



Long Bridge Project Frequently Asked Questions

March 2024

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Project Definition, Scope, and Benefits

What is the Long Bridge Project?

The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority's (VPRA) [Long Bridge Project](#) will add a new two-track railroad bridge next to the existing Long Bridge across the Potomac River, among other rail improvements along the corridor. The Project will increase rail capacity and alleviate congestion between Arlington, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

The project will also create a separate bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the river, connecting Arlington's Long Bridge Park and the Mount Vernon Trail to the District's East and West Potomac Parks. Additional elements along the 1.8-mile project corridor include improvements to four other rail bridges, one other pedestrian bridge, and related infrastructure work.



The Long Bridge Project extends from Arlington, Virginia over the Potomac River to Southwest DC.



A rendering of the Long Bridge Project section over the Potomac River highlighting the new rail bridge and new bicycle-pedestrian bridge.

Why is the project necessary?

The existing Long Bridge is owned and operated by CSX Transportation (CSXT). The bridge operates at 98% capacity during peak hours with nearly 80 CSXT, Amtrak, and VRE trains crossing it daily – carrying up to 1.3 million Amtrak passengers and 4.5 million Virginia Railway Express (VRE) commuters annually. In 2023, [Amtrak Virginia saw an all-time high in its ridership numbers](#), indicating a clear need for additional capacity.

The new rail bridge will relieve this major transportation bottleneck between the north and southeast regions of the United States, improving reliability and growing the region's passenger and freight rail networks.

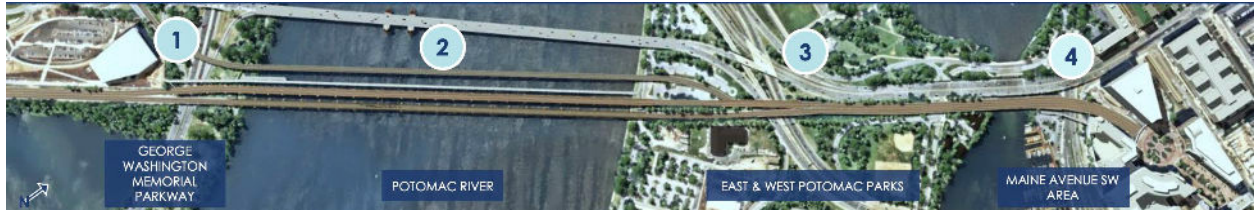
Who is the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority and what is the Transforming Rail in Virginia Initiative?

The [Virginia Passenger Rail Authority](#) (VPRA) is an independent authority created by the Virginia General Assembly in 2020 to promote, sustain, and expand the availability of passenger and commuter rail service in the Commonwealth.

Partnering with Amtrak, VRE, Norfolk Southern (NS), and CSXT, VPRA is working to provide passenger rail service throughout the state that is convenient, reliable, and affordable. The Long Bridge Project is part of this comprehensive statewide initiative, known as [Transforming Rail in Virginia](#) (TRV). For more information about VPRA and TRV, visit the FAQ's on our [webpage](#): <https://vapassengerrailauthority.org>.

What are the components of the Long Bridge Project?

What are the components of the Long Bridge Project?



Area		Structures
1	GW Parkway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potomac River Rail Bridge (extends over the Parkway and Potomac River) Potomac River Bicycle-Pedestrian Bridge (extends over the Parkway and Potomac River)
2	Potomac River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potomac River Rail Bridge (extends over the Parkway and Potomac River) Potomac River Bicycle-Pedestrian Bridge (extends over the Parkway and Potomac River) Retaining Walls and Landscape Design
3	East/West Potomac Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potomac River Bicycle-Pedestrian Bridge Landing WMATA/I-395 Bridge Ohio Drive SW Bridge Washington Channel Rail Bridge Retaining Walls and Landscape Design
4	Maine Avenue SW Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maine Avenue SW Rail Bridge Retaining Walls Maine Avenue SW Pedestrian Bridge

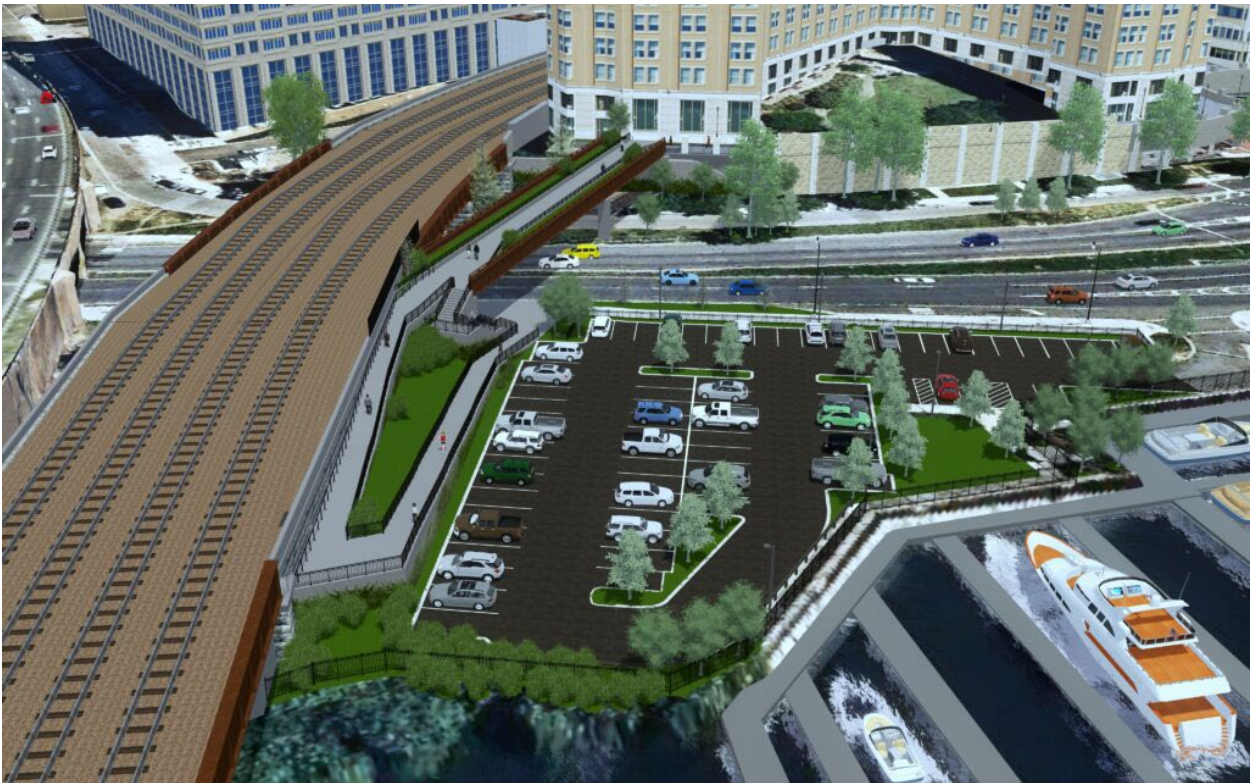
Elements of the Long Bridge Project.

The Long Bridge Project will construct or replace 5 rail bridges and 2 bike/pedestrian bridges, along with supporting infrastructure work. The seven bridges, from the southern end of the Project in Virginia to the northern end in Washington, DC., include:

- The Potomac River rail bridge (extends over the GW Parkway and Potomac River)
- The Potomac River bicycle-pedestrian bridge (extends over the GW Parkway and Potomac River, landing at East Potomac Park)
- The WMATA/I-395 rail bridge
- The Ohio Drive SW rail bridge
- The Washington Channel rail bridge
- The Maine Avenue SW rail bridge
- The Maine Avenue SW pedestrian bridge



A rendering of the proposed Washington Channel rail bridge.



A rendering of the reconstructed railroad bridge and pedestrian bridge over Maine Avenue SW in Washington, D.C.

How will the Long Bridge Project benefit local residents and travelers?

The Long Bridge Project will provide the following benefits to local residents and travelers:

- Increased rail capacity to enable more frequent passenger rail service with better on-time reliability;
- Improved bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia with a new bicycle-pedestrian bridge that is wider, brighter, and safer than other options
- Billions of dollars invested in the regional economy; and
- Increased safety along the project corridor with various infrastructure improvements.

Schedule, Cost and Funding

What is the schedule for the Long Bridge Project?

Early prep work is expected to begin in 2024 with full construction commencing in 2025. Construction is expected to be completed in 2030.

The duration of construction is based on a multitude of factors, including the constrained location, limited access points, limited construction laydown areas, multifaceted coordination with adjacent stakeholders and the railroad operators, and the overall complexity of the project.

Schedule updates and details will be confirmed when both the project's design-build contractors are confirmed in 2024.



What is the cost of the Long Bridge Project and how is it funded?

The estimated cost of the entire Long Bridge Project is \$2.3 billion.

Sources of funding include the Commonwealth of Virginia, Amtrak, VRE, and the Federal Government. VPRA has been [awarded a \\$729 million](#) Federal-State Partnership and a \$20 million RAISE [grant](#) by the Federal Railroad Administration. These grants will aid VPRA in completing the final design and construction of Long Bridge along with all Phase 2 projects of the Transforming Rail in Virginia (TRV) initiative. See VPRA's press release for details:

<https://vapassengerrailauthority.org/news-and-events/>

Construction

What are the project's North Package and South Package?



The project's scope is comprised of two packages: the North Package and the South Package.

The Long Bridge Project will be divided into two construction contracts: the North Package and the South Package.

The North Package encompasses a very complicated construction area from the south side of East Potomac Park and moving north over the Washington Channel and Maine Avenue SW to just south of L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, DC. This package includes the construction of several smaller bridges, including:

- a new rail bridge over the WMATA Portal/I-395;
- replacement of the existing two-track Ohio Drive SW rail bridge with a four-track bridge;
- replacement of the existing two-track Washington Channel rail bridge with a four-track bridge;
- replacement of the existing two-track Maine Avenue SW rail bridge with a four-track bridge; and
- replacement of the Maine Avenue SW pedestrian bridge.

The North Package will use a progressive design-build project delivery method; construction is expected to start in 2025.

The South Package covers the Virginia portion of the project and includes building two new bridges – the rail bridge over the Potomac River and an adjacent bicycle-pedestrian bridge. The South Package will use a design-build project delivery method; construction is expected to start in 2025.



The replacement of the two-track Maine Avenue SW rail bridge in Washington, DC with a four-track bridge is one of the components of the Long Bridge Project's North Package.

Who is the design-builder for the North Package?

VPRA [selected Skanska/Flatiron Joint Venture](#) in December 2023 as the progressive design builder for the North Package. Currently, the Long Bridge is at 30% design. The Skanska/Flatiron Joint Venture team will take the project from the preliminary engineering design phase to 60% design. Once the 60% design is complete, they will submit a price to construct the project. If their price is acceptable, they will proceed with the construction. If their price is not acceptable, their designers will complete the design and the contract will be put out for bid by other contractors. Early preparatory work is expected to begin in late 2024 with full construction commencing in 2025. Construction is expected to be completed in 2030.

Who is the design-builder for the South Package?

In February 2024, VPRA released a Request for Proposals to design-build teams that were shortlisted earlier in the procurement process. Following evaluation of submitted proposals, VPRA anticipates selecting the South Package contractor in fall 2024, with design work beginning in late 2024. As with the North Package, completion of the South Package is planned for 2030.

How will Long Bridge Project construction affect my commute?

VPRA is committed to taking every reasonable measure to keep construction impacts to a minimum while building the project as efficiently and safely as possible, and to inform commuters in advance of travel impacts.

Building bridges over I-395 and Maine Avenue SW in the District and the George Washington Memorial Parkway and Mount Vernon Trail in Virginia will necessitate periodic lane shifts, shoulder closures, and lane closures. Occasional brief full roadway closures may also be necessary, but will be executed during off-peak and overnight hours with advance public notice. VPRA will continue to keep residents and the neighboring communities informed regarding expected traffic impacts.

The project team is coordinating closely with rail operators, Amtrak, VRE, and CSXT to determine train operability during construction, with the goal of maintaining normal rail operations to the extent possible. There is the potential for brief shutdowns in order to accelerate the overall construction duration of the Maine Ave SW rail bridge, and to minimize associated disruptions to the public.

Anticipated Project Results

How will this project affect Amtrak and VRE train service?

The Long Bridge Project will relieve a long-standing bottleneck by increasing railroad capacity to meet future demand for passenger and freight rail. This will enable expanded service and improved service reliability, thereby providing an attractive alternative to driving on I-95, I-395, and I-81.

When complete, the new Long Bridge, combined with other TRV rail investments, will allow five additional Amtrak daily roundtrips, including nearly hourly service between D.C. and Richmond, as well as additional VRE round trips, including weekend and evening service. The Commonwealth has also reached a preliminary agreement with Maryland that, once certain conditions are met, will enable some of its commuter trains (MARC) to travel across the new the Long Bridge into Virginia.

What is ridership like now?

[Amtrak Virginia continues to set ridership records](#). In 2023, more than 1.32 million passengers traveled – an increase of nearly 30 percent over 2022, and the highest ridership recorded since state-supported service began in 2009. [VRE's ridership numbers show the service is leading the nation in commuter rail growth and recovery](#), with 1.5 million riders in 2023 compared to 1.2 million riders in 2022. For more information visit <https://vapassengerrailauthority.org/amtrak-virginia-sets-record-with-calendar-year-2023-ridership/>

Community Impacts

How will construction affect residents, businesses, railroad commuters, roadway travelers, and others in the Long Bridge Project area?

VPRA's commitment to the community is to make every reasonable effort to keep construction impacts to a minimum while building the project as efficiently and safely as possible. Plans and processes are in place to proactively inform the public and other stakeholders in advance of construction activities that are particularly impactful. These may include:

- **Noise impacts** like pile driving hammer strikes, vehicle back-up alarms, heavy equipment operations, generators, etc. Construction contractors will adhere to DC and Arlington County noise ordinances that limit loud work to daytime hours, though there may be a limited number of instances in which it may be necessary to acquire waivers to perform night work.
- **Traffic impacts** like street or lane closures and detours. Building bridges over I-395 and Maine Avenue SW in the District and the George Washington Memorial Parkway and Mount Vernon Trail in Virginia will necessitate periodic lane shifts, shoulder closures and lane closures, and occasional though brief full roadway closures. Any full roadway closures will be executed during off-peak and overnight hours with extensive advance public notice.
- **Impact to Mariners** like navigational channel closures or detours. While there will be no permanent impacts to navigation, temporary impacts during construction will be unavoidable. Construction contractors will follow all U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) requirements for safeguarding river traffic during construction and will minimize disruptions, especially during times of heavy river traffic, such as summer holidays. Mitigation may include using flaggers to stop vessel traffic during closures of the channel or the designation of an auxiliary channel. The amount of and anticipated times for closures will be conveyed to mariners through posting in the USCG's weekly notice to mariners, local radio/news sites, and social media.

Neighbors, travelers, and others who may be affected will be notified of project-related impacts through a variety of means, such as flyers, social media posts, email alerts, newsletters, news stories, pop-up events, and more. [We encourage you to sign up for periodic project information e-mails](#) at <http://vapassengerrailauthority.org/contact>.



Test pile driving in fall 2023.



Graphic from flyer distributed to area residents and business in advance of the test pile program.

Will train schedules be affected by construction?

The project team is coordinating closely with rail operators, Amtrak, VRE, and CSXT to determine train operability during construction, with the goal of maintaining normal rail operations to the extent possible. There is the potential for brief shutdowns in order to accelerate the overall construction duration of the Maine Ave SW rail bridge and to minimize associated disruptions to the public.

What is the plan for maintenance of traffic (MOT) during construction?

The Long Bridge Project team will routinely coordinate traffic maintenance plans with the National Park Service (NPS), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), including any necessary road or lane closures and detours for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Additional information will be provided in future design phases.

Will there be nighttime construction activities?

When beneficial, project crews may conduct nighttime construction to minimize traffic disruptions. Traffic advisories with details of planned disruptions will be sent in advance to the news media, posted on the VDOT, DDOT, NPS and VPRA Long Bridge Project websites, and promoted via social media platforms.

Can I access the existing bicycle-pedestrian network during construction?

The existing bicycle-pedestrian facilities will remain open throughout Long Bridge Project construction, though detours and other maintenance of traffic measures may be required. Approximately 400 feet of the Mount Vernon Trail will be temporarily rerouted during construction.

Will there still be pedestrian access over Main Avenue SW during that bridge replacement?

Prior to the demolition of the existing Maine Avenue SW pedestrian bridge, a temporary bridge will be installed to maintain access across Maine Avenue SW from the sidewalk adjacent to the Washington Marina parking lot to the Salamander Hotel balcony and the Maryland Avenue overbuild (the deck over the railroad tracks).

Environmental Considerations

Will there be noise and air quality impacts due to added rail traffic?

The Long Bridge Project team will follow the District of Columbia municipal codes and Virginia regulations to minimize construction noise, including curfews and noise monitoring.

In the Environment Impact Statement (EIS) Phase, the project analyzed the potential for operational noise impacts throughout the project area. Our goal is to minimize disturbance as much as possible. The EIS Phase also analyzed potential short-term and long-term impacts on air quality and defined how the project will mitigate these impacts. For details, please refer to the [Draft and Final EIS Reports](#) in the Long Bridge Project website's document library. The reports may be found at <https://vapassengerrailauthority.org/longbridgeproject/lbp-document-library/>

How will trees in the project area be protected?

The Long Bridge Project team conducted a tree survey to catalog trees within the project's proposed limit of disturbance, including their size, species, and condition – identifying certain trees to be protected and determining the means by which they will be protected.

Additional details on the project's commitment and mitigation measures for tree protection, replanting, and maintenance are available in the Draft [EIS Report \(Section 5.6\)](#) in the Long Bridge Project website's document library. The report may be found at <https://vapassengerrailauthority.org/longbridgeproject/lbp-document-library/>

Pedestrian-Bicycle Bridge

Why is VPRA building a pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the Potomac River?

During the project's environmental study phase, it was determined that the new rail bridge will impact National Park Service parkland. As a mitigation for these impacts, VPRA is building a pedestrian-bicycle bridge across the Potomac River in addition to construction of the new Long Bridge rail bridge.

Where is the planned pedestrian-bicycle bridge across the Potomac?

The pedestrian-bicycle bridge will be located between the new rail bridge and the WMATA Yellow Line bridge. It will extend approximately one-half mile from Arlington's Long Bridge Aquatic Center and the Mount Vernon Trail to East Potomac Park in Washington, DC.



The pedestrian-bicycle bridge is located between the new rail bridge and the WMATA Yellow Line bridge.

What is the design of the pedestrian-bicycle bridge?

The pedestrian-bicycle bridge will be sixteen feet wide. This width allows for two cyclists to ride abreast while safely and comfortably passing a pedestrian or anyone stopped on the bridge.

By comparison, cyclists crossing the Potomac on the 14th Street Bridge use 8-foot-wide sidewalks.

In addition, the new bridge design offers wide and gradual turns at the endpoints, which maximize sight distances and accommodate users of all abilities and bicycles of all types. State-of-the-art lighting offers both safety enhancements and visual appeal.



Renderings of the planned pedestrian-bicycle bridge during the day and at night.



Renderings of trail and bike lane connection points in Arlington and Washington, D.C.

Will the pedestrian-bicycle bridge be built at the same time as the new Long Bridge rail bridge?

The space where the pedestrian-bicycle bridge will be located is needed for equipment and access during the rail bridge construction. As a result, the pedestrian-bicycle bridge will be a final element of the Long Bridge Project. It will be built after the new rail bridge.

Maine Avenue Pedestrian Bridge

What is the Main Avenue pedestrian bridge?

The existing Maine Avenue pedestrian bridge crosses over Maine Avenue SW and connects the sidewalk on the south side of Maine Avenue SW (adjacent to the Washington Marina Company parking lot) to the Salamander Hotel balcony. This pedestrian bridge is privately owned by the Portals Public Improvements Association and is being replaced because the existing pedestrian bridge must be removed to make space for construction of the new four track Maine Avenue SW rail bridge. The proposed pedestrian bridge will be built in approximately the same location of the existing bridge.



This rendering shows the proposed replacement of the Maine Avenue SW pedestrian bridge.

What about the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail on Maine Avenue SW?

The Anacostia Riverwalk Trail along Maine Avenue SW will be improved. Rebuilding the Maine Avenue rail bridge will allow VPRA to widen the sidewalk from the existing 11 feet to approximately 24 feet without any impact to the roadway. Proposed improvements to the geometry of the 14th Street off-ramp at Maine Avenue SW will improve safety and create better visibility at the intersection.

Adjacent and Related Projects

Are there other projects underway in the areas around the Long Bridge Project?

There are two VPRA projects currently underway that bookend the Long Bridge Project but are outside its scope: the [Alexandria Fourth Track Project](#) and the VRE [L'Enfant Station Project](#). The Long Bridge Project will connect to the Alexandria Fourth Track Project on the Virginia side, and to the VRE L'Enfant Station Project on the District side. All three projects are a part of the Transforming Rail in Virginia (TRV) initiative and further information can be found on the VPRA website at <https://vapassengerrailauthority.org/transforming-rail-in-virginia/>.

Is there other work happening to improve pedestrian-bicycle accessibility in the area?

The National Park Service has ongoing roadway and sidewalk improvement projects that will enhance bicycle-pedestrian paths in East Potomac Park and alongside the George Washington Memorial Parkway. These projects are not a part of the Long Bridge Project, though coordination between the projects is ongoing.

Other Questions

Will there be any changes or impacts to the existing Long Bridge as part of the Long Bridge Project?

There will be no changes to the existing Long Bridge as part of VPRA's Long Bridge Project. The existing Long Bridge is a CSXT-owned rail bridge and is not part of the VPRA work. The Long Bridge Project team will continue coordinating with CSXT during the project, and the existing bridge will be monitored throughout construction.

What was the test pile program in fall 2023 and what did it determine?

In fall 2023, VPRA [drove three 120-foot steel pipe piles](#) in East Potomac Park to evaluate soil conditions and analyze noise, vibration, and settlement characteristics. The information gleaned from the test pile program is being used to inform the Long Bridge Project's design and construction plans.

Stay Informed

How can I stay informed about the Long Bridge Project?

We encourage you to [sign up](#) to receive periodic project updates, and to follow us on social media:

[Facebook: VAPassengerRail](#)

[LinkedIn: Virginia Passenger Rail Authority](#)

[X: @VAPassengerRail](#)

Instagram: @vapassengerrail

<https://vapassengerrailauthority.org/contact/>

Resources and Contact Information

Project Website

[Virginia Passenger Rail Authority Long Bridge Project Website](#)

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

[Draft EIS](#)

Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD)

[Combined Final EIS/ROD](#)

Virtual Public Meetings

[Meeting Recording – June 2022](#)

[Meeting Presentation – June 2022](#)

[Meeting Recording – March 2023](#)

[Meeting Presentation – March 2023](#)

Video Rendering of Project – February 2023

[Project Animation](#)

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[SIGN UP TO RECEIVE PROJECT UPDATES](#)