



## ANACOSTIA WATERSHED COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*Dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Anacostia River and its tributaries*

June 27, 2018

Mr. Jeff Marootian  
Director, D.C. Department of Transportation  
55 M Street, SE, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20003

Commander Pitts  
c/o US Coastguard Command Center  
2401 Hawkins Point Road  
Baltimore, MD 22126

RE: Construction of Frederick Douglas Bridge over Anacostia, Washington DC.

Dear Commander Pitts and Director Marootian,

As chair of the Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee, I write to alert you of a serious hazard to safety of river users being created by the construction of the new Frederick Douglas Bridge. We represent some of the many communities impacted by the construction of this bridge. The Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee (AWCAC) was formed in 1996 by the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Committee to serve as its citizen arm and principal advisory body to both its Steering and Management Committees. (Anacostia.net) AWCAC is comprised of representatives of the jurisdictions and sub-watershed organizations in the Anacostia Watershed, and advises the multi-jurisdiction restoration effort under the auspices of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Part of our charge for this Year of the Anacostia is to bring people to the river. Therefore, we feel it is our responsibility to do our part to contribute to a safe and enjoyable experience for current and future visitors to the Anacostia.

It has been brought to our attention by leaders of the large and active Anacostia boating community that the active construction of the Frederick Douglas Bridge is endangering the safety of river users. As you may know, all scales of watercraft operate in this very visible section of the Anacostia. Contrary to the commitment of the project planners to keep open 2 navigation channels for the duration of construction, the current course of construction will reduce passage to one channel for a period of 4 years. We received notice **today** that the west channel, currently one of 2 open channels, will be closed tomorrow for a period of 4 years. Particularly as we approach the July 4th holiday, one of the heaviest periods of use of this section of the river, we fear for the safety of boaters and other watercraft which will be on the water in this vicinity, many of whom are likely unaware of this active construction. To rely on one span for 2 way traffic which includes vessels from kayaks to cruisers and everything in between represents an unacceptable safety risk and hazard. We asked that this condition be addressed immediately.

As efforts to extend recreational opportunities on the Anacostia move forward it is essential that planners work with the boating community to maintain safety and enjoyment of this important river. Methods being used to construct the new Frederick Douglas Memorial Bridge will compromise marine navigation and water-based recreation now and for the next 4 years. We urge DDOT to involve the river community in developing a maintenance of traffic plan that ensures safe navigation in a manner contemplated by the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Kindly add the Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee to the list of stakeholder groups. If current river use is to continue and future opportunities are to be added, it is essential that the boating community be included in the planning process of transportation projects that will have short or long-term impacts on the river - such as changes in water

traffic patterns, waterway closures, and new obstacles in the river. To consider projects from the land only will undermine the safe enjoyment of this important resource. We are concerned trestle construction is counter to the District's compliance with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. These provisions are intended to ensure that the safety of recreational uses is not unnecessarily compromised and, most importantly, harms to recreational uses are minimized. We request that methods of construction be revisited and adjusted so as to comply with guideline laid out in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process and would appreciate it if you would share this correspondence with all authorities having jurisdiction over this construction project.

We support the actions of District agencies to provide critical improvements to the city's transportation infrastructure and we strongly support the replacement of this bridge. We expect these projects to be conducted in such a way as to protect public safety. Methods of construction for this project clearly do not adequately address public safety concerns. Further, the decision to alter construction plans were done without the knowledge or participation of the impacted users who had participated in good faith during early stages of planning.

We urge you to stop trestle construction until informed decisions can be made that account for the diverse uses of our waterways and will maintain safe operations throughout construction. DDOT gave substantial consideration to recreational use during construction of the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridges, and we are confident this level of coordination can be successful again. We look forward to hearing from you and are hopeful that this project will proceed in a manner which considers the safety of all members of the public.

Very sincerely,



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cc: Chris VanHollen, US Senate, State of Maryland  
Julia Koster, National Capital Planning Commission  
Dan Bierly, US Army Corps of Engineers  
Adam Ortiz, Chair AWRP Steering Committee  
Tommy Wells, Director of DDoEE  
Fred Shaffer, MNCPPC - Planning  
Robert Walker, MNCPPC - Bladensburg Waterfront Park  
Katie Harris, WABA, Capital Trails Coalition  
Gretchen Mikeska, DDoEE  
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Sam Zimbabwe, District Department of Transportation  
Jim Foster, Anacostia Watershed Society  
Doug Siglin, Anacostia Waterfront Trust  
Gabe Horchler, AWCAC

Christopher Lawson, FHA  
Martin Bridges, US Coast Guard  
Mayor Muriel Bowser  
Councilmember Charles Allen  
US Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Patricia Jackman, Capital Trails Coalition  
Jennifer Ney, Anacostia Community Boathouse  
Cindy Cole, Washington Rowing School  
Loreen Arnold, Washington Rowing School  
Trey Sherard, Vicechair, AWCAC  
James Graham, Vicechair, AWCAC  
Dan Smith, AWCAC  
Bill Matuszeski, AWCAC  
Carlie Williams, Water Johnson Crew