

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 14, 2022

The Honorable Jim Ports  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
7201 Corporate Center Drive  
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Ports:

With the work on the new Harry W. Nice/Thomas “Mac” Middleton Bridge across the Potomac River proceeding rapidly, we urge the State to reconsider plans to demolish the old bridge, and halt any immediate efforts to do so. These plans should not proceed until a study can be conducted on the feasibility as well as the financial and environmental costs and benefits of converting the old bridge to a non-motorized trail that could be used by pedestrians and bicyclists.

The demolition cost estimates made by the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) have ranged between \$15 million and \$23 million. Given that a new Environmental Analysis (EA) may now be necessary due to the modification of the demolition process to use explosives, which was not part of the original EA, an independent study to determine a common set of facts and costs would allow all parties the opportunity to consider the options for the use and ownership of the existing bridge.

An independent study, conducted by an entity with experience in similar bridge repurposing projects, is in the taxpayer’s interest to ensure that we are not wasting an opportunity to provide bicycling and pedestrian transportation options at a competitive cost or potentially lower cost than demolition. This study should include costs, safety and navigation impacts, and the potential economic and health benefits of alternative transportation and outdoor recreation uses. Premature demolition would squander the opportunity to repurpose the bridge if it is in the taxpayer and community’s best interest. We strongly urge you to undertake this basic due diligence before moving forward on demolition.

We would appreciate a response by July 22, 2022 regarding the State’s position and plans to secure an independent study and pause in demolition until this study is published.

Sincerely,



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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



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Steny H. Hoyer  
Member of Congress