



WASHINGTON CROSSING

BRIDGE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

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Website Established for Washington Crossing Bridge Alternatives Analysis

Data-Gathering Process Guided by National Environmental Policy Act Now Underway

WASHINGTON CROSSING – A website has been established for an anticipated 30-month-long fact-gathering process that will help the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission determine whether it should replace its narrow 119-year-old weight-restricted operationally challenged Washington Crossing Toll-Supported Bridge.

The new website is for an elaborate review process that the Commission has dubbed the Washington Crossing Bridge Alternatives Analysis. The undertaking began during the summer and is guided by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The website currently has limited content, but that situation will change over the next year or so as data-gathering, updates, and other materials become available. The new website's address is: www.washingtoncrossingbridge.com.

Visitors to the initial website can see the following content:

- An overview of the alternatives analysis process
- A list of frequently asked questions about the NEPA process
- A link to the federal Council on Environmental Quality's *Citizens Guide to NEPA*
- The current schedule of the analysis process's major activities and milestones
- A contact page where visitors can fill out a form to submit questions and comments online
- Background information on the star used in the alternative analysis's logo

The alternatives analysis is being undertaken to identify and assess various feasible alternatives for the Washington Crossing Bridge location. The process will include topographic surveys, environmental studies, archaeological and cultural resource investigations, and other endeavors aimed at assessing the location and developing a list of alternatives. At a minimum, possible alternatives are expected to include doing nothing at all, replacing the current bridge, rehabilitating the current bridge, and/or repurposing the current bridge.

At key points throughout the process, various outreach events are expected to present information and obtain comments from motorists, pedestrians, residents, businesses, and other interested parties.

The primary objective of the analysis process is to identify a “preferred alternative” that would improve mobility and provide a safe and reliable river crossing at the Washington Crossing Bridge location. The process is currently projected to yield a preferred alternative in spring 2027.

The process currently is in its information-gathering stage. HDR, Inc., the international engineering consulting firm the Commission hired to conduct the analysis process, has worked with various subconsultants in recent months on preliminary fact-finding endeavors like reviewing existing documentation, making detailed inspections of the current bridge, topographical research, and collecting vehicular traffic counts.

Contrary to some erroneous published accounts, the alternatives analysis does not authorize or pre-determine construction of a new bridge at Washington Crossing. However, the fact-based process could ultimately conclude that a complete bridge replacement is the preferred alternative to addressing the aging substandard bridge that remains in service today. If a proposed replacement were to result in a favorable decision document from an applicable federal lead agency, then – and only then – could the Commission pursue possible design and construction of a prospective new bridge.

Of the 20 river crossings in the Commission’s bistate (New Jersey and Pennsylvania) jurisdiction, the Washington Crossing Bridge easily receives the most customer complaints. It is the Commission’s narrowest vehicular bridge with a 15-foot-wide roadway divided into two 7.5-foot travel lanes (one in each direction.) Among motorists complaints are broken mirrors and sideswipes with on-coming vehicles or the bridge structure itself.

The bridge carried an average of 7,200 vehicles a day in 2023. Its highest usage years were 2013 and 2016 when the annual average daily vehicle crossing counts were 7,500.

The bridge has a three-ton weight restriction, which has been in effect since 1995. The restriction is enforced by bridge monitors stationed 24/7 at a shelter adjacent to the bridge’s New Jersey approach. Bridge monitors also are positioned periodically in vehicles along the structure’s Pennsylvania approach.

In 2023, over 2,000 vehicles were turned away to protect the bridge from potential damage that could compromise its structural integrity and operation.