

Member Panel
National Parks, Forests, & Public Lands Leg Hearing
7/13/2020

Good afternoon Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Gohmert and fellow members of the subcommittee:

I want to start by thanking the Chairman and the Ranking Member for allowing my bill, HR 7489, the *Long Bridge Act of 2020*, to receive a legislative hearing today. I also want to thank the witnesses for being here to discuss these important pieces of legislation. In particular, I want to thank the Virginia Secretary of Transportation, Shannon Valentine, for appearing today in support of the legislation and for her dedication to the Long Bridge Project. Finally, I want to thank Congressmembers Beyer, Holmes Norton,

Wexton, Connolly, Bobby Scott, Cline, Griffith, Luria, Spanberger, and Brown for their co-sponsorship and support.

HR 7489, the *Long Bridge Act of 2020*, comes after numerous years of successful negotiation between the Commonwealth of Virginia, DC, and CSX and culminated in a December 2019 landmark agreement to expand reliability and service on Virginia's rail lines, creating a pathway to separate passenger and freight operations along the Richmond to Washington, D.C. corridor.

The First District includes the I-95 Corridor in Prince William and Stafford counties, and the City of

Fredericksburg, which includes the worst traffic hot spot in the nation. Addressing the congestion issue along the I-95 corridor is essential to improving transportation in the region.

Long Bridge, the most heavily traveled railroad bridge connecting Washington, D.C. to Virginia and other southern states, is one of the most significant chokepoints for the East Coast's rail transportation system. The bridge connects the northeast and southeast freight rail networks and extends the spine of the nation's intercity passenger rail system from the Northeast Corridor to the Southeast. The existing bridge, which is at 98 percent capacity during peak hours, is used by CSX freight trains, Amtrak long

distance and state-supported trains, and Virginia Railway Express (VRE) commuter trains. The Long Bridge Project would double the capacity of the Potomac River rail crossing by adding a second two-track bridge adjacent to the existing bridge.

This project, which supports projected increases in freight and passenger rail traffic along this corridor, is crucial to continued economic growth and enhanced mobility in Virginia. It will also increase the capacity of the rail network for the Port of Virginia, where 37 percent of goods move in and out by rail. The Port of Virginia will need to increase this share to 45 percent by 2040 to handle a threefold increase in shipments. Building a new Long

Bridge, which will double rail capacity at the major rail bottleneck on CSX's main route from the Port of Virginia to the Midwest and the northeast, is imperative to the Port's and Virginia's economic growth strategies.

The proposed design is a new two track bridge upstream of the current Long Bridge with five additional bridges in Virginia and DC. Along with other 4th track projects in the area, this project will create a four track corridor from just south of Union Station to Alexandria.

This bill will authorize the Secretary of the Interior, through the NPS Director, to convey to, and authorize the use by, Virginia and DC a small section of National Park

Service land for the construction of the new Long Bridge structure for rail and for an additional walkable/bikeable pedestrian bridge spanning the Potomac River.

The bill will convey title and interest to Virginia of about 4.4 permanent acres of National Park Service land.

Also, the National Park Service will authorize Virginia to temporarily use approximately 8.44 acres of land for the construction which will revert back to NPS at the discretion of the NPS director when the project is completed.

A new Long Bridge will go a long way to easing congestion along the I-95 corridor and cut down on commuter travel

time that plagues many Virginia residents. The construction of a separate passenger only bridge will allow freight to move more freely from the Port of Virginia, taking thousands of large trucks off of roadways.

This land conveyance is required for construction of the bridge. 43 U.S.C sections 934 & 938 allows a right of way in federal lands, but not for railroads in National Park Service lands. Therefore, legislation is needed to authorize NPS land to be transferred to Virginia to construct a railroad.

Expanding corridor capacity is an economic catalyst for the whole region. \$6 billion annually in economic benefits is

expected by 2040 to the Greater Washington Metropolitan Area. This expansion is critical to the 1.3 million Amtrak passengers and 4.5 million VRE commuters that cross the Long Bridge each year-easing crowded and congested commutes.

This legislation has the support of the Commonwealth of Virginia, DC, and CSX, as well as, VRE and Amtrak.

Thank you for consideration of HR 7489 and I urge the subcommittee's support of this legislation.