

Introduction

The Susquehanna River Rail Bridge is a two-track bridge located in the City of Havre de Grace in Harford County, Maryland and the Town of Perryville in Cecil County, Maryland. The 108-year-old bridge is owned by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak). It is used by Amtrak, Maryland's MARC Commuter Rail and Norfolk Southern Railway to carry passenger and freight trains across the Susquehanna River.



The U.S. Secretary of Transportation selected the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) for an award of \$22 million through a cooperative agreement between the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and MDOT for the preliminary engineering and National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) phases of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project. FRA, MDOT, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and Amtrak are working together to study various alternatives to improve this rail crossing along the heavily traveled Northeast Corridor (NEC).

Bridge History

The existing Susquehanna River Rail Bridge was constructed in 1906 by the Pennsylvania Railroad. The bridge is eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The multi-span truss bridge was built to replace an original 1860s parallel structure to the south. The piers of the original 1860s bridge can still be seen above the water line in the Susquehanna River. Electrified rail service on the 4,154-foot-long bridge began in the 1930s when an overhead catenary system was installed on the bridge.

The double-tracked bridge was conveyed by Congress to Amtrak in 1976 along with other NEC infrastructure elements. Major rehabilitations and repairs occurred during the 1960s, 1985, 1991, and 1998. These efforts included: corroded steel bridge floor members replacement; steel plates additions to stiffen loose connections; crack repairs; timber deck replacement; and maintaining and enhancing safety access ways and railings. The Susquehanna River Rail Bridge was last inspected in 2013. The results of the inspection indicated the bridge is structurally safe, though the existing bridge is nearing the end of its useful life.

Purpose and Need

The existing Susquehanna River Rail Bridge has an obsolete design and aging infrastructure, creates speed and rail capacity constraints, is operationally inflexible, poses maintenance difficulties, and creates conflicts with marine traffic. The primary purpose of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project is to provide continued rail connectivity along the Northeast Corridor. The goals of the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge Project include:

- Improve rail service reliability and safety;
- Improve operational flexibility and accommodate reduced trip times;
- Optimize existing and planned infrastructure and accommodate future freight, commuter, intercity, and high-speed rail operations; and
- Maintain adequate navigation and improve safety along the Susquehanna River.

Project Description

The existing two-track bridge, which is a critical link along Amtrak's NEC, will eventually need to be rehabilitated or replaced with a new structure to maintain future rail services across the Susquehanna River. The project is proposed to provide future improvements to capacity, trip time, and safety for commuter, freight, and intercity passenger rail services on the NEC consistent with State and Amtrak plans. The proposed project could also improve the navigation channel for marine users. The project team will be developing and evaluating various conceptual alternatives based on their ability to meet the area's rail transportation needs and minimize environmental impacts. Alternative studies will include new and/or rehabilitated structures with up to a four-track total capacity crossing the river and the reconstruction of the approaches to the Susquehanna River Rail Bridge, spanning approximately 2.5 miles on either side of the bridge. In coordination with agencies and the public, the project team will study alternatives that include considerations such as:

- Rehabilitation of the existing bridge or replacement of the existing bridge;
- Building one new bridge or two new bridges;
- Track locations on the existing bridge approaches;
- Building a new movable bridge or a new high-level fixed bridge; and
- Various rail interlocking configurations.

Environmental Review

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) requires agencies to consider the potential impacts of federally-funded projects to the social and natural environment. The project also will be subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 and other applicable laws and regulations. For this project, the NEPA process will include:

- Defining the project's purpose and need;
- Coordinating with the public and federal, state, and local agencies to identify resources in the study area;
- Identifying and developing project alternatives;
- Evaluating the potential environmental effects of feasible project alternatives; and
- Preparing an Environmental Assessment to document the environmental analysis.

Public Involvement

Continuous and active public involvement is important in this project planning process and helps to identify community needs and concerns. Your input is crucial to developing improvements that complement the surrounding area and serve the public. The following are ways in which you can become involved in the planning process:

- Visit the project website: www.susrailbridge.com.
- Sign up for the mailing list: www.susrailbridge.com/contact.
- Attend Public Outreach Information Sessions throughout the planning phase.
- Review the Environmental Assessment, which will be made available for public review and comment.

Contact Us - We want to hear from you

Your comments and suggestions are important. You can provide your ideas, opinions, and questions by mail or email or by filling out the comment section of the website. We will incorporate your input into our project studies. To answer frequently asked questions, the FAQ page of the website will be updated regularly. Additionally, the Environmental Assessment will include a summary of public comments on the proposed project.

Susquehanna River Rail Bridge

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