Dear Governor Hogan:

“The one characteristic more essential than any other is foresight.”
President Theodore Roosevelt, June 10, 1907

Thank you for your early support for the construction of a new bridge that includes a barrier-separated path for hikers and cyclists over the Potomac River connecting Charles County with Virginia. The obsolete Governor Harry W. Nice Bridge, constructed in 1940, was designed at a time when cyclists and hikers were in no planner’s mind. The proposed Nice-Middleton Bridge will be with us for another 100 years; so, it is imperative that it be done right.

At the recent C&O Canal National Historic Park dedication in Williamsport you noted that it was a “transformative project that comes along once in a generation.” Those words were well said; but if you substitute “century” for “generation” you will capture the significance of the new bridge across the Potomac River.

The Maryland Transportation Authority’s current plan to eliminate a barrier-separated bike and pedestrian component to the planned Nice-Middleton Bridge is a major step backwards, and one that will be with us for a century or more.

The Nice-Middleton Bridge is the gateway for the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail and popular cycling and pedestrian venues in both Maryland and Virginia. The Hatem Bridge over the Susquehanna River suggested by the Maryland Transportation Authority as an example to use is, in fact, just the opposite. It’s an 80-year old bridge with no shoulders for the safety of cyclists and hikers. It is one of the worst crossings on the routes of both the September 11th National Memorial Trail and the East Coast Greenway. Bridge crossings are the Achilles heel of cyclists world-wide. Without barrier separation, this bridge will be a safety hazard for all. Its flaw will be a design of regrets.

At a recent Wash COG Transportation Planning Board meeting MdTA stated that the traffic counts on the Nice Bridge were 18,000 vehicles a day. However, Virginia DOT estimates that over 26,000 vehicles crossed the Nice Bridge in 2017, predicting those numbers to grow to over 50,000 by 2040. What will they be in 30-50-75 years from now? Is a shared lane used by competing cars, trucks, hikers and cyclists really a safe and viable solution, or is it asking for a disaster?

Please Governor Hogan, the new bridge over the Potomac River will be used for a century or more. It will become a major Potomac River crossing for the East Coast in the future. It’s your legacy! The “foresight” of our public officials urged by Teddy Roosevelt is as important today as it was in 1907. We urge you to hold firm on the need for a barrier-separated path over the Nice-Middleton Bridge, just as was built into the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and what is now being considered by Maryland for a new American Legion Bridge crossing.

Sincerely,

David G. Brickley, President, Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail Assoc., brickleylaw@comcast.net
Donaro Gardner, President, Oxon Hill Bicycle & Trail Club, DonaroGardner@aol.com
David Jones, President, Friends of Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail, Davej1s@gmail.com
Champe Burnley, President, Virginia Bicycling Federation, champe_burnley@vabike.org

Endorsed by:
Bike Maryland
Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County
League of American Bicyclists
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Oxon Hill Bicycle & Trail Club
Virginia Trail Alliance
Friends of the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail
Virginia Conservation Network
Active Prince William
Richmond Area Bicycling Association
Potomac Heritage Trail Association
Maryland Bike Ped Advisory Committee
East Coast Greenway
Adventure Cycling Association
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Walter Roscello, Oxon Hill
Richard Reis
Fredericksburg Cyclists
Alexandria Bike Ped Advisory Committee
Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling