

GW Parkway Safety Study Comments from:  
Jim Klein  
Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee  
Mt. Vernon Rep  
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Aaron,

Thank you for reaching out regarding the Parkway Safety Study. Unfortunately, I was out of the area on vacation when the open house was conducted on July 11<sup>th</sup>. So these comments relate to the information available on the Project Web Site. My apologies if some of these comments were better addressed at that meeting than what is on the website.

As the Mt. Vernon District Representative on the Fairfax County Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee and as a "fair weather" bicycle commuter for the past 25 years from my Hollin Hills neighborhood to Old Town Alexandria I have a fairly in depth knowledge of the parkway and the Mt. Vernon Trail (both driving and bicycling). I am also a Landscape Architect who has worked extensively on projects involving the preservation and enhancement of historic roadways (including enhancing these routes to promote bicycle tourism while preserving their character defining features) throughout the United States such as Route 66 through the Mojave Desert in California, the Historic National Road in Maryland, the Lincoln Highway in Pennsylvania, the Palisades Interstate Parkway in New York/New Jersey, and Illinois River Road. I offer these comments with that experience in mind.

The comments are my personal comments and not those of the Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways committee.

The most important comment that I have is that pedestrian and bicycle access from the adjoining neighborhoods to the Parkway need to be significantly improved in tandem with the vehicular safety. Of particular concern are the northern most intersections: Belle Haven Road, Belleview Boulevard and Tulane Drive. Between morning bus commuters dodging cars across the parkway and bicyclists trying to cross, it is nearly impossible to access the Mt. Vernon Trail. During weekends, there is similar conflicts especially where trail users cannot get to the trail from adjoining neighborhoods without taking their life in their hands. Belleview Boulevard is the most critical.

The next set of comments are related to the information provided on the web site and that being used to evaluate alternatives moving forward. The third set of comments relate to ideas that could be worth considering to address some of the safety issues along the Parkway.

- 1) Existing Conditions Displays -- This study must address more than just parking lots and moving cars. Please incorporate into the existing conditions assessment, information about parkway destinations and adjoining land use. Please consider how people access the facilities within this heavily used unit of the National Park system including but not limited to:
  - Belle Haven Park (need user characteristics – it is packed most spring, summer and fall weekends, many summer evenings)
  - Dyke Marsh Park (environmental sensitivity)
  - Fort Hunt Park (need user characteristics, related management plan recently undertaken)
  - River Farm (American Horticultural Society) – non-governmental organization managed property used for events, environmental education, and more

- Riverside Park – need user characteristics
  - Mt. Vernon – why is this primary destination with a million visitors a year and most of the tour buses that use the parkway not addressed specifically? How many of those visitors travel down the parkway from Alexandria versus coming from Route 1? How many buses, how many come by the trail
- 2) Need more information describing the character defining features of the Parkway. The few short slides about parkway history are woefully inadequate. The link to the National Register form is important, but what does this mean in terms of Section 106 and any future safety improvements that might be made. Extensive work has been done on understanding the vegetation/landscape design along the Parkway by Paul Keltch (Virginia Tech Faculty member). This information should be communicated to the public in a readily understandable way so they understand more about the character defining features of this National Historic Register site. The parkway was also designated as one of 150 plus National Scenic Byways by the Federal Highway Administration. Although this program is not currently funded, the designation is still significant and should be recognized. All of these character defining features MUST be addressed as per section 106 (which does not seem to be mentioned in any material on the website).
- 3) Need better information about trail user characteristics as shown on the DISPLAY BOARD: [GWPKWY Boards\\_7.10.197.jpg](#) which are inaccurate. The daily bicycle and pedestrian counts are low – when was this data collected? Weekends have very high daily usage – here is a link to stats from 2010-2011. I am sure there are more recent ones, but the paid consultant should be providing this information. If all they did was take one snapshot of use on a single weekday, that is not an accurate picture of the use of that trail.

Source:

[https://parkplanning.nps.gov/showFile.cfm?projectID=23571&MIMETType=application%252Fpdf&filename=Mount\\_Vernon\\_Trail\\_Stats\\_-\\_June\\_2012.pdf&sfid=135303](https://parkplanning.nps.gov/showFile.cfm?projectID=23571&MIMETType=application%252Fpdf&filename=Mount_Vernon_Trail_Stats_-_June_2012.pdf&sfid=135303)

In 2011 at Vernon View: workday ADT of 692; weekend ADT of 1488

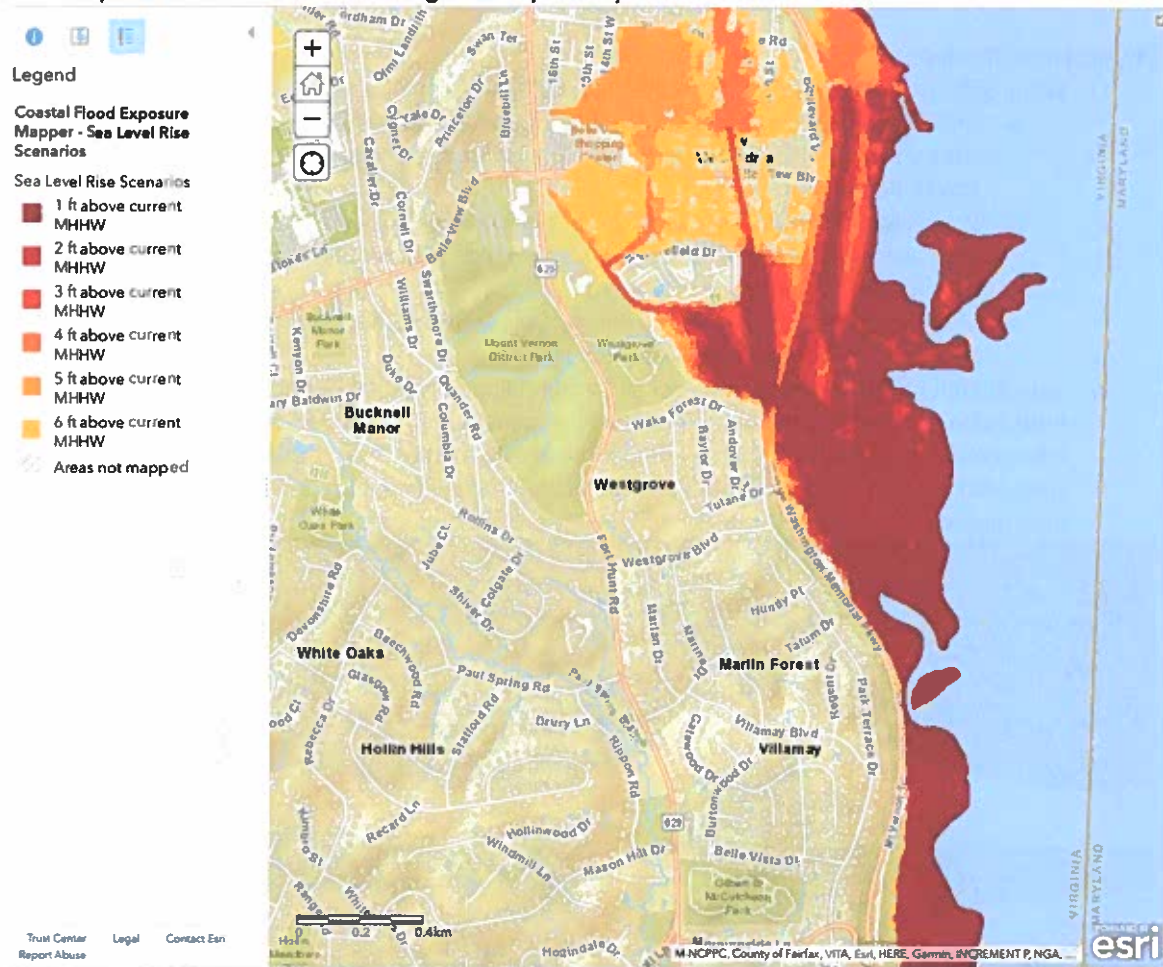
In 2011 at Dyke Marsh: workday ADT of 1631; weekendADT of 1901

- 4) Need better information on the impact of sea level rise and increasing intensity of storms and flooding in this area. Where is the information on the Belle Haven community flood mitigation project and how that would affect the parkway intersections at Belle Haven Road, Belleview Boulevard and Tulane Drive as well as the Mt. Vernon Trail. Where is information about how the rising intensity of storms and sea level rise will affect flooding and storm surge characteristics of the parkway travel patterns and subsequently the intersections under study. Having ridden along the Mt. Vernon Trail for 25 years I have noticed that the low lying tidal guts between Tulane and Belleview Boulevard have created permanent wetlands and are encroaching on the trail on a regular basis between the boardwalk and Belle Haven. The dark red areas on the map below show how just one foot of sea level rise will affect the parkway. The 2014 national climate assessment scenarios project that one foot of sea level rise would occur somewhere between 2024 and 2040 – well within the planning horizon for this work. More recent assessments do not improve this scenario.

Below is a map showing the “bathtub” model of showing inundation for each foot of sea level rise. The dark red areas show just one foot of rise which would start to inundate the parkway on a

permanent basis. This also corresponds to the visual evidence of the permanent sea level rise that has already occurred where the trail gets regularly inundated and MHHW levels are already at the top of existing culverts. One foot of rise also has significant implications for flood hazard risks and storm surge.

If no flood mitigation work is done, then the Parkway will likely flood at greater and greater frequencies with sustained damage to the parkway itself.



The second set of comments are related to ideas that could be considered to improve the safety of these intersections, while at the same time preserving the character defining features - a significant challenge given the historical significance, traffic and use characteristics, and anticipated sea level rise scenarios shown above.

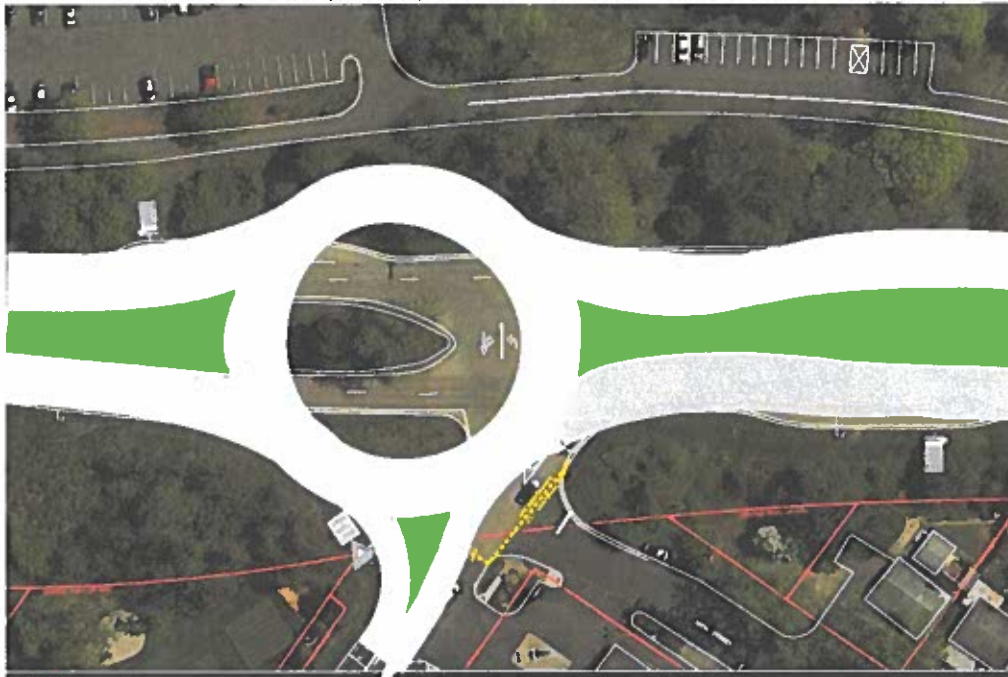
**Traffic Management Scenarios (short term ideas)**

- 1) Please consider restricting left turns from the Parkway onto Belleview Boulevard and Belle Haven Road during rush hours if practical, being sure to examine where the traffic would go that can no longer turn left as a short cut to avoid the Springfield to Wilson Bridge backup on 95
- 2) Traffic calming

- a. Continue to use low cost traffic calming measures like the speed activated radar signs - but consider permanent signs which can be tastefully installed showing the posted and actual speed limit
  - b. Continue enforcement measures but increase their use southbound during rush hour
- 3) Pedestrian and bicycle crossings – consider the use of a HAWK signal at Belleview Boulevard (and any other similarly high pedestrian and bicycle use crossings) coupled with crosswalk markings on the roadway and required signage

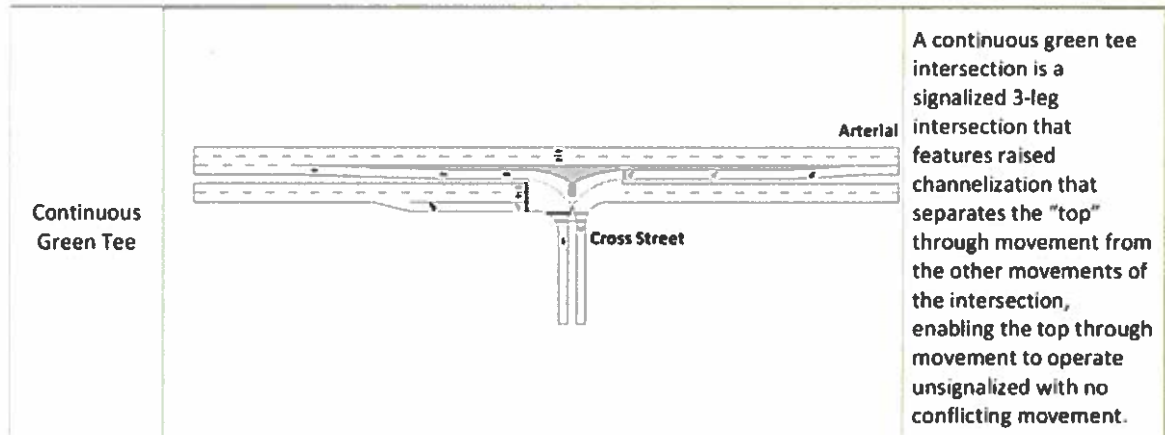
**Physical modifications**

- 1) Wider splitter islands and/or alternative intersection designs
- a. Belle Haven Road - there is currently not enough space for vehicles that are turning left from these roads onto the Parkway. The parkway signage for left turns onto Belle Haven Road is confusing
  - b. Belleview Boulevard - similarly there is not enough space for a car to hold in the median area waiting to turn left, and left turning vehicles from the Parkway conflict with left turning vehicles onto the Parkway
  - c. Other intersections as deemed appropriate where at least one car storage at the median is needed to increase safety of crossings
- 2) Roundabout option – please consider the potential for a roundabout at the Belle Haven Road intersection as a way to handle the left turning movements and to serve as a traffic calming intervention (as speeds through a roundabout are 25 mph or less). The diagram below shows a roundabout with two lanes in both directions and the one lane each direction at the Belle Haven intersection—the entry to the park could be moved over to be the 4<sup>th</sup> leg of the roundabout



George Washington Memorial Parkway  
at Belle Haven Road

- 3) Option for a Continuous Green Tee intersection – although it may require a signal, this is worth considering to sort out the left turn movements at Belle Haven and Belleview



**From:** "LaRocca, Aaron" <aaron\_larocca@nps.gov>  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 10, 2019 at 3:01 PM  
**To:** <undisclosed-recipients;>  
**Subject:** George Washington Memorial Parkway

Hello,

Supervisor Storck's office asked me to reach out to you. Most of the conversation between the NPS and the Supervisor's office has been related to the Safety Study for the section of the GWMP between Alexandria and Mount Vernon. So I assume that's why they shared your contact information. I hope it's okay that I'm reaching out.

I've attached an info sheet for the project. The NPS also established [project specific web-page](#) for this effort that has very similar info as the info sheet. The [comment page](#), which is separate from the project page will be opened tomorrow to receive public comments.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you

