

“Ignoring Obvious Regional Transportation Needs Is Never Smart”
Statement of Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance Board Chairman Evan Pritchard
To National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
July 19, 2017

For 30 years the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance has been a strong voice for regionalism and big picture focus. Our surveys have consistently showed strong public support for a regional top down, vs. a local, parochial approach to transportation planning and investment.

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) was also founded as a big picture regional organization. Its early plans promoted a comprehensive road, rail and bridge network to not only ensure both 21st century regional connectivity, and intelligent land use planning.

Unfortunately over time many key transportation links, including seven new Potomac River bridges, two of which were west of the American Legion Bridge, were dropped from TPB plans and never built. And because our region failed to build the network it planned, its diminished network is the nation’s most congested.

The need for an additional river crossing north of the American Legion Bridge is as apparent today as it was a half century ago.

Ignoring that need won’t make it disappear.

Just as ignoring the need for increased Metro maintenance did not go away.

Year after year Metro General Managers appeared before this and other governmental bodies warning of mounting maintenance backlogs only to have those warnings drowned out by a drumbeat of expand, expand, expand. So how did that work out?

Similarly we know from previous studies using the TPB traffic model that adding Express Lanes to the American Legion Bridge will still result in traffic conditions worse than today’s.

However, new American Legion Bridge Express Lanes coupled with a new crossing travel conditions in the future will be much better than today’s. Both improvements should be top regional priorities.

In short it’s time to restore a new Northern Potomac River crossing to the National Capital Region’s Regional Plan.

Ignoring so obvious a regional transportation need is never smart.