



Mayor Levar Stoney  
900 E. Broad Street, Suite 201  
Richmond, VA 23219

August 5, 2022

**Re: Mayo's Bridge Replacement**

Dear Mayor Stoney:

Mayo's Bridge is one of the most important connectors between Downtown and Manchester and an important piece of our city's architectural heritage. We recognize the need for repair and improvement to the bridge to ensure it remains safe and becomes a place for people walking, biking, and experiencing the outdoors, including fishing. We urge you not to rush to a decision to fully replace the bridge, destroying the old, and prompting a many months shutdown, harming the economy and businesses south of the river.

***Public Involvement and Impact to Businesses***

We strongly believe in extensive community involvement in city planning decisions. We have heard from community members – developers, businesses, and residents, that the decision to replace the bridge instead of rehabilitate, and to entirely shut down the span in the process, was a surprise to many. While we acknowledge public engagement has been done in the past for this project, it has been a few years and much has changed in the region. Many people thought the bridge would be repaired, and many prefer the option of saving the historic bridge while making it a great place for pedestrians and cyclists.

Small businesses south of the bridge, already struggling in the current economy, are at risk of bankruptcy in the event of an extended closure of the bridge. Rehabilitation of the bridge may be a means to avoid complete shutdown, allowing traffic to continue and lessening the impact on the businesses in the area.

The project website says that stakeholder input led to the decision to replace instead of repair. Please share who the stakeholders were and the dates and times of the meetings. In addition, we ask you to put a pause on any design and

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engineering work for a new structure, until public meetings can be held and the options discussed.

### ***Vehicle Lanes and Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities***

We are pleased that the plan in its current form does not intend to add any more automobile lanes to the proposed replacement bridge and that it is meant to emulate the current bridge's style. However, we want to ensure that the bicycle and pedestrian facilities that have been identified for Mayo's Bridge in the city's planning documents will be included whether the bridge is rehabilitated or replaced. The recently adopted Richmond 300 plan calls for the bridge to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities and the 2012 Riverfront plan recommends that the bridge be reconfigured to calm traffic and to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

The Riverfront plan also includes a mockup photo of the updated bridge with one automobile lane in each direction and two lanes for pedestrians and bicyclists. Does the city intend to follow these plans and their recommendations as they continue with this project?

We strongly favor, as we expect many others do, that the bridge have one lane in each direction for car traffic, wide and protected bike lanes in each direction, and wider sidewalks. As our city grows, we need to prioritize walking and biking and transit use over car travel. In addition, commuters have alternatives to Mayo's Bridge.

### ***Historic Preservation***

Mayo's Bridge is one of the historic landmarks of Richmond and emulates the Pont Neuf bridge in Paris. The bridge offers a scenic route and gateway when entering the Manchester community across the river or approaching Downtown. Mayo's Bridge is currently part of the Manchester Industrial Historic District, listed on the National Register, and contributes greatly to the community's distinct sense of place. Its listing and the expected use of federal funding, should also trigger Section 106 review under the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 mandates that the federal agency in charge of the project is responsible for identifying who should participate in the review (e.g. the local government, State Historic Preservation Officer, historic preservation organizations, etc.) and how they plan to involve the public for the project. It also mandates the consideration of avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating adverse effects of the proposed treatment. At what stage is the Section 106 process and have you reached out to potential consulting parties?

## ***Mayo's Island***

Mayo's Island is another important asset of the city that will be affected by the rehabilitation or replacement of Mayo's Bridge. While Mayo's Island is currently for sale, the Riverfront plan and Downtown plan identified the island as a potential recreational space and as the crown jewel of the James River parks in the city. These plans recommended that the city purchase the island. The Riverfront plan suggests that the revitalization of Mayo's Island should coincide with the Mayo's Bridge project, in order to create a cohesive landscape and add traffic calming measures for Mayo's Island. Implementing these recommendations to create more opportunities for recreation and conservation will help to safeguard both our historic and natural resources, some of the city's greatest assets.

We are looking forward to learning more about this project and the process, and to engaging further as this process continues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stewart Schwab". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

President

Cc:

Lincoln Saunders, Chief Administrative Officer  
Bobby Vincent, Director of the Dept of Public Works  
Council President Cynthia Newbille  
Councilmember Ellen Robertson