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February 7, 2023

Ray Roakes

Secretary

City of Richmond Urban Design Committee

900 E. Broad Street

Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Mayo Bridge

Dear Mr. Roakes,

We understand that the Urban Design Committee has an agenda item on Thursday, February 9, 2023 for "Consultation on Preliminary Design for the Mayo Bridge Replacement Project." Mayo Bridge is not only an important economic and transportation connector between Downtown and Manchester, it is an important component of Richmond's architectural legacy. Accordingly, we are writing to request an immediate and robust community engagement process for the project.

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The site of the current Mayo Bridge has been continuously occupied by a bridge since John Mayo was granted a charter to build the first bridge to connect the north and south banks of the James River in 1785. Mayo's son, John Mayo, Jr., received authorization from the General Assembly to continue his father's work. A wooden bridge was constructed in 1788. Successive replacements were built as the bridge was repeatedly washed away during periods of flooding or otherwise destroyed, as in 1865 when Confederate forces retreating from Richmond burned the bridge. The bridge's importance to the local economy grew as the twin cities of Richmond and Manchester grew.

Construction of the current Mayo Bridge was begun in 1910 when Manchester was annexed to the City of Richmond. It opened to the public in 1913, a beautiful example of Beaux Arts architecture that for the first time in its history was toll free—a concrete tribute to the goal of integrating the two cities through multimodal transportation. The Mayo Bridge provided pedestrians, vehicular traffic, and streetcars with a way to travel between Downtown and Manchester.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cyane B. Crump

The bridge was designed by Concrete Steel Engineering Company of New York and built by I. J. Smith & Company of Richmond. Charles Bolling, City Engineer, and G. M. Bowers, engineer in charge, supervised the construction of the bridge. Architectural embellishments include obelisks, gentle arches, and solid cast concrete panels with a molded lattice decorative motif for railings.

In 2000, the Mayo Bridge was listed as a contributing structure on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), acknowledging its value as both architecture and the historical connection point between the commercial and industrial center of Manchester and Richmond's financial district. It also has been deemed individually eligible for listing on the NRHP.

Mayo Bridge is unique among Richmond's bridges, with its distinctive architectural ornament, its connection to Mayo Island, Downtown and Manchester, and its relative height above the river. Mayo Bridge was constructed as welcoming, connecting, aspirational, and transformational infrastructure at a time when transportation in Richmond was multimodal. For that reason, for many years, we have advocated for its rehabilitation and repair, while making it more friendly for people who are not driving.

With that in mind, we would like to offer the following comments and concerns:

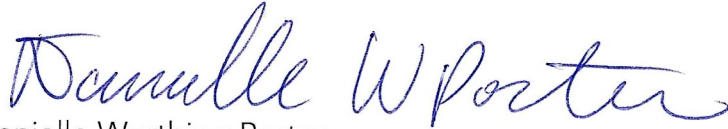
1. **It is our understanding that this is a federally funded project. As it affects a historic property that is listed on the NRHP, we ask that the Section 106 process be initiated as soon as possible.** The community – residents and businesses – will be significantly impacted by this project, including its design and any closures resulting from its staging. A robust community engagement process should occur immediately. We hope that this necessary work can be completed in a manner that respects and acknowledges the Mayo Bridge's historic and cultural significance, while also encouraging and prioritizing community needs and involvement.
2. **In Kind Replacement.** Any necessary replacements should replicate the original bridge design as closely as possible. This may mean recasting the decorative concrete forms, such as the light poles/obelisks, gentle arches, and solid cast concrete panels with a molded lattice decorative motif for railings.
3. **Modern Updates.** The project design should contemplate multimodal transportation options, including bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, and green spaces. This would be in keeping not only with its history but also with the Richmond 300 Master Plan's Goals 5 (Planning Engagement) and 8 (Non-Car Network), as well as existing UDC guidelines regarding multimodal transportation and pedestrian connectivity and safety.

We hope that this week's presentation at the Urban Design Committee will shed some light on these questions, triggering the Section 106 Process and allowing for robust community involvement and appropriate treatment of this beautiful piece of Richmond history. Above all, we hope that any project involving Mayo Bridge today recognizes that it is not merely infrastructure, but that its design can provide high quality

placemaking for people through the creation of spaces that are welcoming, connecting, aspirational, and transformational.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Thank you,



Danielle Worthing Porter
Director of Preservation Services

cc: Mayor Levar Stoney
Lincoln Saunders, Chief Administrative Officer
Council President Michael Jones
Councilmember Ellen Robertson
Director Julie Langan, Virginia Department of Historic Resources

