FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

REHABILITATE BRIDGE OVER THE NORTH ENTRANCE TO RONALD REAGAN WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY

The National Park Service in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration will rehabilitate the bridge on the George Washington Memorial Parkway over the north entrance to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The major project components include replacing the bridge decking, replacing the guardrails and railings, and realignment of the Mount Vernon Trail away from the parkway by constructing a shoulder extension (effectively widening the bridge by 15 feet).

The George Washington Memorial Parkway was developed as a memorial to George Washington. The George Washington Memorial Parkway was designated as a National Park Unit in 1933. The first section, called the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, was completed in 1932 to commemorate the bicentennial of George Washington's birth. Today, the George Washington Memorial Parkway extends from the Capital Beltway (Interstate 495) on the northern end to Mount Vernon in the City of Alexandria, Virginia on the southern end. The Parkway also consists of the Clara Barton Parkway in Maryland, which includes Glen Echo Park and Clara Barton National Historic Site. The Parkway is a major transportation artery in Northern Virginia providing access to Washington, DC, Arlington County, Fairfax County, and the City of Alexandria.

The Mount Vernon Memorial Highway is the original portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway that links the southeastern end of Arlington Memorial Bridge on Columbia Island, Washington, DC, with Mount Vernon in Fairfax County, Virginia. The route roughly parallels the Potomac River. The highway was designed and landscaped to maximize scenic, aesthetics, and commemorative qualities and retains much of its intended character. The Mount Vernon Memorial Highway was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. The National Park Service first constructed portions of the Mount Vernon Trail in 1973.The trail followed a bridle path that ran adjacent to the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. The 18.5-mile trail parallels the parkway and the Potomac River and extends from Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington, to Theodore Roosevelt Island in the Potomac River near the Lincoln Memorial.

The bridge over the north entrance to the airport is historic and a contributing element to the parkway's National Register nomination. The bridge is not an original feature of the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway. The bridge was constructed in 1941 when the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway was realigned to accommodate the development of National Airport. The bridge's stone face on the abutment wingwalls still maintains stylistic elements of the original construction.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Under the Preferred Alternative (Alternative B), the National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, will rehabilitate the historic bridge over the north entrance to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The rehabilitation of the bridge includes the replacement of the bridge decking, replacement of guardrails and railings, and construction of a shoulder extension (effectively widening the bridge by 15 feet) to realign the Mount Vernon Trail. The shoulder extension and trail realignment will

allow the National Park Service to spatially and physically separate trail users from northbound traffic on the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

A stone-faced parapet barrier wall will be constructed between the trail and the highway. Other project elements include:

- Replace bridge decking (which includes the trail portion of the bridge as well as the road) with a concrete deck surface
- Relocate outside curved steel girder to maintain appearance
- Reconstruct the concrete approach slabs
- Remove and replace bridge railings and curb
- Paint bridge beam
- Remove asphalt bicycle/pedestrian path
- Connect timber guardrail to stone bridge parapet
- Construct barrier curb along bridge length
- Seal cracks and fix spalls on bridge abutment walls
- Examine northbound bridge parapet wall for safe heights and raise it if necessary
- Repair/replace pedestrian lighting under bridge
- Reset capstones on guardwall underneath bridge
- Construct temporary detour lanes on bridge shoulders and in median in order to maintain four lanes of traffic
- Replace all striping
- Construct asphalt tie-ins at each end to relocate Mount Vernon Trail

To the extent practical, the original stone facing of the bridge abutment wingwalls will be removed, reused, and reset in a similar manner to the original appearance. Matching stonework will be installed where necessary on new construction. Other architectural features will be replaced with those of a similar nature or would be in character with the parkway design requirements. Any native trees removed will be replaced with plantings of native species and the planting will be consistent with the 1932 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway Planting Plan and other subsequent approved planting plans for the area.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Environmental Assessment prepared for this project analyzed the No-Action Alternative, the Preferred Alternative (described above) and one other build alternative, Alternative C.

Under the No-Action Alternative, the National Park Service would continue management actions that would include minimum rehabilitation of the bridge to maintain the existing integrity and character of the historic structure. The National Park Service would conduct minor "spot" repairs to the bridge and road surface so the bridge remains operational and safe; however, over time, deterioration of the bridge and road surface (i.e., spalling and potholes) would become more prevalent. The National Park Service would not replace and upgrade other features on the bridge such as guardrails and bridge railings to meet American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards. Rehabilitation of the bridge exterior and its appearance such as recapping facestones and painting the bridge beams would not occur. The Mount Vernon trail would continue to be on the shoulder of the bridge and remain approximately 3 feet from the vehicular traffic on the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

Under Alternative C, the National Park Service would rehabilitate the historic bridge as described under Alternative B except a new pedestrian bridge would be constructed parallel to the parkway instead of extending the existing bridge. The major project components of Alternative C include

the replacement of the bridge decking, repair of guardrails and railings, and construction of a new trail bridge. The new trail bridge would remove trail users from the highway shoulder and separate them from northbound traffic on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The bridge would be designed and constructed consistent with the George Washington Memorial Parkway design requirements. This design would include stone-faced side walls on the bridge approaches and railings similar to that used on the other bridges. Any native trees removed for the undertaking would be replaced in kind.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is determined by applying the criteria suggested in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, which is guided by the Council on Environmental Quality. The Council on Environmental Quality provides direction that "[t]he environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in Section 101 of National Environmental Policy Act, which considers:

1. Fulfilling the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;

2. Assuring for all generations safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;

3 Attaining the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;

4. Preserving important historic, cultural and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintaining, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;

5. Achieving a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and

6. Enhancing the quality of renewable resources and approaching the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources (National Environmental Policy Act, section 101)."

The No-Action Alternative is not the environmental preferred alternative because it does not fulfill Criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 listed above. Specifically, the No-Action Alternative would not assure that the bridge is maintained for each succeeding generation in that deterioration of the bridge decking and surface would continue. Safety would be compromised over time because potholes on the road surface would become more prevalent on the bridge and would affect safe driving conditions on the parkway. Also the close proximity of the trail users to northbound traffic on the parkway would not be addressed and safety concerns would persist. The historic character of the bridge would not be preserved: rehabilitation is necessary to achieve a balance between the resource and the population that use the parkway to assure a high standard of living.

Alternative B fulfills Criteria 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. The rehabilitation of the bridge would fulfill the National Park Service's responsibilities as a responsible trustee of the environment because of the efforts to restore the bridge. Alternative B would assure a safe and aesthetically pleasing environment for future generations through safety improvements to the bridge and realignment of the trail away from the roadway. Alternative B would preserve an important historic resources by restoring and maintaining the character-defining features of the bridge. It achieves a balance between the resource (the bridge) and the population who use the parkway (motorists,

pedestrians, and bicyclists) to assure a high standard of living; and enhance the quality of the renewable resource. The primary difference between Alternative B and Alternative C is in the protection of the historic aspects of our national heritage.

Alternative C is not the environmentally preferred alternative because it does not fulfill Criterion 4. Specifically, it would not preserve the historic aspects of our national heritage because the new trail bridge would cause visual impacts to a contributing element of the cultural landscape. The new trail bridge would not be representative of the original stonework and workmanship of the parkway. Alternative C does fulfill Criteria 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6

Alternative B is the "environmentally preferred alternative" over Alternative C because Alternative B fulfills Criterion 4 by offering benefits in preservation of our national heritage; whereas, Alternative C would not fulfill Criterion 4 because of visual impacts to the historic resource and cultural landscape.

MITIGATION MEASURES

Mitigation measures or conditions are presented as part of the Preferred Alternative and have been developed to lessen the adverse effects of the Preferred Alternative. The following mitigation measures are recommended for the implementation of the Preferred Alternative:

Cultural Resources

Section 106 Compliance - The rehabilitation of the historic bridge would be conducted in a manner that is consistent with the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Structures* and *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.* To the degree practical, the existing stonework would be dismantled, reused and reset in a manner consistent with the parkway's design. Any new stonework necessary for the bridge façade would be similar in color and texture to closely match the existing stonework.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Any new stonework necessary for rehabilitation of the bridge abutment wingwalls would be similar in color and texture to closely match the existing stonework. To the extent practical, the construction equipment would be stored at the staging area to minimize visual impacts to the parkway.

Transportation, Traffic, and Safety Mitigation

Traffic Control and Management. A traffic control plan would be developed by the Federal Highway Administration and adhered to during construction by the contractor. Various work restrictions are necessary to minimize the impacts on traffic and safety. This plan would include temporary closures of one lane to the airport entrance road and on two different occasions, both lanes on the north entrance ramp would be closed between 10:00 pm and 5:00 am. Any closure of the ramp must be coordinated with the airport. Four lanes of traffic along the parkway must be maintained during all weekday hours and for weekends preceding a holiday. Two lanes may be closed during non-

holiday weekends. To maintain four lanes of traffic, temporary detours would need to be constructed by widening the southbound and northbound lanes along the shoulders behind the curb and median. The contractor would follow provisions for working near the airport such as restrictions on the use of lights for night work and maintaining the access to the airport. Lastly, the contractor would be required to keep the trails open at all times except for brief periods where overhead movement of heavy materials is necessary.

Coordination of Parkway Transportation Projects. The Federal Highway Administration, working in close coordination with the National Park Service, would consider the potential short-term, adverse, cumulative impacts on traffic when scheduling construction projects on the parkway. Specifically, the traffic control and construction for the rehabilitation of the bridge over the north entrance to the airport, the Humpback Bridge replacement, new entrance to Columbia Island Marina, and any other road improvements need to be coordinated and scheduled to minimize the potential cumulative effects on traffic congestion on the parkway.

Natural Resources

Replacement of Vegetation. The National Park Service would replace the native vegetation affected by the construction of the bridge extension (or new bridge) and realignment of the trail. The native vegetation would be replaced with the same or similar native species in a manner consistent with the parkway's standards for landscaping.

Use of Best Management Practices. Best Management Practices would be implemented by the contractor during construction. Soil compaction and disturbance would be kept to a minimal amount of space needed for construction activities. Appropriate sediment and erosion control measures (such as the installation of silt fence and inlet protection) would be implemented to reduce soil erosion and runoff from the construction area. Disturbed soils would be revegetated according to Federal Highway Administration and any additional George Washington Memorial Parkway requirements for soil stabilization and revegetation including weed control measures. The contractor would implement measures to control fugitive dust during construction.

WHY THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

As defined in 40 CFR §1508.27, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may have both beneficial and adverse aspects and which on balance may be beneficial, but that may still have significant adverse impacts which require analysis in an EIS: No major adverse or beneficial impacts were identified that would require analysis in an environmental impact statement.

The selected action (Preferred Alternative) will have no or negligible impacts on archeology; cultural landscape, water resources; air quality; soundscape management; lightscape management; Indian Trust resources; ethnographic resources; topography, geology and soils; agricultural lands, prime and unique farmlands; wildlife; rare, threatened, endangered, candidate species, and species of special concern; socio-economic environment; land use; environmental justice; community facilities and services; and infrastructure. There would be minor, long-term

beneficial impacts on historic structures/sites, aesthetics and visual resources, and visitor use and experience. A minor, short-term, adverse impacts on vegetation would occur. The selected action would have a moderate, long-term, beneficial impact on health and safety. A minor, long-term beneficial impact would occur to transportation.

Degree of effect on public health or safety: The combination of all the proposed improvements new decking, new railings and guard rails, and realignment of the trail away from the roadway, would have a moderate, long-term, beneficial impact on health and safety.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. No unique prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas were identified during the preparation of the Environmental Assessment or during the public review period. The project is located on the George Washington Memorial Parkway, which has both historic and cultural resources. The George Washington Memorial Parkway and Mount Vernon Memorial Highway are historic properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. After applying the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's criteria of adverse effect (36 CFR 800) the National Park Service proposed that implementing the selected action (Preferred Alternative) would result in a determination of no historic properties affected.

The project area has a number of historic, commemorative, and cultural resources in the immediate vicinity. Historic resources at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Complex include the Main Terminal and South Hangar Line, Abington Plantation Ruins, and Abington Research Center. There are numerous other historic resources such as Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington House, Robert E. Lee Memorial, U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, the Pentagon, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, and the National Mall Historic District. These historic resources are all outside the area of potential effect for the project because the views to and from the bridge are shielded by the airport, vegetation, and existing topography. There are known archeological resources in the vicinity of this project, but not within the area of potential effect.

Degree to which effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial: There were no highly controversial effects identified during the preparation of the Environmental Assessment or during the public review period.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks: There were no highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks identified during either preparation of the Environmental Assessment or during the public review period.

Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration: The Preferred Alternative neither establishes a National Park Service precedent for future actions with significant effects nor represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts: The proposed actions under the selected action (Preferred Alternative) are expected to have negligible and minor adverse impacts and overall, the net outcome would be a beneficial impact. When added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, the Preferred Alternative would not result in individual insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources: There are known historic resources in the vicinity of the project area as previously described. After applying the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Criteria of adverse effect (36 CFR 800.5), the National Park Service proposes that implementing the selected action will have no adverse effect on a property that may meet National Register Criteria. The effect will not alter the bridge structure and its defining features to a point that it would diminish the bridge's eligibility on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Park Service prepared an Assessment of Effect when alternative designs were formulated and solicited comments and concurrence from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (Appendix B in the environmental assessment dated January 10, 2003). In this case, a "no adverse determination" finding was submitted for review. The National Park Service did not receive a response from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources within the 30-day specified review time. Therefore, according to 36CFR800(c)(1), "Failure of the State Historic Preservation Office/Tribal Historic Preservation Office to Respond within 30 days of receipt of findings shall be considered agreement of the State Historic Preservation Office/Tribal Historic Preservation Office with the finding."

Degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat: No threatened, endangered, or candidate species of special concern are known to inhabit the project area or the general vicinity. Based on previous project correspondences for the project area, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation have stated that no known rare species or species of concern, federally-listed endangered and threatened species, wetlands or critical habitat are known to exist in the project area or are expected to be impacted by project activities.

Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local environmental protection law: The Preferred Alternative does not violate Federal, state or local environmental protection laws.

IMPAIRMENT OF PARK RESOURCES OR VALUES

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the project team determined that implementation of the preferred alternative will not constitute an impairment of the park's resources or values. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the impacts described in the Environmental Assessment, the agency and public comments received, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker in accordance with the National Park Service's *Management Policies, 2001* (December, 2000). As described in the Environmental Assessment, implementation of the Preferred Alternative will not result in major, adverse impacts to a resource or value whose conservation is (1) necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, (2) key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park; or (3) identified as a goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant National Park Service planning document.

PUBLIC INVOVLEMENT

The environmental assessment was made available for public review and comment from April 19, 2003 to May 20, 2004 (a period of 30 days). An electronic copy of the environmental assessment was placed on the park's website during the same period. The National Park Service also sent

copies of the environmental assessment to various local organizations, interested parties, and government agencies for their review and comment.

No public comments were received on the document. Agency comments were received from the Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Environmental Quality. The Department of Environmental Quality is responsible for coordinating Virginia's review of federal environmental documents and is the lead agency for the Virginia Coastal Resources Management Program responsible for coordinating Virginia's review of federal consistency determination in accordance with its coastal zone management program. The Department of Environmental Quality in a letter dated May 18, 2004 commented on the Environmental Assessment. The agency comments and the National Park Service's responses to these comments are provided in the attached errata/response to comments.

This Finding of No Significant Impact, attached to the existing public review environmental assessment, is the approved action for the National Park Service. The public review environmental assessment will not be reprinted.

CONCLUSION

The selected action (Preferred Alternative) does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement. The selected action (preferred alternative) will not have a major significant effect on the human environment. Adverse environmental impacts that could occur are negligible or minor in intensity. Mitigation measures will be incorporated into the selected action (preferred alternative) to reduce or eliminate impacts. There are no significant adverse impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, historic properties either listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law. In general, the public supports the selected action and no substantive comments were received from the public or agencies.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended:	//Signed Audrey F. Calhoun, Superintendent George Washington Memorial Parkway	7/28/2004 Date
Approved:	//Signed Terry Carlstrom, Director National Capital Region, NPS	8/4/2004 Date