



# United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
George Washington Memorial Parkway  
700 George Washington Memorial Parkway  
McLean, VA 22101

IN REPLY REFER TO:

## 1.A.1 (GWMP)

Ms. Sarah M. Clarke  
Environmental Program Planner  
Commonwealth of Virginia  
Department of Transportation  
1401 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219-2000

Dear Ms. Clarke:

We are writing in reference to your March 17, 2020, Determination of Effect letter to the Virginia of Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) regarding the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) proposed project to improve the I-495 corridor between the Dulles Toll Road and the George Washington Memorial Parkway interchange in the vicinity of the American Legion Bridge (I-495 NEXT). In this letter VDOT requested VDHR's review and concurrence to a No Adverse Effect determination for impacts on historic properties that fall within the project's revised Area of Potential Effect (APE) related to the I-495 NEXT project in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. The National Park Service (NPS) serves as a consulting party for this project due to the effects of the project on the George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) and was copied on this letter.

The NPS has reviewed the project based on the information that was provided during a February 6, 2020, meeting and represented in a Visualizations Booklet with updated content provided on February 25, 2020. The NPS concurs with VDOT's No Adverse Effect determination for the I-495 NEXT project provided that VDOT selects design option 1 (no retaining wall on NPS property), further minimizes the loss of forest, and mitigates the loss of forest. While option 1 provides the best solution to eliminating the introduction of new infrastructure design elements on NPS lands, option 1 has the greatest effect on the mature forest canopy, understory, and herbaceous plant community. The forest is a character defining feature for the GWMP, and the loss may never fully recover due to present day influences of invasive vegetation, difficulty in adapting to climate change, and lack of ecosystem resiliency even after replanting efforts. To minimize the loss of forest at this entrance to the GWMP, NPS would like VDOT to the extent possible reduce forest loss on their property as well as consider a different treatment of the walls on VDOT property. This would further diminish the effects of the project within this area, develop a harmonious transition of wall/barrier types complementary to the GWMP, and provide an appropriate entry experience for drivers approaching the Parkway from the Beltway.

The NPS will provide further comment on the project through our review of the Environmental Assessment (EA) which is currently out for public review. We are very interested in what VDOT hears from the public regarding the alternatives that are include in the EA. Since the current COVID-19 pandemic has extended VDOT's process we look forward to hearing VDOT's plan to engage the public and further refine alternatives.

We look forward to working with you and the rest of the VDOT team in refining the design to minimize and mitigate the impacts to the Parkway's historic landscape as this project progresses. If you have any questions or need additional information, you can contact either Matthew Virta, Cultural Resources

Program Manager via email at [matthew\\_virta@nps.gov](mailto:matthew_virta@nps.gov) or phone at 202-439-7323 or Maureen Joseph, Chief of Resource Management, via email at [maureen\\_joseph@nps.gov](mailto:maureen_joseph@nps.gov) or phone 202-734-0932.

Sincerely,

Charles Cuvelier  
Superintendent

cc:

VDOT – W. Moore

VDOT – A. Lerner

MD-SHA – S. Archer

VA-DHR – M. Holma

NPS-NCA - T. Stidham

NPS-GWMP – M. Joseph