Delegated Action of the Executive Director

PROJECT
Arland D. Williams Jr. Memorial Bridge Span Replacement
I-395 Northbound
Washington, DC

SUBMITTED BY
District of Columbia Department of Transportation

NCPC FILE NUMBER
8634

NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER
75.00.01(48.00)46294

ACTION TAKEN
Approve final site development plans

REVIEW AUTHORITY
Approval
Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

Advisory
District Projects Outside the Central Area / Federal Projects in the Environs 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT), in coordination with the National Park Service (NPS), has submitted final site development plans to replace one span of the Arland D. Williams Jr. Memorial Bridge, which carries Interstate-395 northbound traffic into Washington, DC from Arlington, Virginia. The new span will have a similar appearance to the existing bascule span, which is no longer needed and severely corroded. In addition, DDOT will replace the deteriorated pier protection system which prevents boat collisions with the adjacent bridge piers; one overhead highway sign structure (in-kind); new side safety railings/barriers (in-kind); several new highway luminaries (in-kind); and install new water navigation lights on the bridge and pier protection structures. The project will also require the temporary use of approximately 1.9-acres of NPS property on the west-side of the Potomac River along the George Washington Memorial Parkway as a staging area and river access for the project for a period of two years.

Per the National Capital Planning Act, NCPC has advisory authority for the new span, railings, navigational lights, highway signs, and luminaires as a District project outside the Central Area. The Commission also has advisory authority for the new landscaping in the staging area as federal property (NPS) outside of the District of Columbia. However, the new pier protection system will require disturbance to the Potomac River bottom, which is federal property under the jurisdiction of NPS within the District of Columbia; therefore, the Commission has approval authority for that portion of the project.

NCPC approved preliminary site development plans for the project in March 2025, with a request that "the applicant continue to work with the National Park Service regarding the proposed tree removal, and provided, as part of the final project submission, landscape plans that reflect the proposed tree replacement per NCPC's tree replacement policy (FE.G.2)." Since that time, the applicant developed several tree replacement approaches and selected a final plan to restore the impacted trees in the temporary staging area. DDOT will remove eight trees total and plant 11 new

trees (Silver Maple, American Elm, Japanese Pagoda, Willow Oak) in the area as mitigation, which complies with NCPC's tree replacement policy. In addition, DDOT will replant approximately 50-feet of shoreline vegetation with native riparian species to restore the existing shoreline buffer that will be removed to allow river access for the project. The future plantings will improve the aesthetics and function of the shoreline since the existing vegetation largely consists of invasive plants and "volunteer" trees, some of which, are in poor health. The submission notes the new plantings will allow views of the Potomac River from the Mount Vernon Trail, unlike today, and improve the local habitat for pollinators.

Current project plans show a number of changes from the previous preliminary submission that include preserving the bridge operator's building; eliminating the staging area in East Potomac Park; and a revised design for the bridge pier protection system design. The previous submission noted the need for DDOT to deconstruct and reconstruct the operator's building to enable the new span installation; however, this is no longer necessary based changes to the installation process. In addition, the previous preliminary pier protection design consisted of vertical water boards in a chorded layout, and the current plan shows horizontal water boards in an elliptical layout to act as rub rails in the event of vessel contact. The new fiberglass reinforced plastic boards will be a "weathered wood" color based on DDOT's preference. Staff supports these changes as they result in fewer impacts to the existing conditions, and the revised pier protection design is not substantially different than the preliminary approval.

The Commission does not have an independent review responsibility under National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the new span, railings, navigational lights, highway signs, luminaires, and the portion of NPS land along the George Washington Parkway due to its advisory authority for these portions of the project. For the new pier protection system, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will use a categorical exclusion related to rehabilitation projects, and NCPC staff determined that categorical exclusion #2 applies to the new pier protection system installation as "rehabilitation and minor improvement of buildings, structures, and sites involving no change in the existing character, predominant use, or extent of the building, structure, or site/landscape." Staff determined that no extraordinary circumstances existed prior to applying the categorical exclusion. NPS also plans to apply a categorical exclusion for the action in conjunction with its "bed of the river" permit.

Similarly, due to NCPC's advisory authority over the new span, railings, navigational lights, highway signs, luminaires and George Washington Parkway land, the Commission does not have an independent review responsibility under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. However, as previously described, the Commission does have an independent review authority related to the new pier protection system installation, and for that, NCPC has designated NPS as the lead federal agency for that action. FHWA, in coordination with DDOT, has concluded that the indirect and direct impacts from this project do not constitute an adverse effect as defined by 36 CFR 800.5(a)(2), and the DC SHPO has determined this undertaking will have "no adverse effect" on historic properties.

Staff finds this rehabilitation project is generally consistent with the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, and in particular, those policies related to

Transportation and Visitors & Commemoration. The project is necessary to preserve and protect a vital transportation connection between the District of Columbia and Virginia.



Figure 1: Rendered new fixed bridge span and pier protection system in-place

The Coordinating Committee met on October 14, 2026 and forwarded the proposed final site development plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) noted coordination is ongoing. Participating agencies included the National Park Service, the U.S. General Services Administration, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, the District Department of Transportation, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office, the DOEE, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

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Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on March 6, 2025 and per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1), I approve the final site development plans for the Arland D. Williams Jr. Memorial Bridge span replacement and related work over the Potomac River in the District of Columbia.

Diane Sullivan
Acting Executive Director

Date