019 announcing publication of the Draft EIS and also the date of the public hearing.
- Distributing an e-blast notification specific to the public hearing to the Long Bridge public email listserv recipients on October 15, 2019, one week prior to the public hearing, and sending a reminder e-blast notification on October 22, 2019, the day of the public hearing.
- Distributing meeting fliers on October 15 and 16, 2019, to the following locations:
  - L’Enfant Plaza and Southwest, DC (200 copies):
    - Southwest Business Improvement District (BID) Office, 420 4th Street SW
    - Southwest Interim Neighborhood Library, 425 M Street SW

- DC Office of Planning (lobby), 1100 4th Street SW
- Safeway, 1100 4th Street SW
- L'Enfant Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Commuter Rail Station
- Fliers provided to ANC Commissioner Andy Litzky to distribute at ANC 6D meeting (75 fliers for October 21, 2019 meeting)
- Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia (100 copies):
  - The Connection: Crystal City Pop-Up Library, 2100 Crystal Drive
  - Crystal City VRE Station
  - Crystal City Metrorail Station
  - WeWork, 2221 South Clark Street
  - TechShop, 2100-B Crystal Drive
  - 1776, 2231 Crystal Drive
  - Crystal City BID (office, online event calendar, 65 fliers to distribute at an evening event)
- Publicizing the meeting via social media, including:
  - Tweets from the FRA Twitter account on September 13 and October 15, 21, and 22, 2019 (see **Figure 3-1**)
  - FRA Facebook posts on September 13 and October 15, 21, and 22, 2019

Local organizations and other government agencies also publicized the meeting via social media and on their websites:

- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy tweet on October 22, 2019
- Washington Area Bicyclist Association blog article on the Project and the Public Meeting posted on October 17, 2019 and accompanying tweet on October 18, 2019
- Sierra Club DC tweet on October 22, 2019
- Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) tweet on October 22, 2019
- VRE tweets on October 18 and 22, 2019
- VRE *Train Talk eNews* notices regarding the Public Meeting distributed to their ridership on October 18 and 21, 2019
- *Greater Greater Washington* post on September 10, 2019

The following news articles also included information on the meeting (see **Appendix G**):

- “The latest on the rehabilitation and expansion of D.C.’s Long Bridge corridor,” *DC Curbed*, September 10, 2019
- “Plan for Long Bridge expansion moves forward,” *Washington Post*, September 11, 2019
- “Rusting Potomac River railroad bridge facing overhaul – and maybe more,” *NBC12.com*, October 4, 2019
- “Railroad Span Over Potomac From DC To Arlington Faces Overhaul,” *Arlington Patch*, October 19, 2019
- “Long Bridge – region’s worst rail bottleneck – public hearing set Tuesday in D.C.” *Potomac Local*, October 21, 2019

**Figure 3-1 | FRA Tweets Promoting the Long Bridge Public Hearing**

**The FRA** @USDOTFRA  
 Mark your calendar: FRA & @DDOTDC to host a #PublicHearing on the #LongBridgeProject @dcra, Oct. 22, 4-7 p.m. More info at [bit.ly/2kmWpR2](http://bit.ly/2kmWpR2) #dc #VA  
 3:00 PM · Sep 13, 2019 · TweetDeck

**The FRA** @USDOTFRA  
 One week from today: FRA & @DDOTDC host a #PublicHearing on the #LongBridgeProject @dcra. More info at [bit.ly/2kmWpR2](http://bit.ly/2kmWpR2). #dc #VA  
 4:00 PM · Oct 15, 2019 · TweetDeck

**The FRA** @USDOTFRA  
 TOMORROW: Don't miss the chance to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement & other docs for the #LongBridgeProject, 4-7 p.m. @DCRA. Visit [bit.ly/2kmWpR2](http://bit.ly/2kmWpR2). #dc #VA  
 2:00 PM · Oct 21, 2019 · TweetDeck

**The FRA** @USDOTFRA  
 TODAY: #PublicHearing on the #LongBridgeProject starts in one hour. Read more: [bit.ly/2kmWpR2](http://bit.ly/2kmWpR2). #dc #VA  
 3:00 PM · Oct 22, 2019 · TweetDeck

## 4.0 Meeting Format and Materials

At the meeting entrance, attendees signed in, and staff offered them a fact sheet on the Project and a Title VI questionnaire. A copy of the fact sheet is in **Appendix B** and an example of the Title VI questionnaire is in **Appendix F**. As they entered, attendees had the opportunity to browse the informational exhibits around the room in an open house format (**Figure 4-1**). The first grouping of exhibits provided background on the Long Bridge Project, the NEPA and Section 106 processes, the Project schedule, the Project Area, and the Purpose and Need for the Project. A second grouping of exhibits provided information on the No Action Alternative, the proposed new railroad bridge types, a comparison of the alternatives, the selection of the Preferred Alternative, an explanation of Section 4(f), and details of the potential Section 4(f) mitigation (i.e., the bike-pedestrian crossing). Additionally, an exhibit provided a summary of the Section 106 adverse effects to historic properties determination and proposed resolution strategies. Finally, two roll plots of Action Alternatives A and B showed the location of key impacts. A copy of the informational exhibits is in **Appendix C**. Staff were available to provide information on the Project and answer questions during the open house.

**Figure 4-1** | Photo from the Long Bridge Public Hearing Open House



Participants had two opportunities to attend the same formal presentation: 4:30 PM and 6:00 PM (**Figure 4-2**). The presentation provided a more in-depth explanation of the information included in the exhibits. A copy of the presentation is in **Appendix D**. A formal public comment period was held following each presentation.

**Figure 4-2** | Photo from the Long Bridge Public Hearing Presentation



## 5.0 Comments Received

Attendees were invited to provide comments in person at the public hearing, by speaking directly to the court reporter, speaking during the public comment session following each presentation, or by submitting written comment cards. Attendees were also encouraged to submit comments via email to [info@longbridgeproject.com](mailto:info@longbridgeproject.com). Eight attendees spoke during the public comment session and two attendees provided comments directly to the court reporter. Another four attendees submitted written comments on the comment cards provided and using the comment section of the Title VI questionnaire. These comments will be responded to in the Final EIS, along with all comments received via email or U.S. postal mail through October 28, 2019. **Appendix H** contains the public hearing transcript and all comments received on the Draft EIS from agencies, organizations, and the general public.

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Over 900 comments were received during the public comment period, including two form letters that generated the majority of comments. Comments touched on the following topics (this list is not comprehensive):

- Support for the Preferred Alternative (including 432 form letter comments)
  - Comments related to design, construction, and operation of the Preferred Alternative included:
    - Including electrification as part of the design
    - Dedicating the new bridge solely to passenger rail operations
    - Ensuring safe operations under the Maryland Avenue SW overbuild
    - Designing bridge to accommodate future demand
    - Considering longer shutdowns during construction to shorten overall construction duration
    - Ensuring new infrastructure has been designed to be resilient to climate change
    - Designing new infrastructure to enable higher speeds through the corridor
- Comments related to impacts included:
  - Concern over impacts due to stormwater runoff from the new bridge
  - Impacts to Washington Marina operations due to loss of parking
  - Ensuring consistency with local and Federal land use plans
  - Impacts to parklands
  - Impacts to the transportation network during construction
- Comments related to mitigation included:
  - Painting the existing bridge to mitigate visual impacts
- Support for the bike-pedestrian crossing (including 376 form letter comments)
  - Comments related to the bike-pedestrian crossing included:
    - Connecting the bike-pedestrian crossing across the Washington Channel to destinations in the District
    - Ensuring the bike-pedestrian crossing is designed with sufficient width to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians comfortably
    - Removing the 90-degree angle at ramps so bicyclists do not have to dismount
    - Ensuring the bike-pedestrian bridge is constructed along with the railroad bridge

## 6.0 Follow-Up and Next Steps

FRA and DDOT updated the Long Bridge Project website with the informational exhibits and presentation from the Public Hearing on October 22, 2019. The home page and past meetings page contain links to the meeting materials. The materials posted on the website are all compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998 (29 USC 794 (d)).

The next steps for the Project are shown in the timeline below (**Figure 6-1**). FRA and DDOT will prepare responses to comments received at the public hearing and during the public comment period on the Draft EIS. FRA and DDOT will present the comments and responses in the combined Final EIS/Record of Decision (ROD), anticipated to be completed in Summer 2020.

**Figure 6-1 | Steps in the Section 106 and NEPA Processes**

