

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FOR

PROJECT: Crystal City to Ronald Reagan
National Airport Multimodal
Connection (CC2DCA)

LOCATION: Arlington, Virginia

STATE PROJECT: CCCB-000-896 (UPC 115562)

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has determined that this project will have no significant impact on the human environment. This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the Environmental Assessment and the Virginia Department of Transportation’s June 11, 2024 letter revising the Environmental Assessment and requesting a Finding of No Significant Impact. These documents have been independently evaluated by FHWA and determined to adequately and accurately discuss the purpose and need, alternatives, and environmental impacts of the proposed project and appropriate mitigation measures. They provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. FHWA takes full responsibility for the accuracy, content, and scope of the Environmental Assessment and the June 11, 2024 letter.

A Federal agency may publish a notice in the Federal Register, pursuant to 23 USC 139(1), indicating that one or more Federal agencies have taken final action on permits, licenses, or approvals for a transportation project. If such notice is published, claims seeking judicial review of those Federal agency actions will be barred unless such claims are filed within 150 days after the date of publication of the notice, or within such shorter time period as is specified in the Federal laws pursuant to which judicial review of the Federal agency action is allowed. If no notice is published, then the periods of time that otherwise are provided by the Federal laws governing such claims will apply.

07-24-2024

Date



Edward Ofori, P.E.
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has reviewed the Virginia Department of Transportation's June 11, 2024 letter revising the Environmental Assessment and requesting a Finding of No Significant Impact, comments on the Environmental Assessment and responses, the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement, and other supporting documentation.¹ In accordance with 40 CFR 1508.1(q), this Finding of No Significant Impact briefly presents the reasons why the project will not have a significant effect on the human environment.

Background

FHWA approved the Environmental Assessment (EA) for public availability on July 11, 2023, and the document was distributed to affected units of federal, state, and local governments. A public hearing was held on September 19, 2023. During the EA public review period, 60 individuals commented via an online comment form, 18 individuals and six groups or non-governmental organizations submitted comments by email, and four federal agencies and two regional agencies provided comments by email. The public hearing summary and the responses to comments are included as attachments to the Virginia Department of Transportation's June 11, 2024 letter.

Environmental Impacts and Evaluation of Significance

As described in the Environmental Assessment, the following resources are not present or would not be adversely affected by the project: housing, water quality, floodplains, water supply, waters of the United States, threatened and endangered species, farmland, and air quality. Also, once constructed, the project would not cause noise impacts.

The Virginia Department of Transportation analyzed the project's environmental impacts and concluded that the project would not have a significant impact on the environment. FHWA has independently evaluated the environmental impacts and the following sections summarize the analysis of impact significance.

George Washington Memorial Parkway and Mount Vernon Trail

The project would use property from the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) and Mount Vernon Trail. The following measures would be implemented to minimize harm to the GWMP and Mount Vernon Trail:

- Design reviews as engineering and design progress to ensure that the design and aesthetic elements of the project in National Park Service (NPS)-administered properties are appropriate for the context.
- Development and implementation of a vegetation protection plan in coordination with NPS to determine which vegetation is anticipated to be removed, impacted, or protected by the project.
- Development and implementation of a vegetation restoration plan in coordination with NPS to reestablish, to the extent practicable, a landscape consistent with historic GWMP planting plans in the vicinity of the project.
- Development and implementation of a Construction Management Control Plan in

¹ The June 11, 2024 letter and the Environmental Assessment are hereby incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact.

coordination with NPS to identify approaches and methods to avoid or minimize, to the extent feasible, the use of, and impacts on, the GWMP from construction of the project.

- Funding for the NPS to develop a Long Range Comprehensive Interpretive Plan for the GWMP highlighting underrepresented stories related to the legacies of enslavement in the vicinity of the project area.
- Restoring the areas of the GWMP affected by construction after the completion of construction. Arlington County will develop and implement a vegetation restoration plan in coordination with NPS for the portion the GWMP disturbed by the project. The restoration plan would re-create the park-like setting present before construction of the project.
- Funding for five years for Mount Vernon Trail maintenance activities including, but not limited to, edging the trail, replacing boardwalk bridge components like decking, cutting back vegetation overgrowth, grinding out asphalt root heaves, and power washing scum from bridge decks.
- Contributing to funding for Gravelly Point Site rehabilitation work, such as parking lot rehabilitation, development of a parking management plan, relocation of the comfort station, and rehabilitation of the boat launch with an accessible canoe/kayak launch.

The NPS has agreed to the above measures. FHWA finds that the impacts to the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Mount Vernon Trail are not significant.

In addition, FHWA finds that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of these Section 4(f) properties, and that the Preferred Alternative would cause the least overall harm in light of Section 4(f)'s preservation purpose. FHWA is signing the Final Section 4(f) Evaluation concurrently with this Finding of No Significant Impact.

Socioeconomic

No adverse impacts to community facilities are anticipated. The project would enhance community connectivity and cohesion by providing a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle pathway between Crystal City, the future VRE Crystal City Station's platform, and the airport.

The new bridge would facilitate economic activity by providing a dedicated pedestrian connection between the airport and Crystal City businesses. In the short term, the project would support planning, engineering, and construction jobs in the area during implementation of the project. The project would result in the potential loss of up to 40 parking spaces and associated revenue at the Terminal 2 parking garage at the airport, depending on its final alignment across airport property. This amounts to a maximum of approximately 0.5 percent of the total parking currently available and 0.3 percent of planned future parking capacity at the airport. When combined with the wide variety of options for travelers accessing the airport, further enhanced by the construction of the project, the loss of parking spaces is not anticipated to adversely affect airport operations. Coordination with the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority will continue to determine the final alignment.

Right of Way and Relocations. The project would not require relocating any residences or businesses. As needed, Arlington County would enter into agreements with the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority, CSX Transportation, the National Park Service, and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, respectively, to allow for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the

bridge across the lands under their respective ownerships or jurisdictions.

Environmental Justice. Any adverse impacts that would be experienced by park users, travelers on roadways or the railroad, bicyclists and pedestrians using the trail system, or visitors to the airport would be experienced by the general population within study area, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Pursuant to Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, the project would not have any disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low-income communities.

FHWA finds that the socioeconomic impacts are not significant.

Land Use

The project would have no impact on land uses in Crystal City since its western terminus would be within the CSX Transportation (CSXT)/Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA) right-of-way. In general, the project would be consistent with and promote the goals of local land use plans and studies, including the Crystal City Sector Plan.

The project would cross over the railroad right-of-way east of the future VRE Crystal City Station platform. Air rights would need to be acquired from both CSXT and VPRA, and a small area of land may also be needed to construct a bridge pier on the eastern edge of the right-of-way. Altogether, the total permanent footprint of the project within the railroad right-of-way (including the portion in CSXT/VPRA air rights) would be approximately 0.04 acres.

The project would cross over the George Washington Memorial Parkway, with several piers within parkway property. It would result in some loss of currently vegetated open space to construct the piers and ramp for the bridge and Mount Vernon Trail link. This would total approximately 0.21 acres. Some of the loss would be offset by the proposed link, which would enhance the trail's connectivity to both Crystal City and the airport.

The footprint of the project on airport property would depend on the final alignment and how it would connect to the airport terminal, but it is likely to be approximately 0.1 acre. If the project connects to the terminal through the parking garage, a small area of the garage may be needed to establish a dedicated walkway. This would result in the loss of some existing parking space. In such a case, it is anticipated that no more than 40 parking spaces (amounting to only 0.3 percent of future parking capacity) would be lost. No other impacts to land use on airport property would occur.

FHWA finds that the land use impacts are not significant.

Historic Properties

Impacts to the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) and Mount Vernon Trail would result from the physical alteration of contributing features. The introduction of contemporary infrastructure into the landscape and removal of vegetation that may be part of historic planting plans would result in the diminishment of setting and feeling for the GWMP and the Mount Vernon Trail. The new bridge would also result in the further erosion of the "Urban Valley" historic viewshed and would diminish this section of the integrity of design and feeling in this section of the GWMP and

the Mount Vernon Trail.

Measures to minimize and mitigate the adverse effects are specified in a Section 106 Programmatic Agreement among FHWA, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the National Park Service, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and Arlington County. These measures include:

- Design reviews as engineering and design progress to ensure that the design and aesthetic elements of the project in National Park Service (NPS)-administered properties are appropriate for the context.
- Development and implementation of a vegetation protection plan in coordination with the NPS to determine which vegetation is anticipated to be removed, impacted, or protected by the project.
- Development and implementation of a vegetation restoration plan in coordination with the NPS to reestablish, to the extent practicable, a landscape consistent with historic GWMP planting plans in the vicinity of the project.
- Development and implementation of a Construction Management Control Plan in coordination with the NPS to identify approaches and methods to avoid or minimize, to the extent feasible, the use of, and impacts on, the GWMP from construction of the project.
- Funding for the NPS to develop a Long Range Comprehensive Interpretive Plan for the GWMP highlighting underrepresented stories related to the legacies of enslavement in the vicinity of the project area.
- Restoring the areas of the GWMP affected by construction after the completion of construction. Arlington County will develop and implement a vegetation restoration plan in coordination with NPS for the portion the GWMP disturbed by the project. The restoration plan would re-create the park-like setting present before construction of the project.
- Funding for five years for Mount Vernon Trail maintenance activities including, but not limited to, edging the trail, replacing boardwalk bridge components like decking, cutting back vegetation overgrowth, grinding out asphalt root heaves, and power washing scum from bridge decks.

The regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act state, “A finding of adverse effect on a historic property does not necessarily require an EIS under NEPA.”

FHWA finds that the impacts to historic properties are not significant.

Terrestrial Wildlife and Habitat

The project would disturb approximately 1.9 acres of upland forested habitat that various avian species may use for nesting and feeding. Immediate disturbances to home territories from tree clearing activities would disperse animals to neighboring habitats. Avoidance of incidental take of migratory birds would be accomplished by conducting nesting surveys and initiating tree removal in fall/winter outside of nesting season. The project would result in temporary construction disturbances that would affect local wildlife. Given the relatively high ambient noise level already generated in the project area from passing vehicles and airplane traffic, animals in the areas such as the gray squirrel, raccoon, white-tailed deer, and songbirds are adapted to everyday urban noise levels, and noise from construction equipment will likely have little negative effect on their behavior.

FHWA finds that the impacts to terrestrial wildlife and habitat are not significant.

Hazardous Materials

Based on a review of available federal and state databases, no Superfund sites or sites governed by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act are located within the project study area. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has identified 14 confirmed leaks, spills of petroleum, or regulated substances in the study area. One of these sites is at a condominium complex, while the others are on airport property. None are within the project's limits of disturbance. The project is not expected to impact an active spill site or create new hazards that would adversely impact the environment. Any undocumented hazardous materials encountered during construction would be handled and disposed of in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations, as applicable.

FHWA finds that the hazardous materials impacts are not significant.

Indirect Effects

Socioeconomic. The project would add a new connection to the Mount Vernon Trail, which could result in increased use of the trail. Additional demand could result in added conflicts between trail users. However, these indirect impacts are expected to be minor. In addition, the project could potentially remove parking spaces at the airport which would reduce the number of travelers able to utilize the parking structure. This could result in decreased business for retail outlets and restaurants at the airport. However, the parking removed amounts to less than 1 percent of total capacity and therefore these indirect impacts are expected to be minor.

Wildlife and Habitat. The project could potentially result in long-term adverse impacts to wildlife habitat. Clearing vegetation for the new bridge could allow opportunistic species, including invasive species, to permanently establish. However, the acreage affected would be small in the context of the amount of habitat available in the study area. In addition, the contractor would adhere to VDOT's Road and Bridge Specifications Manual, Chapter 40 of Title 3.2 of the Code of Virginia, Virginia Administrative Code (VAC) 2VAC-5-390-20, and other applicable regulations.

Historic Resources. The project could potentially increase access to historic resources in the study area such as the RF&P Railroad Historic District, the George Washington Memorial Parkway, and Mount Vernon Trail. The project would provide a new way of interacting with these historic resources by providing a viewpoint from above – currently, these resources are experienced only by travelers on the railroad (RF&P Railroad Historic District), in automobiles (George Washington Memorial Parkway), and on foot, bicycle, or micromobility devices (Mount Vernon Trail). The project would also potentially increase usage of the Mount Vernon Trail, but it is not anticipated that an increase in visitation would degrade the integrity of the resource.

FHWA finds that the indirect effects are not significant.

Cumulative Effects

Socioeconomic Resources. The project would not adversely impact land uses in Crystal City, would not create new physical barriers that would adversely impact community connectivity or cohesion, and would not require any residential relocations. It also would not significantly contribute to adverse cumulative effects to socioeconomic resources. The project is expected to have beneficial

impacts to parks and recreation areas, community cohesion, and economic resources by improving connectivity between Crystal City, the Mount Vernon Trail, and the airport. Past and present actions have led to the development of Crystal City as a high-density residential and office node but have also created barriers that limit connectivity from Crystal City to other neighborhoods, recreational opportunities (such as the Mount Vernon Trail), and the airport. By enhancing connectivity and accessibility among residences, businesses, recreational resources, and air travel, the project would contribute to beneficial cumulative effects. The project would adversely affect user experience on the George Washington Memorial Parkway by removing trees and introducing a new structure into the viewshed. However, when combined with previous development that has negatively affected the viewshed, the project would not significantly contribute to adverse effects on the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Natural Resources. Past growth and urbanization have diminished natural resources within the study area, and current federal, state, and local regulations and conservation efforts would lessen the effects of future actions. The project would result in a small increase in impervious surface within the watershed. Past development has resulted in a high amount of impervious surface within Crystal City and on the airport property and has contributed to impairment of surface waters such as the Potomac River and Roaches Run. However, other present and future actions are not anticipated to appreciably increase the amount of impervious surface and associated pollutant runoff. In addition, the project and other current and future actions would be implemented in accordance with current stormwater regulations and best practices, which are anticipated to reduce pollutants entering waterways. Therefore, the project is anticipated to contribute negligibly to adverse cumulative effects.

Historic Resources. The project would negatively impact the George Washington Memorial Parkway due to the removal of vegetation that was part of historic planting plans and changes to the “urban valley” viewshed within the study area. Development in Crystal City and the construction of the airport have previously resulted in negative impacts to views from the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The project is anticipated to minorly contribute to adverse cumulative effects to the viewshed of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

FHWA finds that the cumulative effects are not significant.

FHWA Finding

Based on the foregoing information as well as the Environmental Assessment, VDOT’s June 11, 2024 letter revising the Environmental Assessment and requesting a Finding of No Significant Impact, and the Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement, FHWA finds that the project will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted, and this Finding of No Significant Impact is being issued accordingly. The Finding of No Significant Impact will be reevaluated pursuant to 23 CFR 771.129(c) prior to FHWA granting any major approvals, and the reevaluation will take into account the conditions at that time.