SUPPORTING MATERIAL
ARTHUR ASHE BOULEVARD BRIDGE
FINAL REVIEW

Project, Purpose, Background, and Context

The Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge replacement project proposes to replace an existing multimodal bridge structure in the City of Richmond, Virginia (RVA), that provides a critical connection over the CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) railroad at the City's crossroads with the eastern seaboard interstate highway corridor. The existing bridge is structurally deficient, requiring the recent installation of emergency temporary supports, and provides sub-standard vertical clearances over CSXT. The roadway is named in honor of the exemplary life of Arthur Ashe Jr., who is considered one of Richmond's brightest beacons for his accomplishments in the world of sports and relentless pursuits of civil and human rights, Arthur Ashe Boulevard (Route 161) provides an important link between the urban and commercial centers of the City to the regional transportation network, including interstate highways I-95 and I-64.

Arthur Ashe Boulevard is an urban principal arterial on the National Highway System (NHS) that carries an annual average daily traffic volume of 26,000 vehicles traffic daily. The current bridge structure (Virgina Department of Transportation (VDOT) Str. 127-1853, Fed ID 21531) supports four traffic lanes and existing sidewalks in both directions. The regional 2020 Greater RVA Transit Vision Plan identifies the roadway as part of the route for enhanced transit and a future expanded high frequency bus network. The roadway also carries high volumes of pedestrians and bicycles through commercial and mixed-use areas, much of which are planned for redevelopment.

The existing Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge spans approximately 275 feet over two active and one abandoned railway lines operated and maintained by CSXT. It is the only grade-separated crossing of the railway within the area and the nearest adjacent at-grade crossing is over three miles away on Hermitage Road. An additional line for high-speed passenger rail as well as an additional freight line are planned along this corridor. The project location is just north of the former Richmond Broad Street Station, which was the southern terminus of the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad. During prior years, up to eight passenger and freight tracks passed below the Arthur Ashe Boulevard Bridge for passenger and freight services.

The original bridge was constructed in 1889, rebuilt in 1912, and lengthened in 1918 to accommodate additional tracks. In 1944, it was lengthened again and widened to accommodate additional tracks and increased roadway capacity. The City of Richmond removed and replaced deteriorating portions of the reinforced concrete on the bridge in 1985; however, most of the bridge is nearly 80 years old, with some components of the existing structure being over 110 years old. The current bridge's deck and superstructure conditions are rated in fair condition, while the substructure is currently rated poor. In 2019, the City of Richmond renamed the Boulevard, a historic road through the City of Richmond, to Arthur Ashe Boulevard to honor the tennis great and humanitarian that was born in Richmond. In the same year, a regularly scheduled bridge inspection revealed an emergency situation of a steel girder, which necessitated an emergency repair to shore up a failed bearing seat and to ensure safe passage to the traveling public

The proposed bridge will raise the road approximately 7 feet to accommodate the vertical clearance requirements of CSXT while also meeting their horizontal clearance requirements. To meet the horizontal clearance requirements, the existing four span bridge will be replaced with a 2-span bridge.

Working in collaboration with the City Engineer, City Transportation Engineer, and City Bridge Engineer, the design team worked to balance the need to throughput of vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists with the desire for placemaking and to deliver a unique and attractive structure. Two vehicular traffic lanes in each direction will be provided, along with a Shared Use Path on the west side of the structure and a wide sidewalk on the east side of the structure. Benches and canopies are added to add to the placemaking of the area.

One lane in each direction, along with pedestrian and bicycle access, will be provided throughout the construction duration.

Pedestrian Amenities

The pedestrian facilities will include new concrete sidewalks and street trees that lead from the Diamond District and Scott's Addition to the new bridge. Pedestrian overlooks will be placed on both sides of the approach to the bridge allowing users to pull off the main sidewalk for a respite. The overlooks will have custom seating and planters that will be oriented to views of the Diamond District and Scott's Addition. Once on the bridge pedestrians and bicyclists will be separated from vehicular traffic by a shared use path. The shared use path is a minimum of ten feet wide and is located on both sides of the bridge. The bridge shared use path is classified as a "side path" in the 5th edition of AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities. Side paths are adjacent to roads and are located within the road right-of-way and the side path is required to be separated from vehicular traffic by a barrier and/or a parkway. The side paths on Arthur Ashe bridge are separated from vehicular traffic by concrete barriers, guardrails, perforated metal panels, and precast concrete planters.

The concrete planters will be filled with hardy, low maintenance, ornamental plants and will be irrigated by an automatic irrigation system. Benches will be integrated into the concrete planters and will orient users to views of the surrounding cityscape. Overhead metal shade structures will provide opportunities for shade along the bridge side paths. The design of the shade structures will have an industrial character recalling the history of industry in the area. In the evening the shade structures will be highlighted with integral LED lighting. The focal point of the bridge will be the central overhead gateway that spans the width of the bridge. Like the shade structures the design of the gateway will have a simple industrial character with a single crossbar that can hold signage as determined by the city.

Community outreach

A Community Meeting was held on June 11, 2025, at the Science Museum of Virginia. This event was well attended, and the public was given the opportunity to comment, both in-person on paper and electronically. The boards from that event are included with this submittal. A Formal Public Hearing slated in December 2025.

Project budget and funding sources

The project budget is approximately $38 million. The initial funding sources is from a Federal Highway Administration RAISE grant. Other contributing sources include CSXT and City funds.

Construction program

The project is on schedule for starting construction procurement in March of 2026 and award of a construction contract in August of 2026.

Estimated construction start date

Actual construction is slated to start in the Fall of 2026 and is estimated to take 24 months.

Plans

Timmons Group submitted 60% plans to the City for review on August 7, 2025. It is being reviewed technically by the City and FHWA. Comments and responses are forthcoming.