



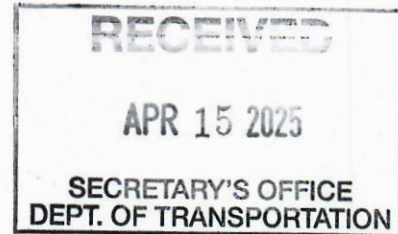
OFFICE OF
MAYOR AND COUNCIL

The Town of Williamsport

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April 3, 2025

The Honorable Paul J. Wiedefeld
Secretary of Transportation
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, MD 21076-0548



RE: Town of Williamsport Mayor & Town Council Transportation Priorities

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld,

The Mayor and Town Council of the Town of Williamsport look forward to your visit in the fall to consider and discuss transportation priorities for Washington County and its municipalities. The town's highest priority is the exploration of the condition and future of the United States Route 11 (US 11) Bridge.

The US 11 Bridge was built 114 years ago to traverse nearly 1,800 feet of the Potomac River from Williamsport to West Virginia. The bridge is the only secondary road across the river between Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and Hancock, Maryland, nearly 60 miles apart. The bridge handles approximately 15,000 vehicles per day and in times that Interstate 81 and/or Interstate 70 are impassable due to accidents or construction, traffic self-diverts to the US 11 bridge to avoid the impediment. This means up to eight lanes of interstate traffic is constricted to a two lane, two-way bridge showing signs of distress. Its age and condition limit the structure, which was not built for the weight, size, and frequency of the vehicles using it to cross the river.

The bridge also serves non-motorized traffic, but does not have sidewalks or bike lanes. The width of the bridge is about 24 feet, leaving 12 feet for each travel lane; with no designated path for non-motorized traffic, pedestrians and bicyclists are required to use the side of the lane to cross. As you can see from the image, this bridge is not safe for non-motorized traffic with no other option to cross over the river.



The bridge is beyond its life expectancy.

A copy of MDOT's submitted Planning and Environmental Linkages study is enclosed for your review. Most recently this study was referred to as a feasibility study by officials, lessening the focus and importance of this vital project. The document raises more concerns than it provides insight and should have been in its final form before submission to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and House Appropriations Committee in October 2023. The town intended for this study to inform a National Environmental Planning Assessment to give guidance and properly plan the bridge's future. The importance of seeing this stage of the process complete cannot be overstated.

The Town of Williamsport is grateful for the attention the US 11 bridge has received in the past few years and cordially calls for a final version of the Planning and Environmental Linkages study. We would also like to invite you to visit the site during your tour of Washington County. This will allow you to see firsthand the trials and tribulations community stakeholders experience daily and discuss with us the importance of moving this issue forward.

Cordially,



William "Bill" Green
Mayor



Dr. Chad P. Rooney
Town Manager

CC: Town Council – Town of Williamsport
Washington County Delegation Members
US Senator Angela Alsobrooks
US Senator Christopher Van Hollen
US April McClain Delaney
Washington County Commissioners
Linda Puffenbarger, SHA District 6 Engineer
Matthew Mullenax, HEPMPO Executive Director
James F. Kercheval, Executive Director, The Greater Hagerstown Committee

United States Route 11 Bridge

Washington County Community Lobbying Coalition

Project Background: The United States Route 11 Bridge traverses the C & O Canal, Riverbottom Park, and the Potomac River in Williamsport, Maryland. It connects western Washington County to eastern West Virginia including Marlowe, Falling Waters, Spring Mills and Martinsburg.

The bridge was constructed in 1909 with a privately operated toll booth. Spanning nearly 1,800 feet, the bridge was most recently given a major overhaul in the early 1980's when the footings were encased with concrete. Official statistics in 2009 showed nearly 8,900 vehicles utilize the bridge daily, the Town is estimating over 15,000 vehicles daily based on traffic reports prior used to determine flow for an overlay on Potomac Street and North Artizan Street.

In May 2018, the State Highway Administration provided an overall "Fair" rating of the bridge with the Superstructure and deck conditioning one point away from being considered "Poor". In context, the bridge needs rehabilitation, but the opportunity to consider alternatives is now.

The Need: When there is an accident on Interstate 81, which is frequent, the image shows the impact on local infrastructure. Interstate traffic will use Exit 1 and Exit 2 to avoid an accident; town streets are not built to handle interstate traffic weights and amounts.



The condition of the bridge is in desperate need of replacement. This 2-lane bridge, built in 1909, footers of which are believed to be sinking, while both the overall condition and substructure

condition of which were determined to be "POOR" in a 1990 inspection.

Current Status:



Safety: Crash data from 2022: 31 crashes on US 11 in town limits, 7 injury crashes. Drivers are confused exiting the Maryland side of the bridge as the intersection leads some drivers to accidentally leave US 11 and continue onto a town street.

This has been observed with oversized loads which cause damage to local streets not built for the weight. In the reverse direction of flow, drivers have left the roadway into the Cushwa Basin parking area with one known to have left the parking surface and into the canal.

Per the PEL Study, the roadway is experiencing some functional cracking...the deck and support beams are one point from being in "Poor" condition.

Pedestrians, bicyclists, and other recreational travelers use the bridge to and from West Virginia and have no safe way to make the trip; the edge of the travel lanes are inches from the sidewall of the bridge.



Benefits: 1) Elimination of an area unsafe for pedestrians at the C & O Canal Headquarters and for drivers to navigate; 2) Allow for construction to occur without disruption of current traffic patterns; 3) Improve traffic mobility in area and decrease the impact on traffic in the Town Center; 4) Continue to support \$30 million in enhancements to C & O Canal park area and Headquarters. This is the only location in the Canal with a working tow path bridge, train bridge, lock house, and lock; 5) Enhance tourism, desirability, and economic development in the region

"Progress is intentional, not inevitable"
~ Governor Wes Moore

This quote has resonated over this project since May 2024 when the Governor told the state that we need to be purposeful with our development. The replacement of this bridge would not only help the town, but also benefit southeastern Washington

County towards purposeful residential, commercial, and industrial growth.

REQUEST:

The Town is requesting support for pre-authorization of funds to replace and realign the US Route 11 Bridge, which passes over the Potomac River, just south of its confluence with Conococheague Creek, and between Washington County, Maryland, and Berkeley County, West Virginia.

For more information on this project contact:

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**Williamsport, Maryland US 11 Bridge
Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL)
(2023 JCR, p. 79)**

**A Report for the Maryland General Assembly
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
and
House Appropriations Committee**

Maryland Department of Transportation

October 2023

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (SHA) offers this report in response to budget language contained in the 2023 Joint Chairmen’s Report. The language states:

Williamsport, Maryland US 11 Bridge – Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study:
The committees are concerned about the condition and current alignment of the US Route 11 bridge connecting Williamsport, Maryland with West Virginia and spanning the C&O Canal and the Potomac River. The bridge, which was constructed in 1909, has had components rated as “poor” in a 1990 inspection, and is currently the subject of a PEL study by the State Highway Administration (SHA). The committees request that SHA provide a status report by October 1, 2023, on the PEL process, indicating when the study is expected to be complete and summarizing any preliminary findings.

Introduction

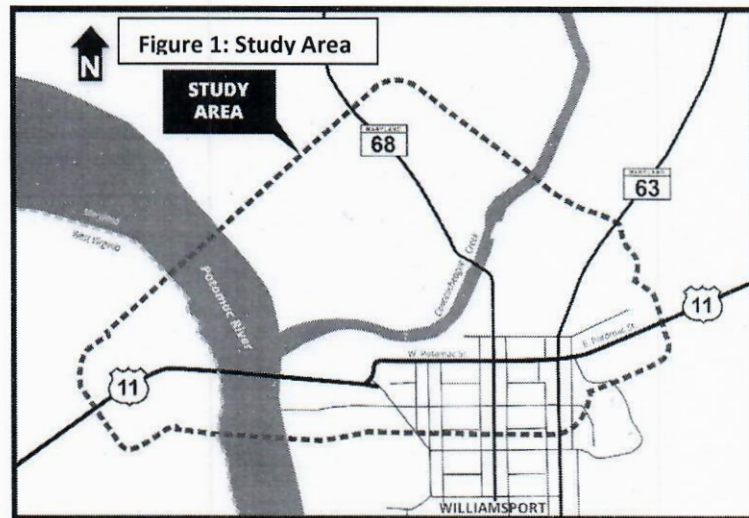
A planning study is currently being conducted for the US 11 bridge in Williamsport, Maryland and SHA has completed initial study activities. At this time, SHA has reviewed the local master plan, collected traffic counts, developed current year traffic volumes, reviewed safety data, assessed major roadway assets, and performed an inventory of key environmental resources. The US 11 bridge over the Potomac River is 100 percent owned by the State of Maryland.

This information will be used to help inform the development of future traffic forecasts, roadway concepts, and recommendations to potentially advance project development efforts in this portion of the US 11 corridor when funding becomes available.

Study Area

The study area includes the US 11 bridge over the Potomac River and its approaches in Williamsport, Maryland, and Berkeley County, West Virginia. The study area is bounded roughly by Temple Drive in Berkeley County, across the Potomac River to include Fenton Avenue in Williamsport to the north, MD 68 (Clear Spring Road/North Conococheague Street) to the east, and along Salisbury Street across the Potomac River to Berkeley County to the south. The largest Census block groups within the study area,

covering most of Williamsport, is identified as historically disadvantaged based on Federal Highway Administration criteria, but it is not an area of persistent poverty. Land use within the study area primarily consists of open water, residential, forest lands, pasture, open urban land, commercial, and industrial. No protected farmlands were identified within the study area; however, prime and unique farmland soils, as well as statewide and locally important farmland soils are present.



Within the study area, US 11 (West Potomac St) crosses over the Potomac River on a two-lane bridge and becomes a two-lane undivided minor arterial roadway within Williamsport, Maryland. The stretch of US 11 in the study area is signed at 25 mph. There are five intersections along US 11 from the bridge to MD 63, two signalized and three stop/yield controlled. There is street parking along both sides of US 11 and a bike lane on both sides of US 11 between the C&O Canal National Historic Park Entrance and MD 63.

Several industrial properties are located in the surrounding area, including the following truck-generators between Williamsport and the nearest freeways of I-81 and I-70: Glen Gery Cushwa Plant, Walmart Distribution Center, Bowman, Maryland Paper Company, Dot Foods, Pepsi-Cola, Packaging Services Industries, and FedEx Freight. Additional industrial land uses are located north of I-70 and east of I-81.

Local Plans

The Williamsport Comprehensive Plan (2010) recommends improvements to US 11 by means of rerouting options to alleviate future traffic, primarily truck traffic from local warehouses and nearby quarry operations with the inherent goal of devising more clarity in the route to the Potomac River Bridge on US 11. Washington County’s Long Range Transportation Plan’s Phase 2 priorities include widening US 11 to four lanes. Both plans emphasize complete street initiatives, such as pedestrian and bicycle access, and connections to the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal and Towpath.

Existing Conditions

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume data along US 11 on the bridge over the Potomac River for 2023 weekday traffic is shown below. Volumes are generally consistent throughout the year with little seasonal variation.

Table 1: Traffic Volume Data

	2023
Average Daily Traffic (ADT)	8,900 vehicles per day
Design Hourly Volume (DHV) ¹	9%
Directional Distribution of DHV	60%
Percent Trucks - ADT	4%
Percent Trucks - DHV	2%

Truck Travel Patterns

INRIX Trip Analytics data was reviewed to determine the pattern of truck trips using the US 11 bridge over the Potomac River. The data shows the following origin and destination patterns for truck trips:

- Nearly half (45 percent) of all truck trips are to/from I-81 and I-70.
- Approximately one-third (32 percent) of all truck trips have origins or destinations within the Town of Williamsport.
- All other truck trips (23 percent) are to/from local roadways in the area, including MD 68, MD 63, and US 11.

¹ The traffic volume during the peak hour. This is calculated as a percent of the Average Daily Traffic

Operations

Based on field observations and preliminary analysis:

- All studied intersections operate at an acceptable level of service.
- In the PM peak, some signal cycles did not clear the full queues at the US 11 at MD 63 and US 11 at MD 68 intersections.
- Average speeds along the corridor remain consistent throughout the day and are typically at or above the posted speed limit. On the bridge, speeds are on average 36 mph but drop to an average of 25 mph in the segment through Williamsport.
- Some driver confusion was observed at the US 11 at Commerce Street intersection, where some eastbound drivers failed to follow the reverse curve to stay on US 11 and ended up heading southbound on Commerce Street where they had to U-turn to get back to US 11.
- Based on travel time runs under normal conditions, it is 3-6 minutes slower for motorists to use US 11 to access I-81 and I-70, compared to using I-81.

Crash Data

Crash data from January 2018 to December 2022 indicates 31 total crashes reported along US 11 from the West Virginia state line to MD 63, including 7 injury crashes and no fatal crashes (2022 crash data is preliminary). The locations with the most crashes are the US 11 at MD 68 intersection, the US 11 at MD 63 intersection, and the reverse curve just east of the bridge. Two pedestrian crashes occurred at US 11 at MD 68 and one pedestrian crash occurred at US 11 at MD 63. Crosswalks and pedestrian signals are provided on all four legs of both intersections.

Roadway Asset Conditions

SHA has begun to review key roadway assets including the US 11 bridge, roadway pavement, and pedestrian/bicycle facilities as part of the initial study activities.

SHA inspects bridge structures at least every two years (biennially) in accordance with the Federal Highway Administration's National Bridge Inspection Standards. For bridges over water, underwater inspections also are performed at least every four years. Specific elements of each bridge, such as the piers, abutments, decks, etc. are inspected and rated independently. During these routine inspections, the team notes any defects and determines the condition of each rating element in categories such as good, fair, or poor.

The US 11 bridge was last inspected in May 2022. The inspection assigns a rating for each of the three major elements associated with the bridge. These elements include the deck (riding surface), the superstructure (support beams) and the structure (supporting piers and abutments). These elements were rated a 5 (fair) for the deck, a 5 (fair) for the superstructure, and a 7 (good) for the substructure. Given the current condition of the bridge there is no planned maintenance work at this time. SHA will continue to inspect this bridge on the regular inspection cycle with the next inspection anticipated to occur in 2024.

The US 11 pavement section consists of 6.0 to 6.5 inches of asphalt over 6 inches of gravel. Between the Potomac River bridge and the intersection with MD 63/Artizan Street, US 11 was last resurfaced in 1994. East of MD 63/Artizan Street, US 11 was last resurfaced in 2019. The roadway is experiencing some functional cracking in areas that were not recently repaved. A field review did not identify major needs beyond regular maintenance.

US 11 has striped bike lanes and sidewalk in most places between the C&O Canal access to MD 63. The sidewalks are not continuous and mostly not Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliant. There are no sidewalks or bike lanes across the US 11 bridge over the Potomac River, but bicycles are allowed to share the travel lane across the bridge. The level of stress for bicycle riders is a level 2 - low stress (level 2 out of 5) along US 11.

There is noticeable pavement and curb deterioration along MD 68, particularly on the bridge crossing the Conococheague Creek. MD 68 has sporadic non-ADA sidewalks and levels 3-4 (stressful and very stressful, respectively) for bicycle riders.

Environmental Inventory

A desktop inventory of environmental features was conducted by compiling readily available environmental data for the study area. Geographic Information System (GIS) data was reviewed for mapping existing conditions and identifying potential natural, socioeconomic, and cultural resources. The following notable resources are within the study area.

Floodplains

The study area includes portions of the 100-year floodplain for the Potomac River and Conococheague Creek, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency GIS floodplain data. A Joint Federal/State Permit Application for the Alteration of Any Floodplain, Waterway, Tidal or Nontidal Wetland in Maryland would be required for most construction activities.

Wetlands

There are no Maryland mapped Wetlands of Special State Concern in the study area. Conococheague Creek and its tributaries are mapped as Recreational Trout Waters. There are no West Virginia trout streams mapped in the study area.

Waterbodies

The study area is located entirely within the Upper Potomac River watershed, including Conococheague Creek, a large tributary on the Maryland side, and a small unnamed tributary to the Potomac on the West Virginia side. Overall, the environmental inventory confirms the presence of five waterways and notes several potential features including: one waterway, one wetland/waterway complex, and seven wetlands. Other notable features include the C&O Canal and perennial Springfield Run. Full delineation would be required for a full National Environmental Policy Act evaluation and wetland/water impacts would require regulatory agency authorization.

Historic Features

The US 11 bridge over the Potomac was determined not eligible for the on April 3, 2001. However, there are five other historic standing structures in the study area, four in Maryland and one in West Virginia. Additionally, the study area contains one property greater than fifty years of age that has not been evaluated for National Register of Historic Places eligibility. Coordination with the Maryland Historical Trust) will be required.

The study area contains one archaeological site that has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places: Conococheague Creek Site. The site is a Middle and Late Woodland Village or Hamlet. Five additional archaeological sites within the study area have not yet been evaluated for eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Additional archaeological investigations of previously surveyed locations may also be required. Additional consultation with the National Park Service would also be required. Unevaluated archaeological sites would require further investigation.

Hazardous Materials

The hazardous materials review included an initial identification of potential environmental concerns sites within or adjacent to the designated study area using readily available online data. The database listings identified several sites with environmentally significant records or observations. The observations identified four sites as potential environmental concerns including the former Byron Tannery, Redland Brick Cushwa Plant, Sheetz Gas Station, and Allegheny Energy R. P. Smith Power Station. Further determinations on potential environmental concerns will be made when conceptual alignments are developed more, depending on the alignment, groundwater flow direction, and construction activity required in the area.

Community Facilities

Several community facilities have been identified, including the C&O Canal Park and Williamsport Park, the potential for any build alternative to impact community facilities would require further analysis. A Section 4(f) Evaluation would be required to evaluate the use of publicly owned public parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historical sites.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Chesapeake Bay Ecological Field Office listed no threatened, endangered, or candidate species, and no critical habitats in the Maryland portion of the study area. Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) GIS shows two Sensitive Species Project Review Areas along the Potomac River and at the northeast end of the study area. In addition to the future the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and West Virginia Field Office coordination, consultation would be required with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, Protected Resource Division for the Shortnose Sturgeon, Maryland DNR Wildlife and Heritage Service regarding state-listed species, and Maryland DNR Project Review Division for local fisheries resources.

Next Steps

Future Traffic Modeling

The team will develop a traffic forecast and model for the 2045 design year. The traffic forecast will be based on projected growth from the local travel demand model and will include planned development within the study area. Development includes the Hetzer Property, which is a 730,980 square foot warehouse proposed to be built along the east side of MD 63 just north of the Town of Williamsport. Several other developments are proposed north of I-70, including multiple warehouses. These developments are anticipated to generate some trips, including trucks that will travel through the Town of Williamsport.

With either the current alignment of the bridge or if it is realigned to join MD 68 north of Williamsport, truck travel is likely to increase with future development – specifically through intersections of US 11 at MD 63 and US 11 at MD 68, though their turning movements may change with realignment. This will be considered further as part of the next steps and future needs assessment.

Concept Development

The team will develop improvement concepts which would include new alignment options to replace the Potomac River bridge, as well as accessibility and mobility needs for all users, including safety and bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Final Study Report

SHA is scheduled to complete the US 11 planning study by early 2024. Report findings are anticipated to include potential concepts that could be investigated further, recommend the next steps in the project development process, and prioritize strategies to develop and implement improvements, such as interim improvements and/or phasing. Recommendations will be shared with the Town of Williamsport, Washington County, National Park Service, and other local jurisdiction partners.