

**From:** [Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Trump, Shaianna L. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Mayo Bridge Design and Manchester Canal Bridge  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026 9:49:04 AM

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I received this letter as well for the record.

Thanks,

**Ray Roakes**  
Urban Design Planner | [authentiCITY Studio](#)  
Secretary Urban Design Committee  
804-646-5467 | [raymond.roakes@rva.gov](mailto:raymond.roakes@rva.gov)

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**From:** CHARLES WARE <[stclairware@comcast.net](mailto:stclairware@comcast.net)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 18, 2026 10:57 PM  
**To:** Kim, John S. - DPW <[John.Kim@rva.gov](mailto:John.Kim@rva.gov)>; Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR <[Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov](mailto:Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov)>; Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office <[Amy.Robins@rva.gov](mailto:Amy.Robins@rva.gov)>; [velzyg@verizon.net](mailto:velzyg@verizon.net)  
**Subject:** Mayo Bridge Design and Manchester Canal Bridge

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Sunday, January 18, 2026

To the City of Richmond Urban Design Committee, and City of Richmond Virginia Bridge Engineer John Kim:

It is my understanding that the City of Richmond Urban Design Committee of the City Planning Commission will review preliminary plans for the replacement May Bridge on Tuesday, January 20, 2026. I have previously submitted letters expressing my concerns that any new bridge must be constructed in a manner that will meet three objectives:

1. Reducing hazards to whitewater boaters using the Pipeline, Middle Line, and Southside Rapids;
2. Reducing hazards to pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists using a replacement bridge by separating pedestrians and cyclist from vehicular traffic, by slowing traffic on the bridge, and allowing safe access to the new mayo's island Park and to the vital 14th Street Whitewater Access.
3. Ensuring that people fishing from a new bridge will not snag whitewater boaters with fish hooks.

I have expressed these concerns in personal letters delivered to the VDOT

engineer overseeing this project {Mr. Will Wheeler}. I also wrote comments that were submitted by the James River Outdoor Coalition {JROC} on the bridge replacement projects.

## MANCHESTER CANAL BRIDGE

I have previously noted that building a new bridge over the disused Manchester Canal is a huge waste of taxpayer dollars. The section of the Manchester Canal east of the Hull Street crossing of this former waterway serve to supply water to a disused hydropower plant. No Federal Energy Regulatory Commission permit has been issued for this former plan site, and any such permit would be vigorously opposed by several organization to which I belong, and by myself. The canal area could be sold by the city, which I believe now owns the canal, or by any private owners to provide for development along the river. Remain sections of the canal could retain or achieve an outflow into the river {the western portions of the canal appear to be stagnant} using a suitably sized underground conduit that could discharge through an existing floodwall gate. Redevelopment of hydropower at this site would divert water from a valuable whitewater resource, and would harm fisheries and wildlife, for a very slight potential private gain to a developer. Stormwater discharge could utilize the existing canal discharge gate, which should be rehabilitated to ensure that this gate will function should stormwater flooding south of the floodwall occur during storm events.

Rather than built a new bridge over the Manchester Canal, a culvert could be emplaced and the canal filled under the new roadway. This solution would be far less costly than a new bridge. The existing Manchester Canal is a weed-choked ravine that once had historic significance, but was industrialized when the hydro plant was constructed. The canal will never have any navigational use east of 14th Street, and currently is hazardous to people walking in the area. Canal Romantics be damned, in this case: this portion of the canal should be filled in!

## MAYO BRIDGE

VDOT and the City of Richmond appear to have given some consideration to the many comments from area residents who seek measures to protect pedestrians and cyclists, and to lessen he traffic violence that is prevalent in our community. The most recent design proposal is an improvement over earlier plans for a multi-lane, high speed expressway-type crossing of the river. However, the proposed painted buffer for a cycle path is inadequate. I suggest having a six-foot sidewalk on both sides of the bridge, with a six to eight-inch curb separating this from a combined 12-foot bikeway which would be curb-separated from the travel lanes. This raised curb of about six inches could be mounted by emergency vehicle when it would be necessary for them to pass stopped traffic on the bridge. Cyclists could dismount and move onto the sidewalk if signaled to do so. A curb would direct rainwater into outlets, and would discourage drivers from using the should area and bikeway as an additional travel lane. Violators would risk curb damage to wheels and tires, which would be an effective deterrent. The sidewalks, bikeways, and traffic lanes could all be mechanically swept.

Much attention has been given in the design proposal to "maintaining the historically accurate appearance of the existing Mayo Bridge." The existing bridge was designed to accommodate streetcars. The bikeway/emergency lane system that I have suggested could be modified in coming years to allow the return of trolley cars, although these vehicle might better share the vehicle lanes. I trust that the new bridge would support buses and trolleys with ease.

\*\*\*\*The major concern I have about the materials presented to you, however, is the total lack of discussion about the proposed design of the bridge piers.\*\*\*\*\* The presented materials suggest, but do not state, that the existing number of piers would be construct to support the bridge deck. Let me be clear that I am far less concerned a aesthetic features of the replacement bridge than I am over more practical and quite critical aspects. I would like to see engineering plans for the proposed pier placements, and believe that the Planning Commission should have this information available before a design is approved.

First, the number of supporting piers should be reduced to the absolute minimum required. The current pier placement did not take into consideration passage of whitewater rafts, canoes, kayaks, and other craft. The piers are close enough together that tree trunks that are swept downstream my fully block openings between piers. The design of the piers MUST provide for a hydrodynamic form that will not create a pinning hazard for rafts and other boats. A semi-circular pier design is the best choice. This design would lessen accumulation of strainers {piles of wood} that are a major hazard on the James River.

Piers should be constructed so that they do not fall within the main currents used by boaters, and so that main currents are not directed against the bases of piers. Fewer piers would also allow for passage of more water under the bridge deck at higher flows, and should lessen the flooding risk on the island and upstream of the bridge. I suggest that you consult a hydrologist concerning the shape of the piers. Again, these are critical issues that should not be disregarded. If these warnings are ignored, I feel that you may be liable for future deaths that may occur because of pinning entrapments of boaters or involuntary swimmers.

Second, it has been noted that the design before you does not provide for a passage under the replacement bridge for those who will use the new Mayo Island Park. This concern could be easily addressed if the north abutment of the south channel bridge was constructed perhaps ten feet inland on the island, so that a walkway could be constructed under the new roadway, connecting the eastern and western portions of the park. Reliance on the crosswalk scheme will be regretted, in my opinion.

Finally, the proposed "pedestrian overlooks" have been given much attention in the proposed design, while more critical features have received less attention. It matters little if such bumpouts are placed in a symmetrical pattern. It is certain that these "overlooks" will be used by people who use shad hook rigs to fish from the bridge. Any overlooks should be placed away from the main whitewater channels. I served as a commercial raft guide on the Falls of the James for 42 years before

retiring from that activity in 2024. I have myself been hooked by fishermen, and have had guests on commercial trips hooked in the face and in the hand. The mono-filament line used by many fishing from the bridge is not visible from upstream. Hook injuries have sent people to the hospital. It is my opinion that fishing should be prohibited from the bridge areas above the main whitewater channels. Certainly, "overlooks" should not be constructed to encourage fishing at these places. If you cannot identify the main whitewater channels, the boating community will gladly assist you.

Please share my comments with all of the members of the Urban Design Committee, and with VDOT.

Charles V. Ware {former A.I.C.P. and Virginia Certified Zoning Administrator}  
(804) 231-0118

**From:** [Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Trump, Shaianna L. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Mayo Bridge NEEDS physical protection  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026 11:27:02 AM

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Another letter

Thanks,

**Ray Roakes**  
Urban Design Planner | [authentiCITY Studio](#)  
Secretary Urban Design Committee  
804-646-5467 | [raymond.roakes@rva.gov](mailto:raymond.roakes@rva.gov)

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**From:** Kelsy Boyle <[kelsyboyle@gmail.com](mailto:kelsyboyle@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026 11:23 AM  
**To:** Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR <[Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov](mailto:Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov)>  
**Cc:** Mayor Danny Avula <[RVAmayor@rva.gov](mailto:RVAmayor@rva.gov)>  
**Subject:** Mayo Bridge NEEDS physical protection

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Hello,

I spoke with project manager William Wheeler this morning on the phone to express my thoughts on the Mayo Bridge design, and wanted to share directly with you as well.

I urge you to REJECT any plan that is missing PHYSICAL protection between the bike and car lane. This is absolutely essential and the project will be a complete failure without it!

I used to bike across the Mayo bridge every day for work, and it was a horrible experience. It was so bad I would get off my bike and push it on the sidewalk to avoid riding next to cars. I was very excited to see the bridge being redesigned to finally make it a safe, equitable, and sustainable piece of infrastructure in our city. The current plans without physical separation are a huge disappointment and fall short of the project's potential. I bike almost everywhere and have witnessed over and over again how dangerous bike lanes without separation are. Cars constantly park in them, forcing me to merge into the road with cars. No amount of enforcement can solve this—we need physical barriers to prevent cars from entering in the first place! The lack of separation also allows cars to speed and pass too closely to cyclists, creating an unsafe and uncomfortable experience.

If the bridge is built without separation, I will simply not ride on it. I will once again miss out on a piece of my city because it is designed only for cars to go fast, leaving an unsafe environment for

everyone else. Please don't let that happen.

Thank you,  
Kelsy Boyle

**From:** [Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Trump, Shaianna L. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Mayo bridge proposals  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026 12:24:40 PM

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One more

Thanks,

Ray Roakes  
Urban Design Planner | authentiCITY Studio  
Secretary Urban Design Committee  
804-646-5467 | [raymond.roakes@rva.gov](mailto:raymond.roakes@rva.gov)

-----Original Message-----

From: Paul McDonald <[paul0302@me.com](mailto:paul0302@me.com)>  
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 11:45 AM  
To: Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR <[Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov](mailto:Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov)>  
Subject: Mayo bridge proposals

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Hello,

I would like to urge you to reject any proposals for the Mayo bridge that do not include concrete barriers for cyclists. As a cyclist in the city I can tell you the bike lanes painted onto the road without a barrier are just suggestions for cars and no amount of traffic enforcement will change that. A concrete barrier will physically protect people from cars.

Thank you,

Paul McDonald

**From:** [Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR](#)  
**To:** [Trump, Shaianna L. - PDR](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Planning Commission Public Comment  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026 12:24:52 PM

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One more

Thanks,

Ray Roakes  
Urban Design Planner | authentiCITY Studio  
Secretary Urban Design Committee  
804-646-5467 | [raymond.roakes@rva.gov](mailto:raymond.roakes@rva.gov)

-----Original Message-----

From: Abby Knuff <[abby.knuff@gmail.com](mailto:abby.knuff@gmail.com)>  
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 11:57 AM  
To: Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR <[Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov](mailto:Raymond.Roakes@rva.gov)>  
Subject: Planning Commission Public Comment

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Hello,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed Mayo bridge design. It currently does not include any sort of protective barrier for cyclists riding in the bike lanes. As a cyclist, I do not feel safe riding in unprotected bike lanes and choose not to bike in them for my own safety, so under this design, I would not ride my bike across Mayo bridge.

Please reject the current Mayo bridge design in favor of a new one that includes hard, physical bike lane barriers.

Thank you,  
Abby Knuff  
Richmond resident

UDC 2026-01

Concept plan comments:

- For the typical bridge section, I recommend having even distribution of pedestrian space (sidewalk) to 11' on each side of bridge.

Bridge Sketch comments:

- Light poles are spaced to middle of span. As the spans are ~80-ft, the spacing would be ~80-ft, exceeding the recommend spacing of 40 to 60 ft. I recommend adding a light pole at each pier location to conform to the recommended spacing.
- Additional light poles should be on a raised pedestal to be at the same level of the mid-span light poles.

Other:

- What is the architectural treatment(s) of the bridge?
- The Mayo Bridges are in a similar style to the Pont Neuf in Paris France. It is my understanding that the Pont Neuf is made from sandstone. How will architectural treatment reflect the detail?

## Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR

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**From:** Janet Woodka <jlwoodka@mac.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2026 10:15 AM  
**To:** Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR  
**Cc:** sgrice@smbw.com  
**Subject:** Mayo Bridge - UDC conceptual review - comments from Manchester Alliance and Shockoe Partnership

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Hi Ray -

The Mayo Bridge replacement project is due to come before the Urban Design Committee on January 15, 2025. This project is of tremendous significance to the Manchester and Shockoe neighborhoods as well as all of downtown. This bridge should serve as a community connector, uniting both sides of the river. Moreover, it will serve as the primary access to a wonderful new park, the Mayo Island park, part of the James River Park system. Because of the significance and impact of the bridge, the Manchester Alliance and Shockoe Partnership would like to submit the following to the UDC for consideration at its meeting on 1/15.

DPW/VDOT, as the request of the Manchester Alliance and the Shockoe partnership, provided a briefing last week on their presentation to UDC for this new bridge. We were very pleased to hear of the plans for wider sidewalks, a lowered speed to 25 mph on the bridge and island, and the speed hump that will be placed on the island. We are also happy to see the inclusion of bike lanes and abutments.

However, after hearing the presentation, Manchester Alliance and Shockoe Partnership continue to have the following concerns and issues:

1. Protection for non-vehicular uses - We are dismayed to see so little thought or creativity being given to how to protect non-vehicle users. The lack of any kind of barrier between motorized users and those that are not is simply not in keeping with Vision Zero. Creating a situation where a vehicle that loses control has no impediment to pinning a person against a cement railing designed simply to prevent the vehicle from going off the bridge does not seem like an improvement nor does it seem to comport with Mayor Avula's directive to create a bikeable, walkable, dog/child friendly community connector out of this bridge. While we understand that there may be safety needs that must be addressed, there should be multiple ways to design a bridge that would address these concerns as well as make this bridge safer for pedestrians, bikers, wheelchair users, strollers, dogs, skateboarders, etc. For example, the barrier could go in the "buffer zone" between the bike lanes and the vehicular lanes, similar to what has been done on the new Arthur Ashe bridge. The "barriers" could be moveable or immovable planters, bollards (collapsible, moveable, or fixed) or a lower barrier that does not impede an emergency vehicle but would be a deterrent to passenger vehicles. It could also be possible to examine creating protected bike and pedestrian lanes on one side of the bridge but leaving the other side as currently designed, allowing for a potential third lane for emergency vehicles. We would urge that more thought, more effort, more creativity, and more input be allowed into this portion of the design. We would urge the city to consult experts, get community feedback, and think beyond just rebuilding the current bridge.

2. Railings - From our perspective, additional options for railings that would enhance the non-vehicular experience would be welcome by the communities. Our organizations believe strongly that the non-vehicular experience is critical to this bridge being a true community connector and the economic driver that it could be. This bridge will act as a

recreational opportunity and economic development enhancement if done with that in mind and we strongly urge that more consideration be given to this important element and more options presented to the public and more input from the neighborhood associations be allowed. It is instructive to compare the crossing experiences of the Nickle bridge vs. the Huguenot or Lee bridges, or to look at the design for the new Arthur Ashe bridge. A visual connection to the river should be a critical design element of a new Mayo bridge as should the protection for non-vehicular users.

3. Floodwall constraints - We appreciate that the revised presentation will include the addition of sketches that will show transitions to the land-based routes, especially through the flood wall openings. It will be useful to see how the constraints impact all of the various uses. It will also be important to see how the pedestrian and bike paths transition to the existing right-of-ways on each side of the bridge. We reserve judgment and comment on these transitions until seeing renderings.

4. Traffic flow and necessary changes - We continue to be concerned that the overall traffic flow from north and south is not being adequately addressed. We urge DPW and the city to address the intersections at Hull /Commerce and Hull/Cowardin sooner rather than later and also begin addressing the traffic flow on the north side. At a minimum, the city needs to set aside funding to address the signal changes that will allow for left-turns from northbound vehicles on Hull Street. We continue to urge that the Mayo Bridge replacement, the Manchester Canal Bridge replacement, and the Hull Street Streetscape all be done in a coordinated fashion - with each limiting traffic to one-lane northbound and one-lane southbound. The city needs to set aside or provide funding for these as well, with at least CIP specific funds. We remain concerned about how traffic will flow and be shifted before, during and after construction - and how were the issues related to those being addressed. As noted above, we continue to urge that these be examined, studied, and addressed prior to the need for a detour. One idea we had proposed was to reduce Mayo bridge to two lanes of traffic along with some signal changes now to get people acclimated to the future use. We think that there is benefit in socializing and testing these issues in advance to achieve a better solution. Both neighborhood associations stand united in the need to address these concerns earlier and for the city to allocate funding to address these related issues.

5. We greatly appreciate the traffic calming measures that will be employed on the new bridge. This will substantially impact the enjoyment and safety of the non-vehicular experience. However, we would urge DPW to immediately lower the speed limit on the Mayo Bridge to 25 mph. There is little to no reason to not do this now and given the pedestrian deaths in the city at large and in Manchester specifically, we feel very strongly about this. The current bridge is unsafe with a reputation for high speeds and unsafe driving. The bridge currently has variable speeds - between 25 and 35 mph and there is no reason not to lower it to 25 mph now.

6. Street lights - Neither of the neighborhood associations believes that we should be bound to a certain form or design of street lighting and that the functionality of the lighting is more important. There is a different style on the north side of the river from the south side of the river. Neither the Shockoe Partnership nor the Manchester Alliance have argued for the Hanover Luminiere. However, both associations do care about how this lighting functions on the bridge - does it enhance the experience of those walking, does it make it safer to bike in low light, is it pleasing and helpful? We believe that the functionality of these lights and the safety they create are more important than the design, although we do believe both function and attractiveness can be achieved.

6. Abutments - We are happy to see that the bridge includes abutments for enjoyment of the view, the river, and for those who fish. However, these seem rather small - 5' deep - and it would be good to understand why this particular design and depth were chosen and allow feedback from the community as to whether this is adequate.

7. The Trail of the Enslaved - The Mayo Bridge is an important part of the history of Richmond and for those who were enslaved. This is the connection point between the Shockoe Project and the new installations going at Ancarrows Landing. It would be impactful for this bridge to allow for a connection to this history and, at present, there does not seem to be much opportunity for that. We urge consideration of this component and engagement with the neighborhood associations and other involved parties on this.

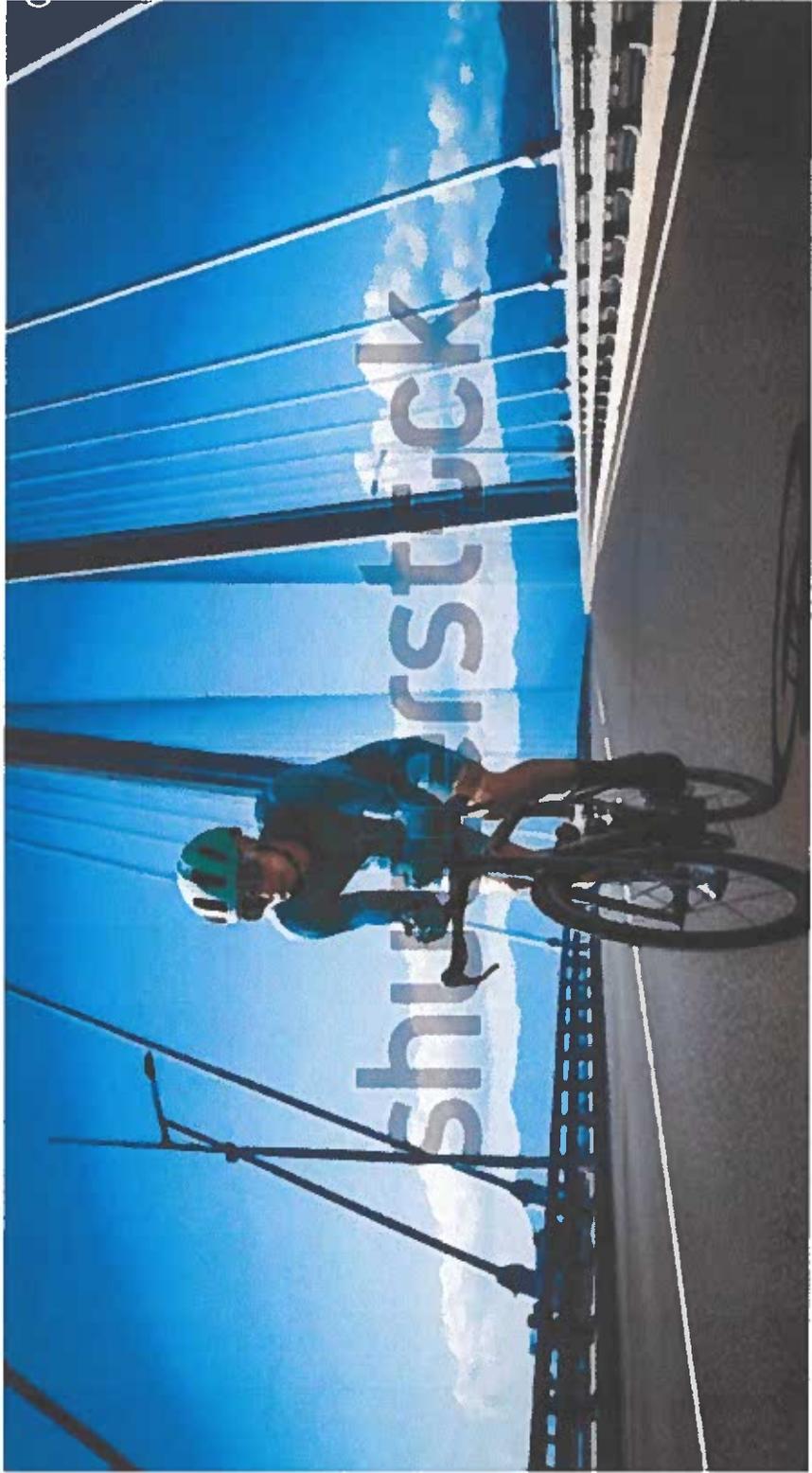
Overall, the current design leans too heavily toward "putting back what was there" and too little into the experience for the non-vehicle user. We urge this committee and the city to view this project as the once-in a lifetime project that it is and to be thoughtful, creative, and smart about its design. Its impact on both sides of the river cannot be underestimated and the future is bright if this is done right.

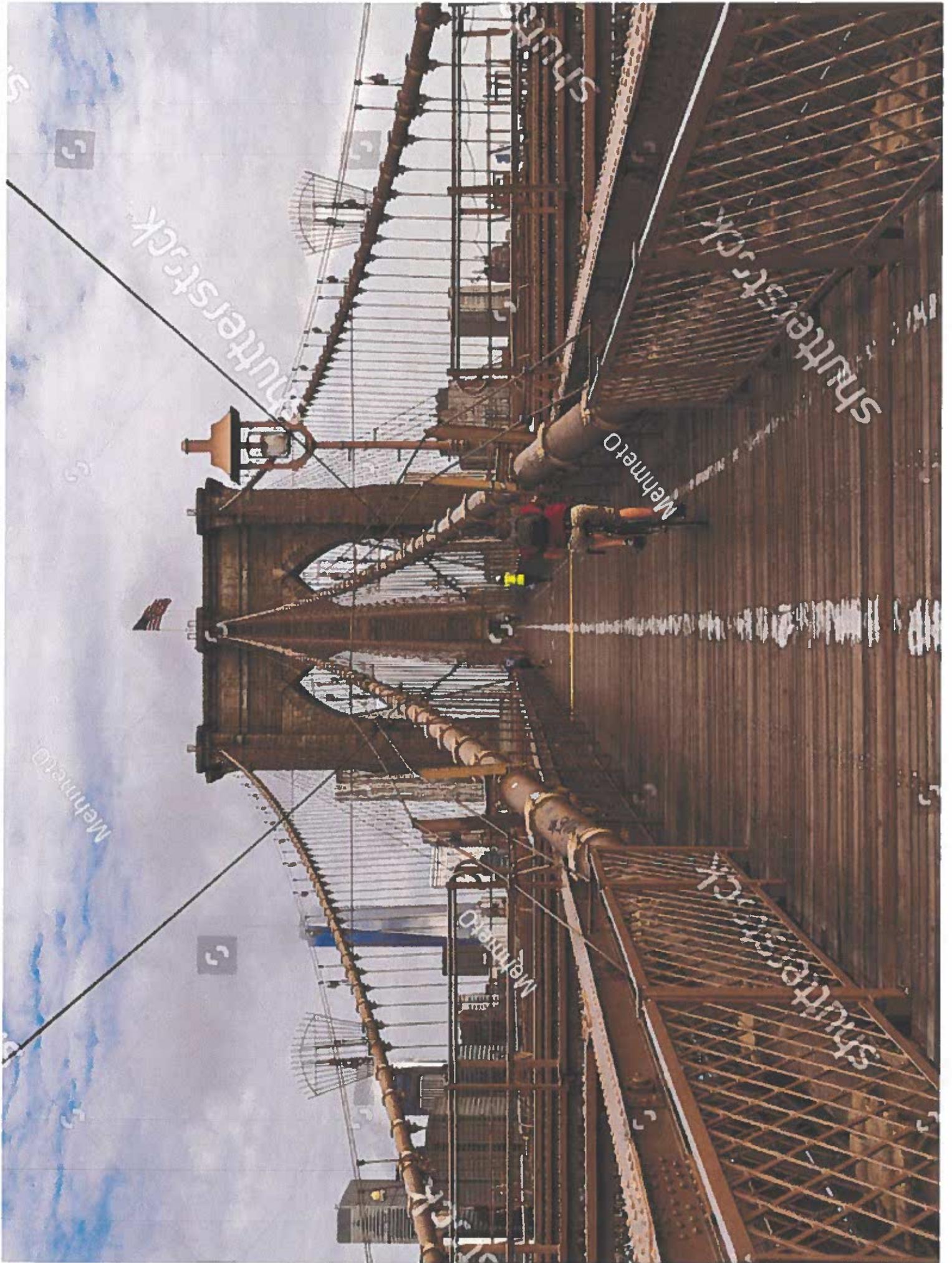
Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and ideas. We will continue to engage to ensure that this critical community connector and economic driver be done in a way that optimized the betterment of our two neighborhoods and the whole of downtown Richmond.

Spencer Grice  
President, Shockoe Partnership

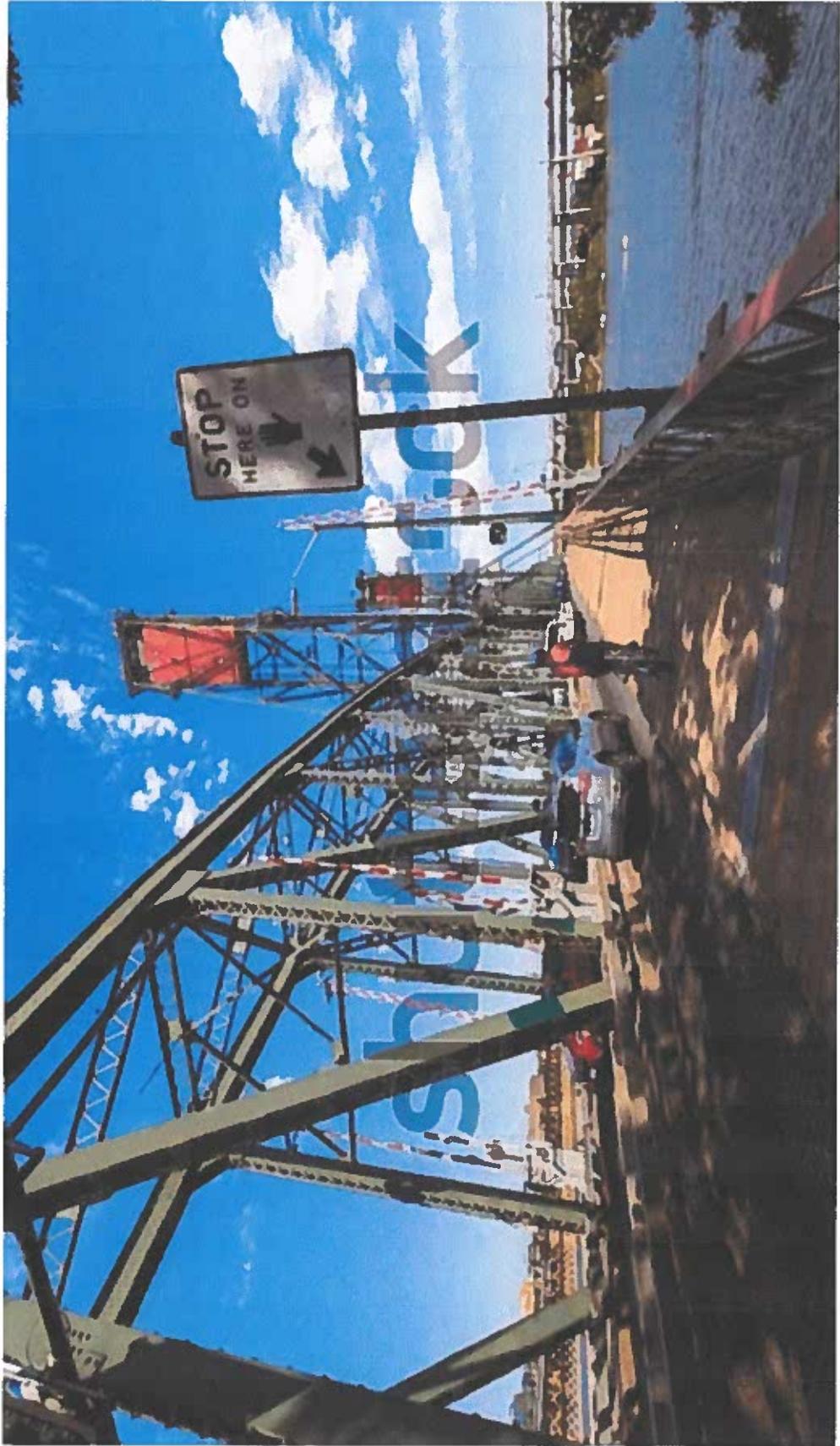
Janet Woodka  
President, Manchester Alliance

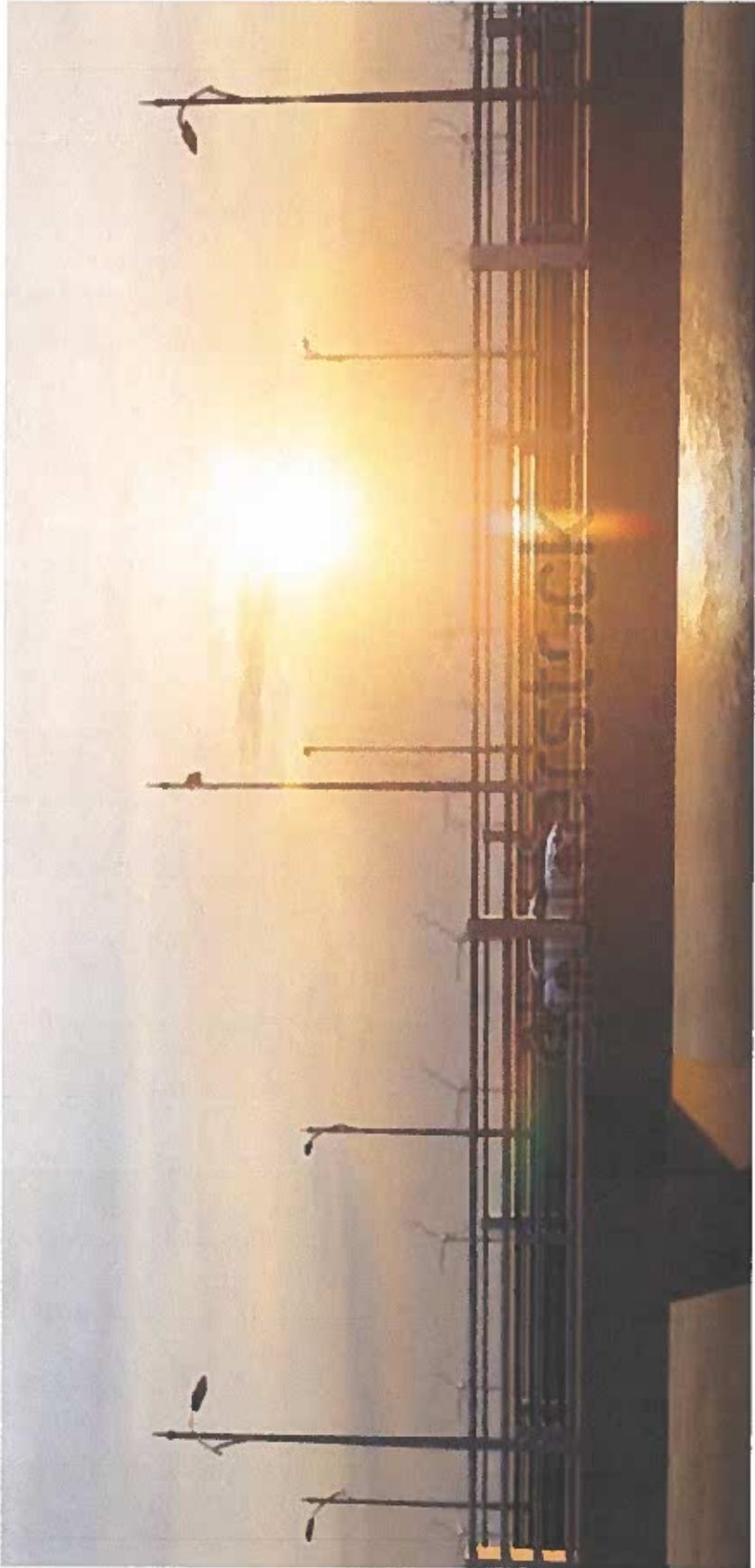




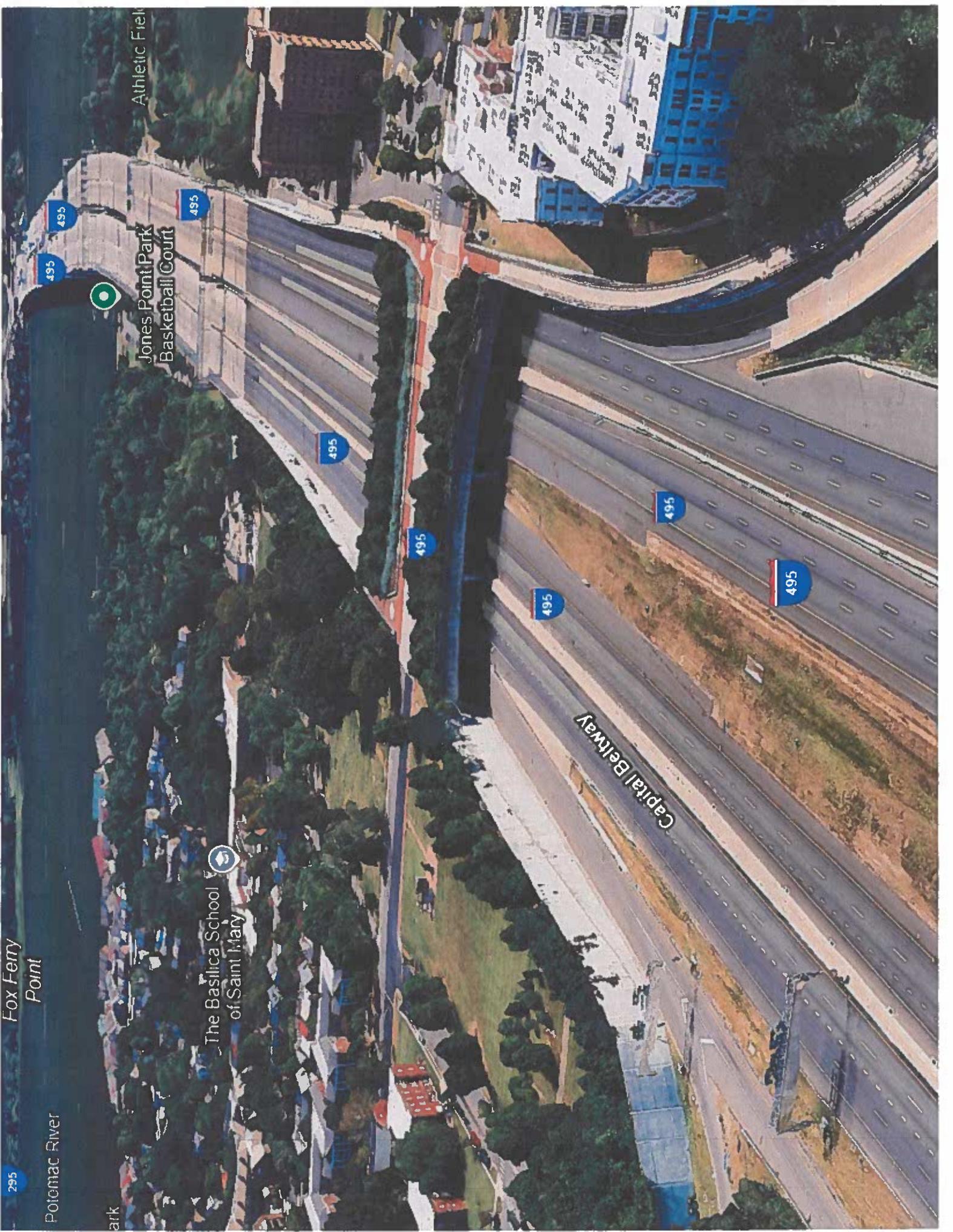












295

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Potomac River

Park

The Basilica School of Saint Mary

Jones Point Park Basketball Court

Athletic Field

Capital Beltway

495

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## Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR

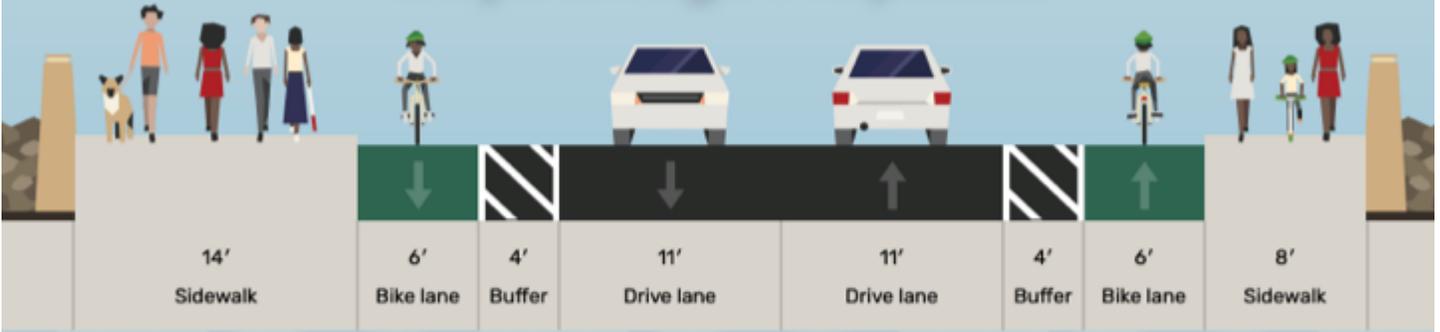
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**From:** Dan <dan.g.nelson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 15, 2026 10:53 PM  
**To:** Roakes, Raymond A. - PDR; Boenau, Andy E. - DPW; Mayor Danny Avula; Wheeler, William (VDOT); Fisher, Scott P.E. (VDOT); Vincent, Bobby - DPW; Breton, Andrew S. - City Council; Brantley Tyndall  
**Subject:** Mayo Bridge Bike Lane Barriers

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The Mayo Bridge could easily have barriers for the bike lanes by combining two lanes on one side, reducing the bike lane widths to 5 ft each (Capital Trail is 10 feet), and reducing the western sidewalk to 12 feet.

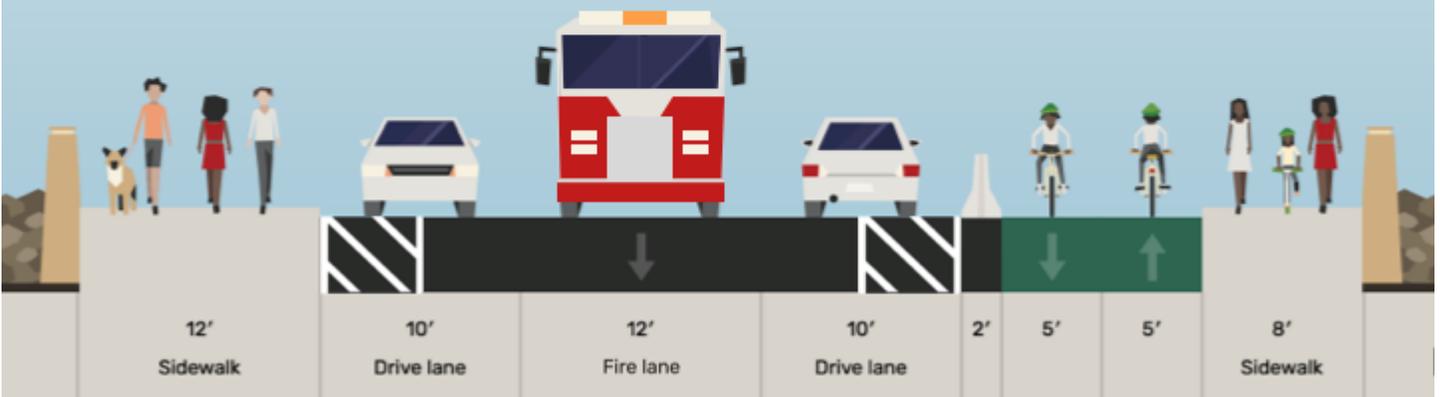
# Mayo Bridge Proposed



# Mayo Bridge with Bike Lane Barrier



# Plenty of Room for RFD



CITY GOVERNMENT

# Here's Richmond's first crack at designing a new Mayo Bridge



SARAH VOGELSONG

JANUARY 15, 2026 | 7:11PM EST · 8 MIN



(City of Richmond)

But members were less enthusiastic about the plan's lack of any physical barriers between the two bike lanes and the vehicle lanes that would adjoin them. That absence, said several, would unnecessarily put bikers at risk — even as city fire officials said barriers were a no-go because they would block drivers from moving out of the way in case of an emergency.

“Paint is not protection,” said UDC member Keith Van Inwegen. “There has to be some way to do it. Otherwise we shouldn't even call these bike lanes.”