



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
RICHMOND

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FORTY-FOURTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:  
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS  
APPROPRIATIONS  
COUNTIES, CITIES AND TOWNS

August 16, 2019

Superintendent Charles Cuvelier  
George Washington Memorial Parkway Unit  
National Park Service  
c/o Turkey Run Park  
700 George Washington Memorial Parkway  
McLean, Virginia 22101

Re: Official Comments Regarding George Washington  
Memorial Parkway, South Section, Traffic Safety Study

Dear Superintendent Cuvelier,

This letter is a follow up on the public open-house meeting July 11th at Walt Whitman Middle School to provide you with my comments regarding the ongoing traffic safety on the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the Mt. Vernon Memorial Trail. I have been gathering comments and concerns shared by my constituents over the past several months, and will continue to direct constituents to submit comments online and via mail through the end of the public comment period on August 21st.

I understand the regulations outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act that place limitations on alterations that can be made to the Parkway. However, the Parkway is not the safe and scenic byway as was originally envisioned back in the 1930s when it was opened. The Parkway was never designed to accommodate heavy volumes of commuters, large trucks, or the high speeds that have been observed. Our community is rapidly changing, with an increasing population and, therefore, expanded workforce. In addition, more intersections have been added along the route, including intersections at Belleview Boulevard, Tulane Drive, Waynewood Boulevard, Vernon View Drive, and Stratford Landing. These added entrances create unsafe left turn scenarios throughout the Parkway. It is clear that changes must be made to ensure the safety of drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.

I was impressed with the preliminary data presented at the open-house meeting. The visuals displayed throughout the room highlighted the safety concerns along the Parkway that my constituents and I have recognized for years. Most significantly, speeding creates extremely unsafe conditions all throughout the Parkway, as was outlined in the display showing 70-80% of drivers speeding in 45mph zones. The study of lines of sight at each intersection on the Parkway show significant sight distance issues where shrubbery, trees, and grass block drivers' lines of sight. The speeding and sight distance issues contribute to the significant rush hour queuing outlined on another display, with a maximum of 21 cars backed up at Belle Haven Road during the morning rush hour.

Provided below are solutions that have been sent to me by my constituents, as well as my own thoughts on improvements. The major consensus gathered from these comments is the need for a holistic approach when looking at these possible solutions. Tackling the issue of driver speed alone, without also examining alternative commuting options, for example, will not prove to be an adequate solution to the problem.

#### Expansion of Commuting Options & Safety

The 11Y WMATA bus is currently the only public transit option along the parkway, and has minimal service — only 4 buses during am rush and 4 buses during the evening. I am aware that the bus service has been expanded for the time during which the Blue and Yellow Metro lines south of National Airport will be out of service, but it is unconfirmed whether this expanded service will continue once the Metro shutdown is lifted. In addition, for pedestrians to reach the current bus stops on the other side of the Parkway, it is currently very dangerous as there are no proper paths or trails to the bus stops. The placement of these stops should be revisited. The WMATA is also not coordinated with bus services from other jurisdictions, such as the Fairfax Connector and Alexandria DASH buses.

The commuter parking restrictions should be lifted in National Park Service lots along the Parkway such as at Belle Haven Marina and Washington Sailing Marina. To prevent overcrowding in parking areas, and to assist in the maintenance of parking areas, a limited amount of parking permits could be distributed and sold via lottery. Creating infrastructure for multi-modal options such as bike to bus, park and ride, or drive and then bike, would hopefully help address volume concerns. Carpooling facilities would also present another solution. Capital Bike Share racks could be installed along the route to encourage bicycling. Another controversial suggestion would be lifting the ban on e-bikes or e-scooters along the Mount Vernon trail. The e-scooters can be seen seemingly everywhere in Old Town Alexandria, as well as in DC, and have been adopted by some commuters. They present an alternative to driving and make the commuting distance to DC manageable.

## Enforcement

The National Park Service should increase officer presence along the Parkway to enforce the speed limits and reduce the amount of trucks illegally utilizing the Parkway. Preventing trucks from entering the Parkway will help to prevent further damage to the roadway and the Alexandria Avenue overpass. I saw that this additional enforcement sentiment was shared by many attendees at the open-house meeting on the map print outs. I, along with Senator Surovell, are supportive of adding speed cameras for increased speed enforcement along the Parkway, as they have been successful in many states, including Maryland and the District of Columbia, and would not distract from the scenic nature of the Parkway. While not always popular, speed cameras do provide a cost-efficient mechanism for enforcement.

## Line of Sight Improvements

Excessive foliage blocking lines of sight at intersections on the Parkway should be removed. Increased sight distances should help prevent future collisions and fatalities. Reasonable grass height should be maintained at all Parkway entrances, as excessively tall grass contributes greatly to reduced lines of sight for drivers. This is especially true at the intersection of Morningside Lane and the Parkway. This alone is a very cost-effective solution. Of course, this should be done in accordance with the requirements set forth by the National Historic Preservation Act.

## Alternative Intersections

While it may seem intuitive to ban left turns from several intersections along the Parkway to ease congestion and prevent accidents, as Senator Surovell has previously pointed out, banning left turns or outright closing entrances to the Parkway from most intersections will funnel traffic to other intersections and residential neighborhoods, creating significant delays and unsafe conditions in other areas. I believe that examining additions of a stoplight at Belle Haven Road, and traffic circles at other intersections will help to improve flow and prevent collisions. In addition, another safety improvement that would aid in left hand turns would be putting in median strips at every intersection, especially at Morningside Lane. These strips create safe havens for drivers who cannot make it all the way across the road at one time. In addition, these median strips make distinct the division between each side of the road.

### Roadway Maintenance

The GW Parkway is long due for road restriping, as the lane lines in many areas have limited visibility, especially during inclement weather and at night. In addition, repaving should be scheduled as soon as possible, as the increased wear and tear caused by heavy volume has degraded the roadway significantly.

### Environment

There are some areas along the Parkway, including some parts of the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, which represent some of the Washington, D.C. area's last surviving natural biodiversity. As more and more areas of Northern Virginia are developed, these critical wildlife habitats are disappearing. It is paramount that an arborist be brought in to evaluate the health of diseased and dead-appearing trees if there are any plans to remove trees from the area along the Parkway. In addition to this, native species saplings should be planted to replace any trees that are removed.

Thank you for all of your hard work on this critical issue to our community and region, and I look forward to continuing to work with you toward the final outcome.

Sincerely,



Paul Krizek  
Virginia House of Delegates  
44th District