



DC STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Property Name(s): Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad (historic name)

Street Address(es): n/a

Square(s) and Lot(s): 0327 0831, 0352 0821, 0386 0802, 0463S 0805, 0493 0804, 0537 0801, 0583N 0801, 0582 0856, 0641 0827, 0695 0035, 0695 0825, 1024 0808, 1048 0806, 1048 0807, 1067 0814, 1080S 0807, 1080E 0801, 1149S 0800, PAR 02100012, PAR 02100011, PAR 02030081, PAR 01680097, PAR 01680098, PAR 01760103, PAR 01760113, PAR 01770091, PAR 01830073, PAR 01840103, possibly others.

Property Owner(s): Consolidated Rail Corporation / CSX Transportation

The property/properties is/are being evaluated for potential historical significance as/for:

- An individual building or structure.
- A contributing element of a historic district:
- A possible expansion of a historic district: *Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad Corridor*
- A previously unevaluated historic district to be known as:
- An archaeological resource with site number(s):
- An object (e.g. statue, stone marker etc.):
- A new multiple property/thematic study regarding:
- Association with a multiple property/thematic study:
- Other:

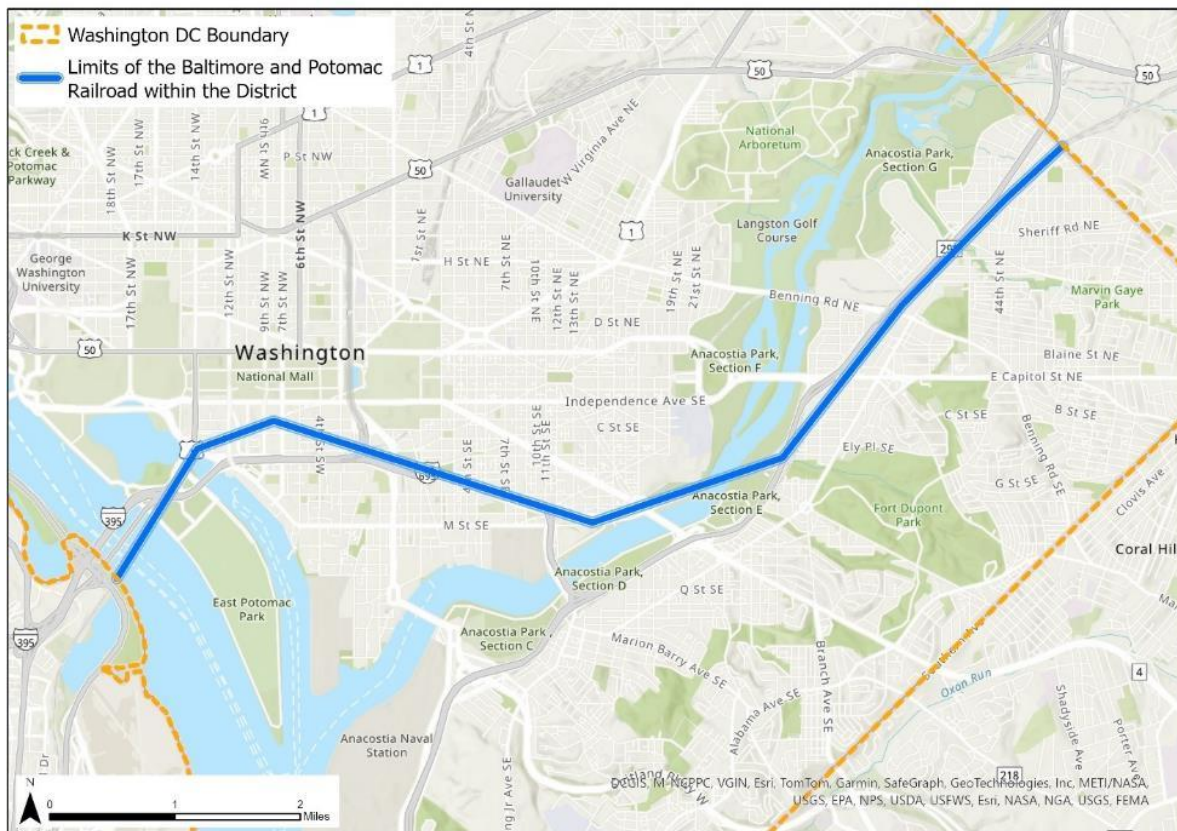


Figure 1. Map of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Corridor within the District of Columbia.

Physical Description

Rail Corridor

The historic Baltimore & Potomac Railroad (B&P Railroad) corridor (the corridor) is located within the current railroad right-of-way owned by CSX Transportation (CSX) through the District of Columbia (the District) and continuing northeast into Maryland and southwest into Virginia. The corridor crosses through the Northeast, Southeast, and Southwest quadrants of the District. The area studied for this Determination of Eligibility consists of the entire corridor within the boundaries of the District, which is approximately 7.5 miles in length. Starting in the Northeast Quadrant at the Maryland state line at Eastern Avenue NE, the corridor travels southwest parallel to the Kenilworth and Anacostia Freeways into the Southeast Quadrant and crosses the Anacostia River over the Anacostia River Railroad Bridge. From the bridge, the railroad corridor briefly runs parallel to the river before turning northwest and entering the Virginia Avenue Railroad Tunnel near 12th Street SE. The railroad exits the tunnel at 2nd Street SE and travels in a northwesterly direction into the Southwest Quadrant and follows a curve to the southwest between 7th Street SW and the 9th Street Expressway. The corridor then follows a northeast-southwest alignment, traveling under the Maryland Avenue SW overbuild and crossing over Maine Avenue SW. The corridor then crosses and forms the boundary between the National Park Service-administered East and West Potomac Parks before crossing the Potomac River via Long Bridge to the Virginia state line on the opposite shore. See Figure 1 above for a map of the railroad corridor.

Along much of its route through the Northeast and Southeast quadrants, and particularly on the southeast side of the Anacostia River, the railroad corridor is at grade; however, bridges are present where the railroad crosses streets or waterways. Bridges carry the railroad tracks over Eastern Avenue NE, Nannie Helen Burroughs Ave NE, East Capitol Street NE, Watts Branch, and the Anacostia River. These bridges are described in more detail in the section, “Northeast and Southeast Quadrants” below and are shown on Figure 2. The railroad runs underground between 12th Street SE and 2nd Street SE.

In the Southwest quadrant, the railroad corridor is elevated above the surrounding streets on a retaining wall composed of rusticated stone blocks (Photos 1 and 2). Bridges (also referred to as railroad overpasses) are present where the railroad crosses streets. Within the Southwest quadrant, the railroad crosses over 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, and 9th Streets SW. These bridges are described in more detail in the section, “Southwest Quadrant” below.

The portion of the corridor between Maine Avenue SW and the Virginia state line is known as the Long Bridge corridor, named for the historic Long Bridge across the Potomac River that comprises much of this section. This portion of the corridor crosses over Maine Avenue SW, the Washington Channel, and Ohio Drive SW before crossing the Potomac River via Long Bridge. The railroad corridor serves as the boundary between East Potomac Park and West Potomac Park on the northeast shore of the Potomac River. The Long Bridge corridor is described in more detail in the section, “The Long Bridge Corridor” below.

DC State Historic Preservation Office
 Determination of Eligibility Form for the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Corridor

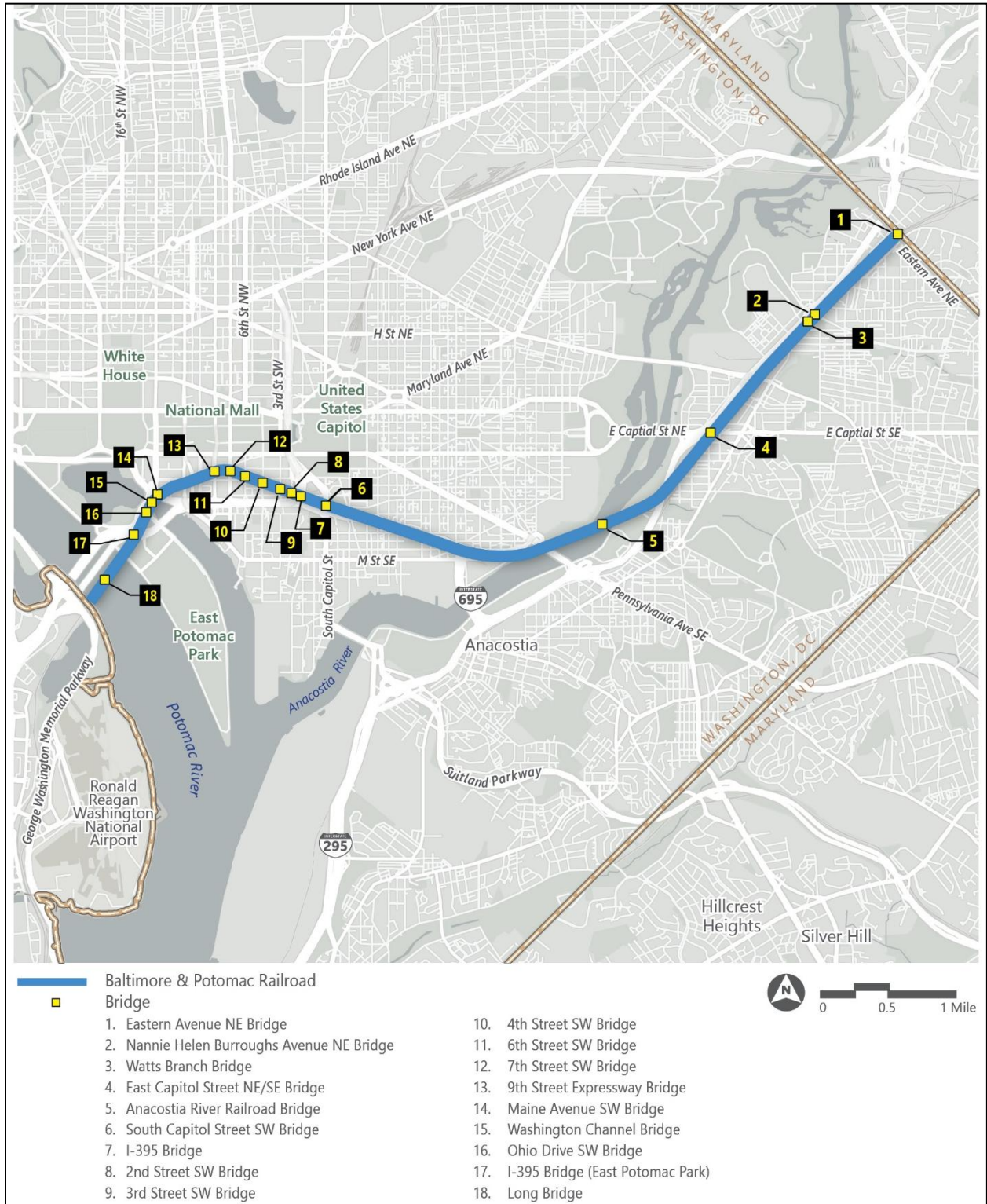


Figure 2. Map showing the existing bridges along the B&P Railroad corridor within the Washington, DC boundary.



Photo 1. Rusticated stone retaining wall (left) and original steel bridge crossing over 6th Street SW (right), facing northwest (VHB 2024).



Photo 2: The 6th Street Bridge, a catenary pole is visible at center right, facing northeast (VHB 2024).

Catenary poles (see Photo 3) were installed along the B&P Railroad between 1928 and 1935 as part of the electrification of the railroad. The catenary poles are paired metal poles that stand on opposite sides of the railroad corridor and are connected by a third horizontal pole with diagonal bracing. The poles were used to connect electrical wiring (referred to as catenary wires) strung

above the moving trains. The catenary wires were removed during the 1990s, but the support frames and poles are still present along the right-of-way in some areas.

This former B&P Railroad corridor currently serves CSX freight trains, Amtrak intercity passenger trains, and Virginia Railway Express commuter rail trains.



Photo 3: Catenary poles are visible crossing above the railroad tracks along Virginia Avenue SW near the 7th Street SW Bridge, facing northwest (VHB 2024).

Northeast and Southeast Quadrants

The following resources associated with the railroad are located along the corridor within the Northeast and Southeast quadrants of the District. The descriptions generally follow the resources from northeast to southwest along the railroad corridor. Figure 2 above shows the location of the resources within the District.

The B&P Railroad runs parallel to two other railroad corridors on the east side of the Anacostia River that are considered separate corridors and are not part of the B&P Railroad. This includes portions of the Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad Alexandria Branch and the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail (Figure 3). The B&O Railroad Alexandria Branch was constructed in 1874 as part of the B&O Railroad's unsuccessful attempt to secure a dominant railroad presence in the nation's capital. The B&O Railroad Alexandria Branch was determined to be not eligible for listing in the National Register in 2015.¹ The Metrorail Orange Line was opened in 1978 and runs parallel to the B&P Railroad corridor from roughly Benning Road NE to the Maryland state line. The Metrorail line does not converge with the B&P Railroad and maintains separate tracks and alignment through the District. Therefore, the B&O Railroad Alexandria Branch and the Metrorail Orange Line are not considered to be part of the B&P Railroad corridor for this documentation.

¹ AECOM, "Baltimore & Ohio, Alexandria Branch Railroad," *DC State Historic Preservation Office DOE Form* (2015): 6.

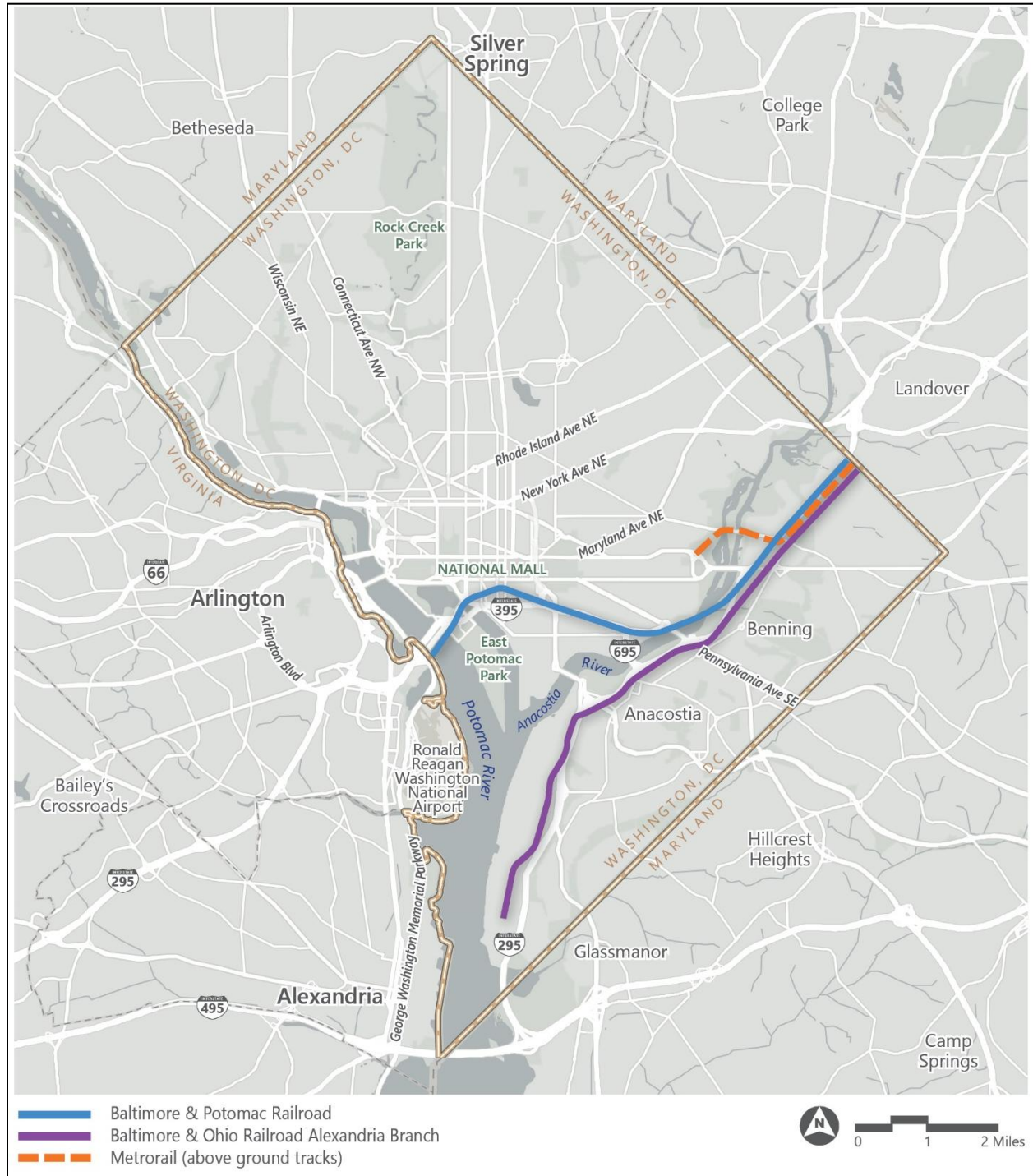


Figure 3. Map showing alignments of other railroad corridors with above-ground tracks running adjacent to the B&P Railroad corridor within the Washington, DC boundary (rail lines not to scale).

Eastern Avenue NE Bridge (c. 1915; contributing)

The Eastern Avenue NE Bridge (see Figure 2 and Photo 4) carries the B&P railroad tracks over Eastern Avenue NE, which is one of three boundary streets between the District and Maryland. The bridge was built circa 1915. Based on its design, the Eastern Avenue NE Bridge appears to be contemporaneous to the construction of Eastern Avenue NE beneath the B&P Railroad. The

bridge is a triple track, three span, reinforced concrete bridge with a crushed stone ballast track bed. The bridge is approximately 70 feet long and 40 feet wide. Its structure is composed of a reinforced concrete slab that rests on a pair of concrete abutments buttressed by a pair of arched concrete abutments that shelter sidewalks on either side of Eastern Avenue NE. The bridge has approximately three-foot-tall concrete railings with decorative panels and stout posts. Two additional concrete railroad bridges cross over Eastern Avenue NE to the southeast that carry the former B&O Railroad Alexandria Branch and the Metrorail Orange Line. Deterioration of the concrete is evident throughout the bridge, particularly the underside of the slab where the outer layers of concrete have fallen away to expose the steel rebar. Additionally, discoloration of the concrete due to rainwater and salt efflorescence is evident throughout the bridge structure and abutments.



Photo 4: The circa 1915 concrete bridge carrying the railroad over Eastern Avenue NE, facing southeast (VHB 2024).

Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue NE Bridge (c. 1903; contributing)

The Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue NE Bridge (see Figure 2 and Photo 5) conveys the B&P Railroad over Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue NE between Minnesota Avenue NE and Kenilworth Avenue NE. It is a triple track, two span, steel deck plate girder bridge with a crushed stone ballast track bed. The bridge is approximately 70 feet long and 40 feet wide. Its structure is composed of riveted steel girders that rest on rusticated stone abutments and are supported by a rusticated stone pier that supports the bridge between spans. Surface rusting of the steel members is widespread throughout the superstructure and the stone abutments have some areas of biological growth and discoloration where water drains from under the bridge. Two additional railroad bridges for the B&O Railroad Alexandria Branch and Metrorail, supported by rusticated stone abutments and piers are located just southeast of the bridge.



Photo 5: The Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue NE Railroad Bridge with a train passing over, facing northwest (VHB 2024).

Watts Branch Bridge

The Watts Branch Bridge (see Figure 2) carries the railroad tracks over Watts Branch, a tributary stream of the Anacostia River. Historic maps show that the Watts Branch has always been on the B&P Railroad's alignment and was bridged circa 1870 to permit the railroad's passage through Northeast DC. The bridge was not accessible or visible from the public ROW during fieldwork, and research could not determine whether materials of the original bridge remain or if it has been replaced.

East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge (c. 1955; non-contributing)

The East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge over the Anacostia River is a concrete bridge that was built circa 1955 as part of the construction of East Capitol Street NE/SE (see Figure 2 and Photo 6). The East Capitol Street SE approach to the bridge was built beneath the B&P Railroad corridor. East Capitol Street NE/SE serves as the boundary between the Northeast and Southeast Quadrants of the District. The railroad bridge over East Capitol Street SE is a two span, six track, reinforced concrete bridge with a crushed stone ballast track bed that rests on steel I-beams. A single concrete pier supports the center of the bridge and serves to divide the flow of vehicle traffic below into eastbound and westbound lanes. The bridge is approximately 120 feet long and 300 feet wide. Its structure is composed of a reinforced concrete slab supported by steel I-beams and concrete. The slab and I-beams rest on concrete abutments that serve as retaining walls for East Capitol Street NE/SE as it descends below grade. Beneath the bridge, the concrete walls of the pier and retaining wall are faced with square tiles. Discoloration of the concrete due to rainwater and salt efflorescence is evident throughout the bridge structure and abutments. Additionally, the bridge's steel beams show evidence of rust.



Photo 6: The eastern side of the East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge, facing northeast (VHB 2024).

Benning Rail Yard (c. 1870s; non-contributing)

The Benning Rail Yard is located near the eastern shore of the Anacostia River, just to the east of the Anacostia River Railroad Bridge. Today, the yard is owned and operated by CSXT and functions as an active railroad switching yard. Trackage within the yard varies with a maximum of seven tracks, one of which diverts from the rest to the southeast. Several contemporary buildings, equipment storage areas, access roads, and parking areas comprise the area to support rail operations (see Figure 2 and Photo 7).



Photo 7: Benning Rail Yard as viewed from the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail pedestrian bridge, facing northeast (VHB 2024).

Anacostia River Railroad Bridge (1872 Rebuilt 1972 and c. 2010; contributing)

The Anacostia River Railroad Bridge (see Figure 2 and Photo 8) is a double track through-girder bridge that carries railroad traffic over the Anacostia River. It runs in a northeast to southwest alignment and is northwest of the John Philip Sousa Bridge. Built-up embankments continue the railroad tracks on either end of the bridge. The Anacostia River Railroad Bridge is approximately 930 feet in length and 30 feet wide. The bridge is broken up into 26 spans and supported by reinforced concrete piers that are set roughly equidistant from each other across the width of the Anacostia River. Near the northeast end of the bridge there is a lift span that permits the passage of boat traffic beneath the bridge. The bridge deck consists of steel deck plate girders supporting two rail tracks with a crushed stone ballast track bed. Metal posts and cable run the length of the bridge, rising several feet above the deck. Steel girder beams and cross girders comprise the superstructure under the deck. The bridge was rebuilt in 1972 and most recently circa 2010.



Photo 8: The Anacostia River Railroad Bridge as viewed from Anacostia Park, facing northwest (VHB 2024).

Virginia Avenue Railroad Tunnel (1872, 1904, 2018; noncontributing)

The original Virginia Avenue Railroad Tunnel (see Figure 2) was built in two phases between 1872 and 1904 by the B&P Railroad to convey the railroad through Southeast DC. The tunnel is approximately 4,000 feet long and located beneath eastbound Virginia Avenue SE from 12th Street SE to 2nd Street SE. To construct the tunnel, workers used a cut and cover technique, digging down 30 feet below grade and building the support structure for the tunnel before covering it. Stone retaining walls were used to support the structure. The first phase of tunnel construction in 1872 included construction of the tunnel between 12th Street SE to a location between 7th and 8th Streets SE. The second phase in 1904 extended the location of the tunnel's west portal by an additional half-mile to 2nd Street SE.

When completed in 1904, the tunnel contained two sets of tracks. However, due to modernization of train equipment throughout the 20th century, the interior horizontal clearance of approximately 28 feet forced the tunnel's conversion to a single track in the tunnel. Between 2015 and 2018 the tunnel was rebuilt due to deterioration and a desire by CSXT to allow double stacked railcars to pass through the tunnel on two tracks. Today, the eastern portal of the tunnel has two separate openings, one for each track; however, the western portal has a single, double

tracked opening (see Photo 9). As a result of this rebuild, original segmental arched rusticated bluestone portals were replaced with concrete portals and the original stone retaining walls were reinforced with concrete. According to the Assessment of Effects report for the Virginia Avenue Tunnel Reconstruction Project, the original tunnel was eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion A for providing important railroad access to Washington, DC, and also under Criterion C for its demonstrated engineering prowess. The rebuild resulted in an adverse effect on the historic tunnel due to diminished integrity of location, design, setting, workmanship, feeling, and association.²



Photo 9: Western portal of the Virginia Avenue Railroad Tunnel as viewed from H Street SE, facing northeast (VHB 2024).

Southwest Quadrant

The following bridges and other major resources associated with the railroad are located along the corridor through the Southwest Quadrant of the District.

Rusticated Stone Retaining Wall (c. 1903; contributing)

The railroad corridor is elevated above road grade on a rusticated stone retaining wall (see Figure 2 and Photo 10) that runs parallel to Virginia Avenue SE/SW from roughly 2nd Street SE (near the western extent of the Virginia Avenue Tunnel) to just west of 7th Street SW. The height of the wall varies based on grade but is generally 15 to 20 feet high above street level. Metal railings run the length of the stone wall on the side of the tracks. The stone retaining wall is contemporaneous with several of the bridges in the Southwest quadrant and was constructed as part of the early 20th century campaign to eliminate grade crossings. Overgrown vegetation and biological growth are evident on the retaining wall throughout the corridor.

² Parsons Brinkerhoff, *Virginia Avenue Tunnel Reconstruction Project, Section 106 Assessment of Effect for Historic Properties, Draft* (July 2013): 28.



Photo 10. The rusticated stone retaining wall along the south side of Virginia Avenue SW; bridge over 4th Street SW visible in background, facing southeast (VHB 2024).

The South Capitol, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th Street SW Bridges (c. 1903-04; contributing)

The South Capitol, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th Street SW Bridges (see Figure 2 and Photos 11-18) are similar in appearance, construction, and materiality. They were collectively part of the effort to eliminate grade crossings through the Southwest quadrant in the early 20th century. The bridges are each steel frame through-girder bridges with crushed stone ballast track beds composed of riveted girders that rest on rusticated stone abutments. Bracketed steel columns set in concrete footers support the bridges between spans. The bridges are all between 50 and 65 feet long and 50 to 70 feet wide. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th Street SW Bridges each have four tracks as originally designed; the South Capitol and 6th Street SW Bridges only have three tracks today, although they were designed to carry four and five tracks, respectively.

Surface rusting of the steel members is widespread throughout the superstructures and steel columns of these bridges. Stone abutments have some areas of biological growth and discoloration where water drains from under the bridges. Additionally, several of the concrete footers supporting the steel columns are showing some deterioration. Vegetation overgrowth is evident on the sides of the superstructure and abutments of these bridges.



Photo 11. View of the South Capitol Street SW Bridge as viewed from below the I-695 overpasses, facing north (VHB 2024).



Photo 12: The 2nd Street Bridge from the intersection with E Street SW, facing north. The top of the 2nd Street SW Signal Tower is visible above the bridge at right (VHB 2024).



Photo 13: The 3rd Street Bridge crossed by a pair of catenary poles as viewed from the intersection with Virginia Avenue SW, facing southeast (VHB 2024).



Photo 14. View of a Virginia Railway Express train passing over 4th Street SW at its intersection with Virginia Avenue SW, facing southwest (VHB 2024).



Photo 15. View of the south side of the 6th Street Bridge as it crosses over 6th Street SW at its intersection with Virginia Avenue SW, facing north (VHB 2024).



Photo 16. View of the north side of the 6th Street Bridge near the entrance to the Virginia Rail Express L'Enfant Station, facing southwest (VHB 2024).



Photo 17. View of the substructure of the 6th Street Bridge, facing southeast (VHB 2024).

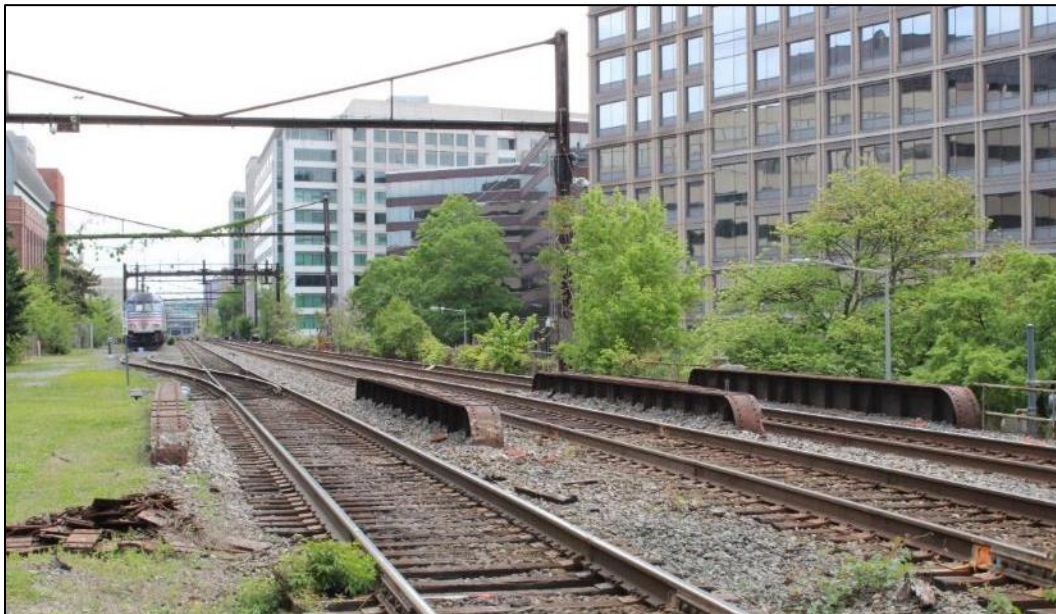


Photo 18. View of the top of the 6th Street Bridge as seen from the Virginia Rail Express L'Enfant Station platform, facing southeast. Note the original steel through girders visible between the railroad tracks (VHB 2024).

I-395 Bridges (c. 1963; non-contributing)

The railroad bridges over I-395 between South Capitol Street SW and 2nd Street SW were constructed to accommodate I-395, also known as the Southwest Freeway, which was constructed through the District in the late-1950s and 1960s (see Figure 2). The rail corridor splits at this area with a northern railroad branch leading to the 1st Street SW Tunnel while the southern branch continues along the B&P Railroad corridor. The bridges in this area consist of

multiple spans along a roughly 500-foot-long corridor to cross over four separate legs of the Southwest Freeway. The bridges are made of reinforced concrete and steel with a crushed stone ballast track bed resting on steel I-beams. Concrete piers of varying heights comprise the substructure. Two tracks cross the bridges, though the width of the bridge suggest it may have been designed to carry additional tracks. These bridges were not fully documented during fieldwork due to lack of safe pedestrian access.

The 2nd Street SW Signal Tower (c. 1915; contributing)

There is a two story, red brick masonry signal tower known as the Virginia Avenue Control Point Tower (see Figure 2 and Photo 19) located on the north side of the tracks immediately northeast of the 2nd Street SW Bridge. It sits on a square rusticated stone foundation with a metal garage door entry. The tower is topped by a hipped, tile-clad roof, and has a projecting wood-frame bay window fronting the tracks, detailed with molding. Fenestration consists of large 1-over-1 sash on the second story track-facing elevations and small fixed single pane windows on the first story and second story rear. Windows are embellished with limestone or cast concrete jack arches and sills, and there is a string course made of molded limestone or cast concrete (formal identification of the material was not conducted in the field). A brick chimney rises from the northeast corner and is partially embedded in the wall. Dense vegetation overgrowth has partially covered the northwest tower wall. The Virginia Avenue Control Point Tower is a DC landmark and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.



Photo 19: 2nd Street SW Signal Tower as viewed from 2nd Street SW, facing southeast (VHB 2024).

Rusticated stone wall enclosure at 3rd and E Streets SW (c.1903; contributing)

Similar in material and construction to the stone retaining wall elevating the railroad track, this approximately 20-foot-high rusticated stone wall (see Figure 2 and Photo 20) formerly enclosed a railyard. The former railyard is bound by the railroad corridor to the north, East Street SW to the south, 3rd street SW to the west, and 2nd Street SW to the east. It appears on the historic Baist and Sanborn maps. Several sections of the wall have been removed to allow the construction of metal gates. The wall appears to be in overall good condition, although it has some vegetation overgrowth present at various points along its length.



Photo 20: The rusticated stone wall enclosure at 3rd and E Streets SW, facing southeast (VHB 2024).

The 7th Street SW Bridge (c. 1970s; non-contributing)

The 7th Street SW Bridge (see Figure 2 and Photos 21-25) is a circa 1970s Brutalist style concrete replacement bridge that was built following the completion of the L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station underground. The bridge is a triple track, steel deck plate girder superstructure with a crushed stone ballast track bed that rests on reinforced concrete abutments. The bridge is approximately 80 feet long and 60 feet wide. The cantilevered concrete abutments are connected to the earlier rusticated stone abutments. Discoloration of the concrete due to rainwater and salt efflorescence is evident throughout the bridge structure and abutments. Where they are exposed, the bridge's steel beams show evidence of surface rust. Additionally, there are some concrete cracks on the bridge's southern and northern abutments.



Photo 21. View of the south side of the 7th Street Bridge, facing north (VHB 2024).



Photo 22. View of the south side of the 7th Street Bridge with rusticated stone retaining wall on either end, facing northwest (VHB 2024).

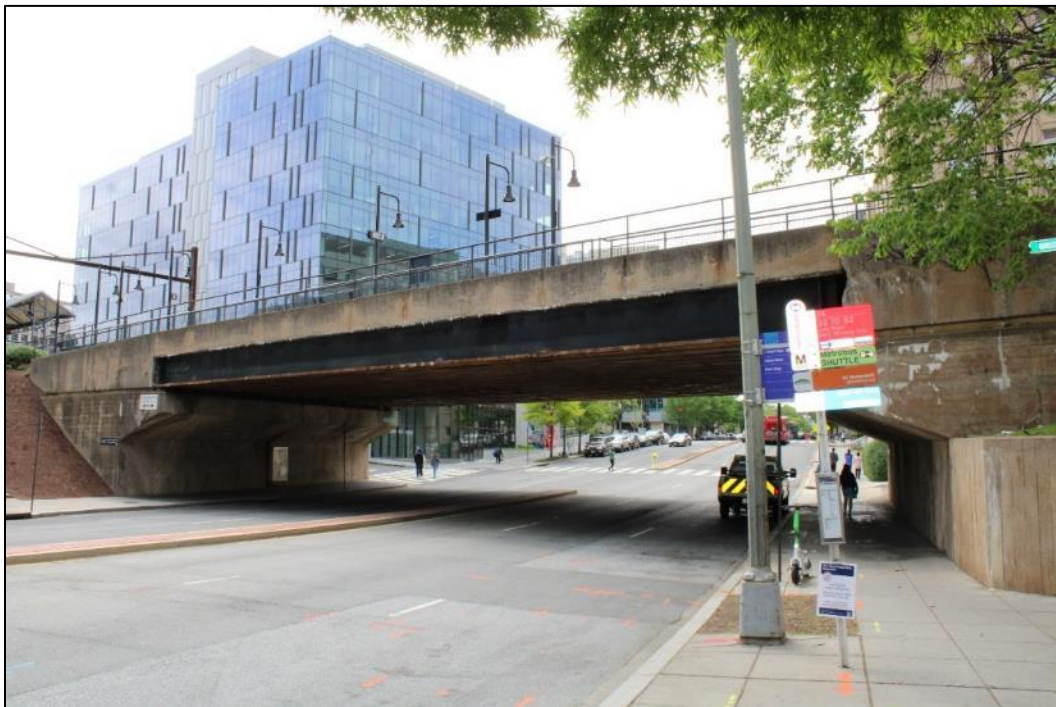


Photo 23. View of the north side of the 7th Street Bridge, facing southeast (VHB 2024).



Photo 24. View of the north side of the 7th Street Bridge, facing southwest (VHB 2024).



Photo 25. View of the substructure of the 7th Street Bridge, facing northwest (VHB 2024).

The 9th Street Expressway Bridge (c. 1979; non-contributing)

The 9th Street Expressway Bridge (see Figure 2 and Photo 26) is a circa 1979 concrete replacement bridge that was built as part of the construction of the 9th Street Expressway. The bridge is a four bay, reinforced concrete bridge with a crushed stone ballast track bed that rests on steel I-beams. Presently it is triple-tracked, although it was designed to carry four tracks. The

bridge is approximately 120 feet long and 50 feet wide. Its superstructure is composed of steel I-beams. The I-beams rest on concrete abutments that are part of the 9th Street Expressway's retaining wall. Discoloration of the concrete due to rainwater and salt efflorescence is evident throughout the structure and abutments. Additionally, the bridge's steel beams show evidence of surface rust.



Photo 26: View of the railroad tracks across the 9th Street Expressway, facing southeast (VHB 2024).

The Long Bridge Corridor

The Long Bridge Corridor consists of a series of bridges that carry railroad traffic from Southwest DC across East and West Potomac Parks and the Potomac River into Virginia. Within the Long Bridge Corridor there are four bridges: the Maine Avenue SW Railroad Bridge, the Ohio Drive SW Railroad Bridge, the Washington Channel Railroad Bridge, and the Long Bridge. The bridges that make up the Long Bridge Corridor have been previously documented and are described below. As part of the on-going Long Bridge Project, the railroad bridges over Maine Avenue SW, Ohio Drive SW, and the Washington Channel are proposed to be replaced; the I-395 Bridge through East Potomac Park would be augmented with an additional bridge to support additional tracks. The project also proposes to augment the Long Bridge with an additional bridge upstream from the existing one.

Maine Avenue SW Railroad Bridge (c.1903, c.1940; contributing, planned for replacement)

The Maine Avenue SW Railroad Bridge is a double-track, deck beam bridge that carries the Long Bridge Corridor over Maine Avenue SW (see Figure 2 and Photo 27). The full length of the bridge is approximately 180 feet and consists of two distinct sections that were constructed at different times, the first circa 1903 and the second circa 1940. These sections are described below. The Maine Avenue SW Railroad Bridge forms part of the viewshed in East Potomac Park and is therefore contributing to the East and West Potomac Parks Historic District.

The first section (constructed circa 1903) is made of three spans and is located on the northeastern end of the bridge. It has a bridge deck consisting of steel girders supporting two rail tracks with a crushed stone ballast track bed. The superstructure of the bridge is constructed of riveted, built-up girders. The bridge is supported by a rusticated stone abutment built into an embankment on the northeast end. Riveted steel columns with brackets set into concrete footers

support the bridge between spans. The southwest end of this bridge section is supported by a wide concrete pier that connects to the circa 1940s bridge section.

The second section (constructed circa 1940) is made of two spans and is located on the southwest end of the bridge. It has a bridge deck consisting of a concrete slab supporting two rail tracks with a crushed stone ballast track bed. The superstructure of the bridge is constructed of riveted, built-up girders and cross girders. The bridge is supported by a concrete abutment on the southwest end and two wide concrete piers: one on the median of Maine Avenue SW and one at the connection to the circa 1903 bridge section.

Surface rusting of the steel members is widespread throughout the superstructure and steel columns. The stone abutment and concrete piers have some areas of biological growth and discoloration where water drains under the bridge. Dense vegetation overgrowth has partially covered each abutment. Graffiti is evident on the sides of the bridge, particularly on the outside of the deck beam and the piers. The concrete utility duct bank is deteriorated in places, resulting in visible holes.



Photo 27. Maine Avenue SW Railroad Bridge, facing southeast (VHB 2022).

Washington Channel Bridge (c. 1904; contributing, planned for replacement)

The Washington Channel Bridge is a double-track, deck plate girder bridge that carries the Long Bridge Corridor over the Washington Channel (see Figure 2 and Photo 28). It runs in a northeast-southwest alignment and parallels four other bridges also crossing the Washington Channel adjacent to the northwest. Built-up embankments continue the railroad tracks on either end of the bridge. The full length of the bridge is approximately 160 feet, broken into two roughly equal spans with a central pier. The Washington Channel crosses under the bridge and connects to the Tidal Basin to the northwest. The bridge deck consists of steel deck plate girders supporting two rail tracks with a crushed stone ballast track bed. Metal posts and guardrails run the length of the bridge, rising several feet above the deck. Steel girder beams and cross girders comprise the superstructure under the deck. The bridge is supported by rusticated stone abutments on either end that are built into embankments. A wide rusticated stone pier supports the two spans near the middle of the bridge. A rectangular concrete beam runs parallel to the deck on the southeast side, supported by the abutments and pier.

Rusting of the steel members is widespread throughout the superstructure and steel pier. The stone abutments and pier have some areas of biological growth and discoloration. Dense vegetation overgrowth has partially covered each abutment; vegetation overgrowth also occurs along the southeast side of the bridge deck above the concrete beam.



Photo 28. View of the Washington Channel Bridge from the Washington Marina, facing northwest (VHB 2022).

Ohio Drive SW Bridge (c. 1904; contributing, planned for replacement)

The Ohio Drive SW Railroad Bridge is a double-track, through-girder bridge that carries the Long Bridge Corridor over Ohio Drive SW (see Figure 2 and Photo 29). It runs in a northeast-southwest alignment and parallels the 14th Street SW/US Route 1 bridge to its immediate northwest. Built-up embankments continue the railroad tracks on either end of the bridge. The full length of the bridge is approximately 110 feet, broken into two roughly equal spans. The bridge deck consists of steel girders supporting two rail tracks with a crushed stone ballast track bed. Riveted steel through-girder plates run the length of the spans on either side, rising several feet above the deck. The bridge superstructure is constructed of riveted, built-up girders and cross girders. The bridge is supported by rusticated stone abutments on either end that are built into embankments. A full-width central pier supports the two spans and consists of riveted steel columns and cross braces on a rusticated stone base.

Surface rusting of the steel members is widespread throughout the superstructure and steel pier. The stone abutments have some areas of biological growth and discoloration where water drains from under the bridge. Dense vegetation overgrowth has partially covered each abutment.



Photo 29. View of Ohio Drive SW Bridge from East Potomac Park, facing northwest (VHB 2022).

I-395 Bridge (East Potomac Park) (c. 1959; non-contributing, planned to be augmented with a new bridge for additional trackage)

The railroad bridge over I-395 within East Potomac Park was constructed to accommodate I-395, also known as the Southwest Freeway, which was constructed in the late-1950s and 1960s. The bridge is a two-span, riveted steel bridge with a crushed stone ballast track bed. The bridge is supported by concrete and rusticated stone abutments and circular rusticated stone piers between the spans (see Figure 2 and Photo 30). The bridge is roughly 200 feet long and 40 feet wide with two tracks.



Photo 30. View of the I-395 Bridge in East Potomac Park as viewed from the I-395 southbound lanes, facing east (VHB 2021).

Long Bridge (1904, 1929, 1942; contributing, planned to be augmented with new upstream bridge)

The Long Bridge is a double track through-girder bridge that carries the Long Bridge Corridor over the Potomac River between Ohio Drive SW in the District and the George Washington Memorial Highway in Virginia. It runs in a northeast-southwest alignment and parallels the Metrorail Bridge and the Arland D. Williams Jr. Memorial Bridge. Built-up embankments continue the railroad tracks on either end of the bridge. Long Bridge is 2,529 feet in length across the Potomac River with 22 spans. The bridge is supported by rusticated stone piers that are set roughly equidistant from each other across the width of the Potomac River. Originally

constructed in 1904 with 13 steel trusses and one swivel-swing span, the bridge was modified in 1929 when the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway (now part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway) was constructed on the southwest shore of the Potomac River and the two westernmost trusses were removed. Long Bridge underwent major reconstruction in 1942 to meet contemporary weight requirements for freight trains; additional piers were added between existing piers and all but one of the trusses were replaced with through plate girders.

Today, Long Bridge consists of through plate girder spans with the single remaining swivel-swing truss span to the southwest of the bridge's midpoint (see Figure 2 and Photo 31). The swivel-swing span has been welded in place and is no longer a moveable span. The bridge deck consists of steel girders supporting two rail tracks with a crushed stone ballast track bed. Riveted steel through-plate girders run the length of the spans on either side, rising several feet above the deck. The bridge superstructure is constructed of riveted, built-up steel girders. The bridge is supported by rusticated stone abutments on either end that are built into embankments as well as the rusticated stone piers in the Potomac River.

Surface rusting of the steel members is widespread throughout the superstructure of the bridge. The stone abutments have some areas of biological growth and discoloration. Vegetation has partially covered each abutment. Graffiti is prominent on the sides of the deck, particularly on the outside of the through girders. The piers were inaccessible and as a result their condition could not be assessed.



Photo 31: View of Long Bridge from the Mount Vernon Trail on the west shore of the Potomac River, facing north (VHB 2019).

Historical Narrative

The L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington

With the establishment of the District of Columbia in 1790, areas of land along both sides of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers were ceded to the federal government for the creation of the new capital of the United States of America (National Capital). The Plan for the City of Washington, designed by Pierre Charles L'Enfant in 1791, was an urban plan for the National Capital that

featured a broad network of diagonal avenues crisscrossing over a more traditional network of east-west and north-south streets. This network of avenues and streets provided unbroken lines of connection between key areas of the capital including the Capitol Building (Congress House) and the White House (President's House) as well as connections between public lands making up the city's Monumental Core (Figure 4). One of these avenues, Maryland Avenue, provided a direct line from the Capitol Building to the Potomac River to the south and west. Virginia Avenue provided a similarly direct line to the Anacostia River and points east. Several open squares and triangles of land were created between these intersecting streets and avenues in L'Enfant's plan. L'Enfant intended for them to be reserved for public use and they were known as Reservations. In the District's Northwest quadrant, several of these reservations were developed into parks in the first half of the 19th century. In the Southwest quadrant, however, many remained undeveloped.³ What is known as Reservation 113 (known today as Hancock Park) was an open square of land created by the intersection of Maryland and Virginia Avenues SW and bounded on the north, east, south, and west by C Street SW, 7th Street SW, D Street SW, and 9th Street SW, respectively. The L'Enfant plan only extended to the west bank of the Anacostia River. Portions of the Southeast and Northwest quadrants are located east of the river; as a result, those parts of the capitol's development were not governed by L'Enfant's plan.

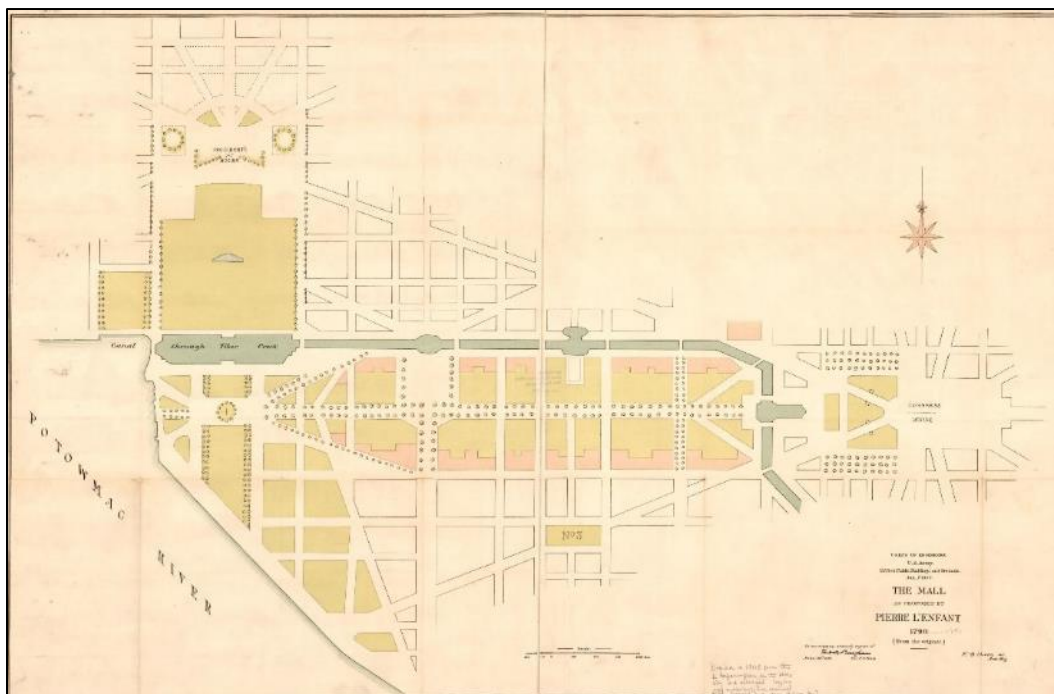


Figure 4. 1791 L'Enfant Plan of the Mall, Washington, D.C. with parkland shaded in orange. Maryland Avenue cuts a diagonal from lower left to middle right through a public square ("No.3", the future Reservation 113). Virginia Avenue is not shown. Source: Library of Congress.

The Development of the Railroad Corridor

At the time of its early establishment, the District relied heavily on private and public ferry services to transport goods, services, and passengers across both the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers; however, these ferry services were infrequent and slow.

³ U.S. General Services Administration, *Cultural Resource Survey: Cotton Annex and GSA Regional Office Building Parcel, Washington, D.C.*, (Washington, D.C., 2015): 42.

In 1808, President Thomas Jefferson signed into law an Act of Congress authorizing the Washington Bridge Company to construct a mile-long toll bridge between Maryland Avenue in the District and Alexander's Island, a small islet along the southwest shore of the Potomac River. Construction of the bridge was completed by 1809, and the bridge was used primarily by pedestrian traffic, carriages, and wagons, as no railroad tracks were present in the early 19th century. The bridge was replaced in 1816 after heavy damage during the War of 1812 and was eventually destroyed in a storm in 1831. By 1833, Congress had purchased the bridge from the Washington Bridge Company and saw to its replacement. The new bridge was opened in 1835 and was referred to as the 'Long Bridge Across the Potomac' or simply the 'Long Bridge.' Contemporaneously, another bridge known as the Upper Bridge or Anacostia Bridge was built across the Anacostia River in Northeast DC. Later renamed Benning Bridge, it became an important local toll road connecting the small rural settlements east of the Anacostia River with the more developed metropolis to the west.

Around the same time, the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad Company held a monopoly over rail traffic in the District even though it did not have trackage within city limits. At the time, passengers and freight disembarked rail cars outside the city limits and were taken by horse-drawn carts into the city.⁴ Development of the B&O rail line within the District limits began in the early 1850s. With the rapid growth of the railroad industry in the mid-19th century, several railroad companies, including the B&O Railroad Company in the District as well as the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad Company in Virginia, anticipated that tracks would soon be laid on the Long Bridge across the Potomac.

By 1855, to prepare for the eventual rail crossing of the Potomac River, the B&O Railroad Company laid railroad tracks from the foot of Long Bridge along Maryland Avenue to the foot of Capitol Hill and across the National Mall at 1st Street SW to the B&O Depot at New Jersey Avenue SE. The railroad corridor in Southwest DC utilized L'Enfant's street plan and the level grades of Maryland and Virginia Avenues SW. The open space at Reservation 113 evolved into a railroad interchange and depot area. The use of city streets for trackage and the potential use of the Long Bridge for a Potomac River rail crossing prompted a Congressional debate which stalled the line's further development until the Civil War.

The onset of the Civil War prompted the installation of railroad tracks across Long Bridge for the US Army to ship material and troops to northern Virginia.⁵ Initial tracks spanned the length of the bridge; however, the bridge could not support the weight of the locomotives, resulting in goods having to be unloaded from rail cars and transferred across the bridge by horse-drawn carriages. As a result, a new single-track drawbridge, that could hold the weight of the locomotives, was constructed in 1863 parallel to the existing Long Bridge.⁶

In 1862, the Maryland Avenue Depot (Figure 5), a one-story wood-framed freight building, was erected on the south side of Maryland Avenue SW between 9th and 10th Streets SW to support

⁴ AECOM, "Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad," *DC State Historic Preservation Office DOE Form* (2015): 3.

⁵ U.S. General Services Administration, 42.

⁶ Cohen 2003; "Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad Company: Richmond's Oldest Railroad." *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Volume 4 (September 08, 1937): pp 74; Stewart, William. "Tour of capital's forts reveals dramatic history." *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. (February 16, 1986): pp 172.

rail operations. There was also a wood-frame engine house fronting the south side of Reservation 113, and a turntable several blocks west on 12th Street and D Street.⁷



Figure 5. Ca.1863-1865 Matthew Brady photo looking northwest at the B&P Railroad Depot on Maryland Avenue. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maryland_Avenue_Depot_at_Washington,_D.C._-_NARA_-_525130.jpg accessed May 11, 2024.

The B&O's monopoly on Washington rail commerce spurred competitors, including the short-lived Alexandria and Washington Railroad which laid their tracks along Maryland Avenue SW to Capitol Hill in 1855 without Congressional approval.⁸ Operation of this railroad in the District was prevented by irate Congressmen opposed to the location of the tracks, particularly at the crossing of Pennsylvania Avenue. Chief among the B&O's competitors, however, was the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR), chartered in 1846 by the Pennsylvania Legislature. The PRR aggressively expanded northeast and southeast from Philadelphia with the goal of establishing a continuous, interstate rail corridor between New York City and Washington, DC. In September 1867, the PRR committed to funding the construction of the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad (B&P) which had been authorized to extend its line from Baltimore across the Anacostia River and enter the District. Acting through the B&P, the PRR achieved its goal.⁹

The B&P Railroad entered the District from Maryland, passing through undeveloped land in Northeast and Southeast DC along the eastern bank of the Anacostia River. Near Massachusetts Avenue SE, a trestle bridge was built in 1872 to cross the Anacostia River near East Washington Park. After crossing the river, the tracks ran along M Street SE before curving onto Virginia Avenue SE and passing through the Virginia Avenue Tunnel, which was authorized under a Congressional act dated March 18, 1869.¹⁰

At 6th Street SW, a railroad spur turned northward and traveled up 6th Street SW, crossing the National Mall, until it reached the original B&P terminal at B Street NW near Pennsylvania

⁷ U.S. General Services Administration, 45.

⁸ U.S. General Services Administration, 34-35.

⁹ AECOM, "Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad," 3.

¹⁰ AECOM, "Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad," 3.

Avenue. Under another Congressional act, approved June 21, 1870, the B&P line continued along Virginia Avenue SW until it reached Maryland Avenue SW to reach the Long Bridge over the Potomac River. In June 1870, Congress gave the B&P a monopoly of rail service over Long Bridge. The B&P opened its line into the District on July 2, 1872. Within eleven years, the PRR had double tracked the B&P line through the District.¹¹

In 1880, Currier & Ives produced a bird's-eye view map of Washington DC (Figure 6). The map depicts the B&P railroad corridor in Southwest with steam trains running on grade down Maryland Avenue SW, surrounded by a dense urban commercial, industrial, and residential district. At Reservation 113 (shown as open space with a steam train crossing it on Figure 6) the rail line split with one line turning sharply north to cross the National Mall at the foot of the Capitol Building and terminate at the B&P depot. The other line continued southeasterly on Virginia Avenue SW.¹² This triangular junction was known as the 6th Street Wye. As shown on the bird's-eye map and on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, the corridor included related railroad infrastructure such as a roundhouse at 6th Street SW, a freight yard, and numerous sidings serving adjacent manufactories. The corridor created a physical barrier between Southwest and the rest of the city as coal-fired steam trains were running on four tracks by 1888 (Figures 7 and 8). It generated near-constant dirt, grit, noise, rumbling, and hazardous grade crossings along Maryland and Virginia Avenues.



Figure 6. Detail of an 1880 Currier & Ives birds eye view of Washington DC showing the B&P RR corridor in Southwest DC Steam trains carrying passengers and freight crossed Long Bridge (lower left) turned northwest and ran up Maryland Avenue to the “Y” junction at Reservation 113 (the open space in the upper middle of the Figure). From here they proceeded north to the passenger depot at the north end of the Mall, or continued southwesterly on Virginia Avenue. Source: Library of Congress.

¹¹ AECOM, ‘Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad,’ 3.

¹² The Anacostia River Railroad Bridge and the railroad’s passage through Southeast DC is not depicted on the Currier & Ives map.

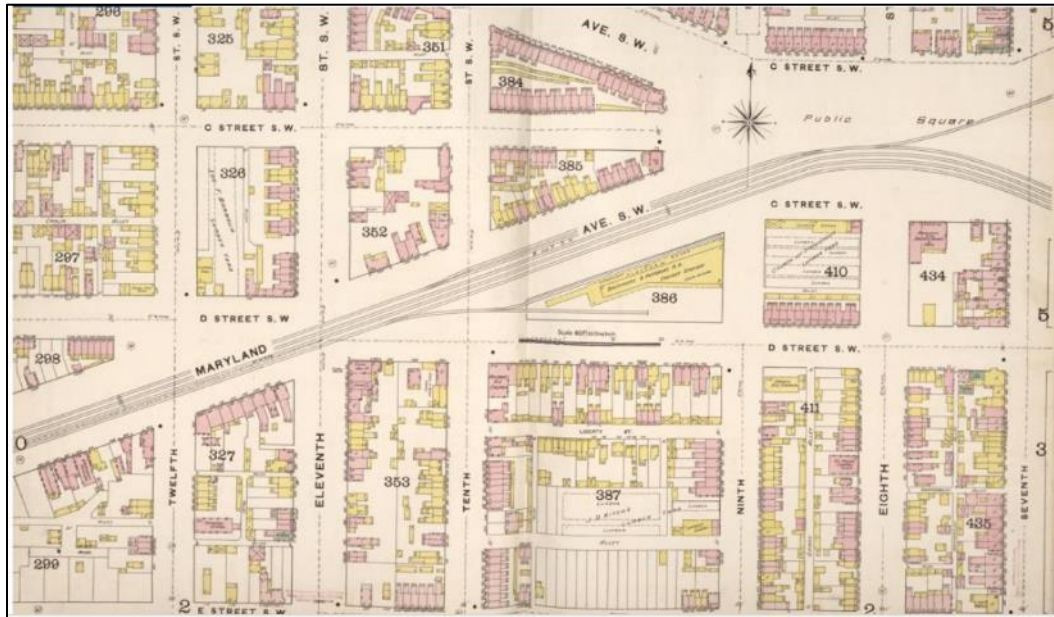


Figure 7. 1888 Sanborn Map showing the B&P RR corridor on Maryland Avenue between 12th and 7th Streets SW and the dense industrial/residential area that fed off the railroad. All the crossings were on grade and though it was labeled “Public Square,” Reservation 113 was railroad territory. Source: Library of Congress.

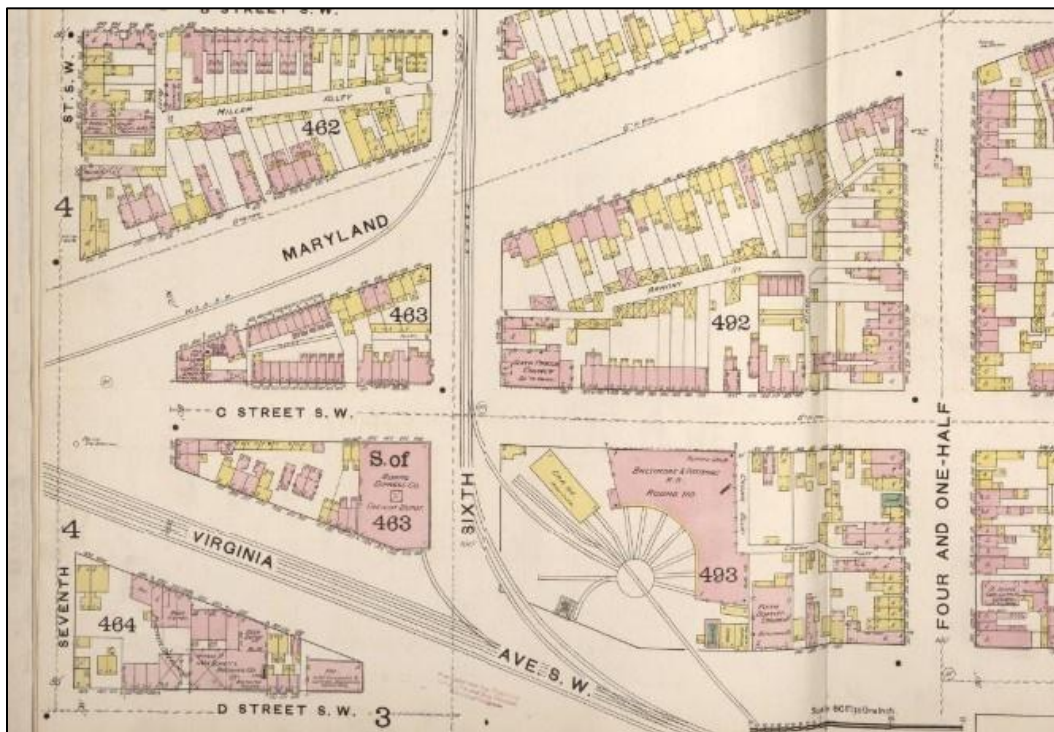


Figure 8. 1888 Sanborn Map showing the B&P RR corridor between 7th Street and 4 ½ Street SW on Virginia Avenue. The “Y” junction carried tracks north across the Mall. Block 493 contained a turntable and roundhouse. A freight yard was located to the southeast (out of frame). Source: Library of Congress.

Impact of the B&P Railroad East of the Anacostia River

The land east of the Anacostia River (portions of the Northeast and Southeast quadrants) was included within the boundaries of the District to provide a line of federally controlled defenses outside of the city core and to give the capital access to the recreation and commercial potential of the Anacostia River.¹³ During the early 19th century, land speculators flocked to the Southwest and Southeast quadrants on the assumption that a major port would develop at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. No major ports were established however, and during the 19th century most of the development in the District occurred in the Northeast and Northwest quadrants west of the Anacostia River.

After the initial flurry of land speculation died out on the east side of the Anacostia River, developers created subdivisions such as Good Hope, Anacostia, Uniontown, and Benning near major employers or river crossings. For example, Benning was located just east of the Benning Toll Bridge while Uniontown and Anacostia were opposite the United States Navy Yard. Interspersed with these subdivisions were truck farms that grew produce as well as tobacco farms. Lacking adequate connections to the heart of the District, much of the land east of the Anacostia River remained open and unsettled through the middle of the 19th century when the B&P Railroad began construction.

The arrival of the B&P Railroad brought industry to the Southeast and Northeast quadrants on the east side of the Anacostia River. The areas alongside the railroad tracks were soon characterized by slaughterhouses, dairies, truck gardening, and floral greenhouses. These industrial and agricultural opportunities attracted a Black working-class populace that expanded on and established new segregated neighborhoods. In particular, the rocky soil and hilly terrain in the Benning area was considered undesirable for white landowners. This provided the opportunity for Black landownership, which then spawned some of the earliest Black suburbs in the District.¹⁴ Additionally, shortly after the B&P Railroad's completion, the railroad established a freight yard at Benning, creating additional employment opportunities for the working-class population. The Benning Rail Yard consisted of up to six tracks, as evidenced in historic topographic maps (Figure 9), and was used to marshal freight cars, refuel, and assemble freight trains bound for other locations. The B&O Railroad Alexandria Branch tied into the freight yard in this location to interchange freight trains between railroad lines.

¹³ Tanya Edwards Beauchamp, "Anacostia Historic District," Historic Society of Washington D.C. https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Anacostia_Historic_Brochure_0.pdf.

¹⁴ Patsy M. Fletcher, "Ward 7 Heritage Guide," Historic Preservation Office, https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/release_content/attachments/Ward_7_Heritage_Guide.pdf.



Figure 9. 1899 USGS Topographic Map of Washington, DC showing the trackage of the Benning Rail Yard on the east side of the Anacostia River. Source: US Geological Survey.

The McMillan Plan

The 1890s marked the beginning of private and public planning efforts to improve central Washington, culminating in the 1901 formation of a Senate Park Commission, popularly known as the McMillan Commission, headed by Senator James McMillan of Michigan. The Commission's approach was informed by the City Beautiful movement which sought to introduce beautification and monumental grandeur into urban areas, and by a desire to honor the 1791 L'Enfant Plan for the National Mall (Figure 10). City Beautiful also exemplified Progressive Era thinking about the government's role in improving public health and safety. As public awareness grew of the dangerous and unhealthy conditions prevailing in America's urban areas at the turn of the 20th century, progressives believed that by reinventing urban space through the introduction of monumentality, grandeur, and Classical symmetry and order, urban problems could be mitigated or solved.

One of the targets of the Commission's efforts was the removal of the trackage from the National Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue NW (now belonging to the B&P) and the construction of a new Union Station on a site to the north, which would be shared by the B&P and the B&O.¹⁵

¹⁵ "The Mall Cultural Landscape Inventory" <https://www.nps.gov/nationalmallplan/Documents/Studies/m2.pdf>. n.d.: 2.



Figure 10. In the McMillan Plan's *City Beautiful* version of the Washington Mall, all trackage was removed, Maryland Avenue marked a break between park and city, Reservation 113 (blue arrow) reverted to public park, and the railroad corridor was out of sight. Source: Library of Congress.

The Campaign to Eliminate Grade Crossings

In the late 19th century throughout the United States, railroad grade crossings were regarded as deadly places. While engine speed limits were implemented within the District bounds, these speed limits were not always heeded. Where crossing gates were installed at grade crossings, these gates were not enough to deter all pedestrians, and children in particular. In addition, steam engines were surprisingly quiet. These factors led to relatively frequent fatal collisions between trains and people. Grade crossings could also be fatal for horses and carriages if the gates happened to land between the two when lowered. The situation acquired more urgency in the early 20th century with the rising number of catastrophic collisions between steam engines and streetcars, with newspapers reporting the gory details of these collisions.¹⁶ The B&P Railroad through the District had many of these dangerous grade crossings.¹⁷ Figure 11 shows the grade crossings in 1901 at the Maryland Avenue SW depot.

¹⁶ "When Railroads Held Washington's Parks and Streets" (Part 2), *The Evening Star*, April 20, 1913.

¹⁷ A smaller number of grade crossings were present in Southeast DC. However, due to the area's settlement pattern, the B&P Railroad traveled primarily through thinly settled parts of Southeast DC.



Figure 11. 1901 photo of the Maryland Avenue SW depot. By this time some in Congress were advocating for the elimination of grade crossings. Source: Library of Congress.

In 1903, after years of lobbying by the Washington newspaper *The Evening Star* and a group called the Southwest Citizens Association, and with the support of Senator McMillan and Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont, an Act of Congress was passed that directed the B&P Railroad to remove certain grade crossings, including those at 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th Streets SW in the Southwest quadrant as well as that at Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue SE (then called Dean Avenue) east of the Anacostia River. The rail corridor through Southwest DC was by this time condemned as a deathtrap.¹⁸ Figure 12 shows the rail corridor in 1903, which consisted of four tracks with numerous grade crossings. The 6th Street Wye, Reservation 113 and the especially hazardous grade crossing at 7th Street SW (which by now was a major thoroughfare with a streetcar line) were held up by Senator Morrill as examples of railroad usurpation of public lands and Federal indifference to public health and safety.¹⁹ Furthermore, a formal protest by the Southwest Citizens Association alleged that “property values have decreased, home comforts and enjoyments have been greatly interfered with, street crossings are obstructed [by parked railroad cars] and life and limb daily placed in jeopardy.”²⁰

¹⁸ “When Railroads Held Washington’s Parks and Streets” (Part 1), *The Evening Star*, April 13, 1913.

¹⁹ “Grade Crossings,” *The Evening Star*, Jan. 20, 1900.

²⁰ “A Plea for Vigilance,” *The Evening Star*, Nov. 5, 1905.

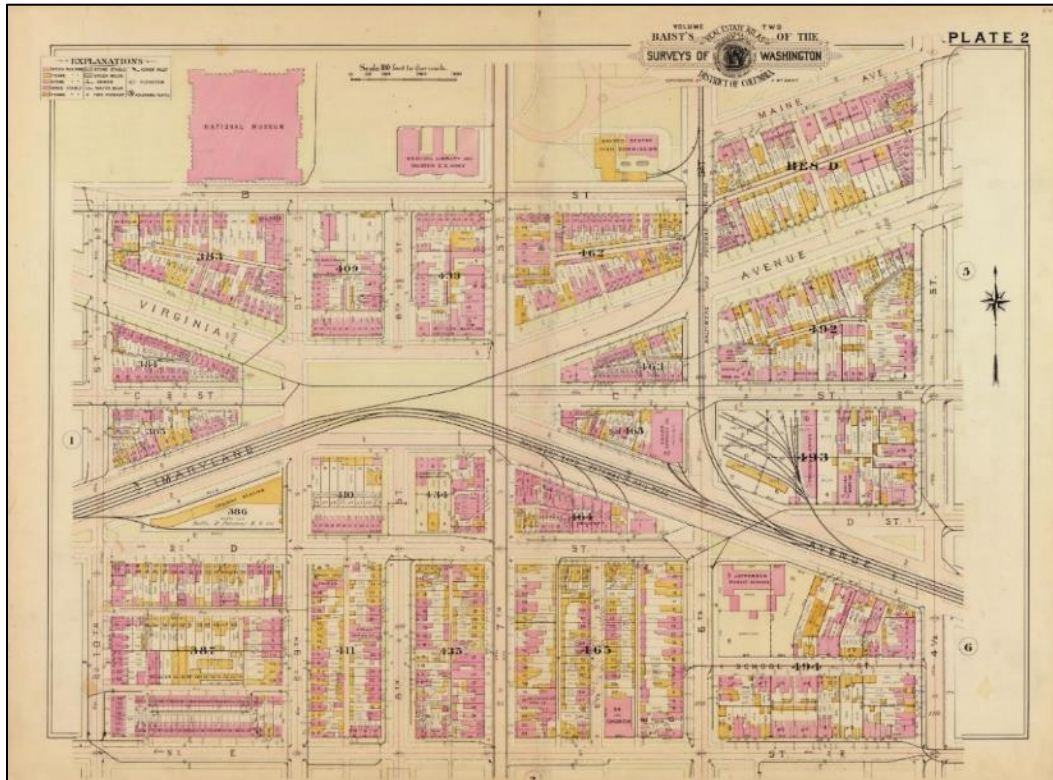


Figure 12. 1903 Baist Real Estate Survey map showing the B&P RR corridor between 10th and 4 ½ Streets SW including the junction in Reservation 113. The corridor is now quadruple-tracked with several sidings serving industries adjacent to the railroad tracks. Source: Library of Congress.

Progressive Era Railroad Improvements

The grade crossing campaign was not formally part of the McMillan Plan. However, Congressional pushback on the railroads' use of avenues and undeveloped public lands within the District went beyond the beautification of the National Mall to include the trackage, yards, and depots on Maryland and Virginia Avenues SW and the junction at Reservation 113 (Figure 13). When the trackage on the Mall was removed in early years of the 20th century, the 6th Street Wye was also eliminated along with the engine house and turntable (Figure 14). The trackage between South Capitol and 9th Streets SW was raised on the present rusticated stone walls with undergrade crossings (railroad bridges) consisting of steel girder bridges, all built to a similar functional design and without ornamentation. The freight yard was enclosed within a rusticated stone wall (Figures 15 and 16).



Figure 13. Detail of 1901 Map of the public reservations in the District of Columbia, prepared by the Commission on the Park System, showing the existing public green spaces in Southwest DC, shaded in green. Reservation 113, now less than half its original size, is shown by a blue arrow. The B&P rail corridor and its yard near Garfield Park are clearly shown. Source: Library of Congress.

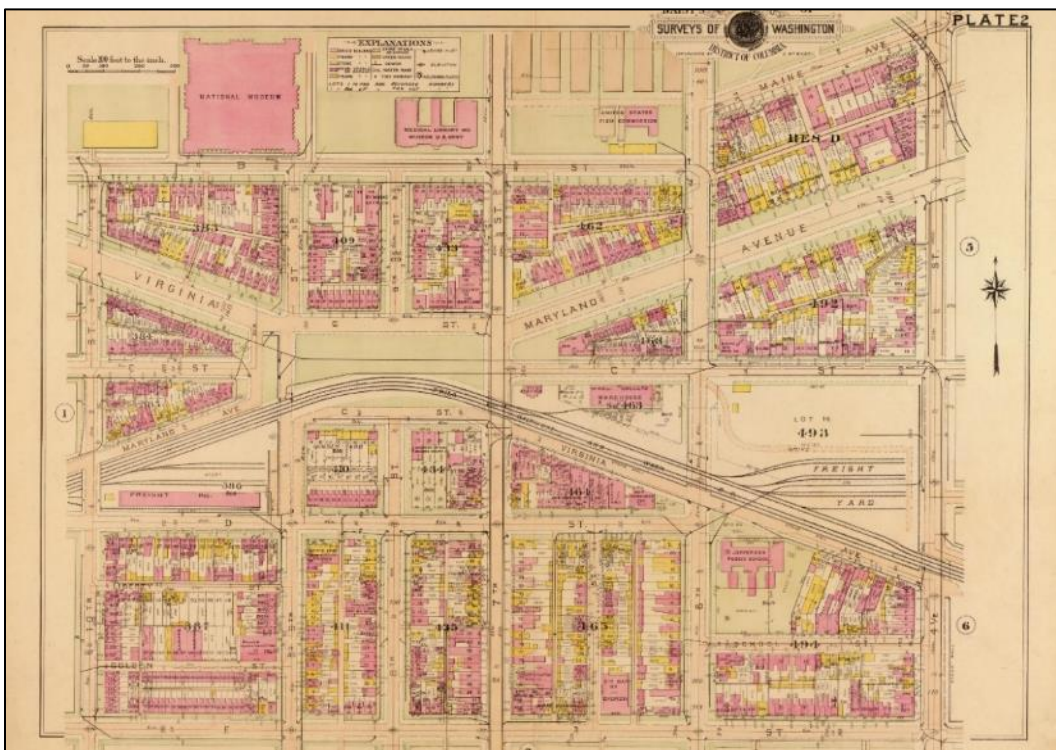


Figure 14. 1921 Baist Real Estate Survey map of the same area for comparison. The “Y” junction is gone, the streets are bridged except for 10th Street SW which is an overpass. Block 493 no longer has a roundhouse or turntable. Source: Library of Congress.

DC State Historic Preservation Office
Determination of Eligibility Form for the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Corridor

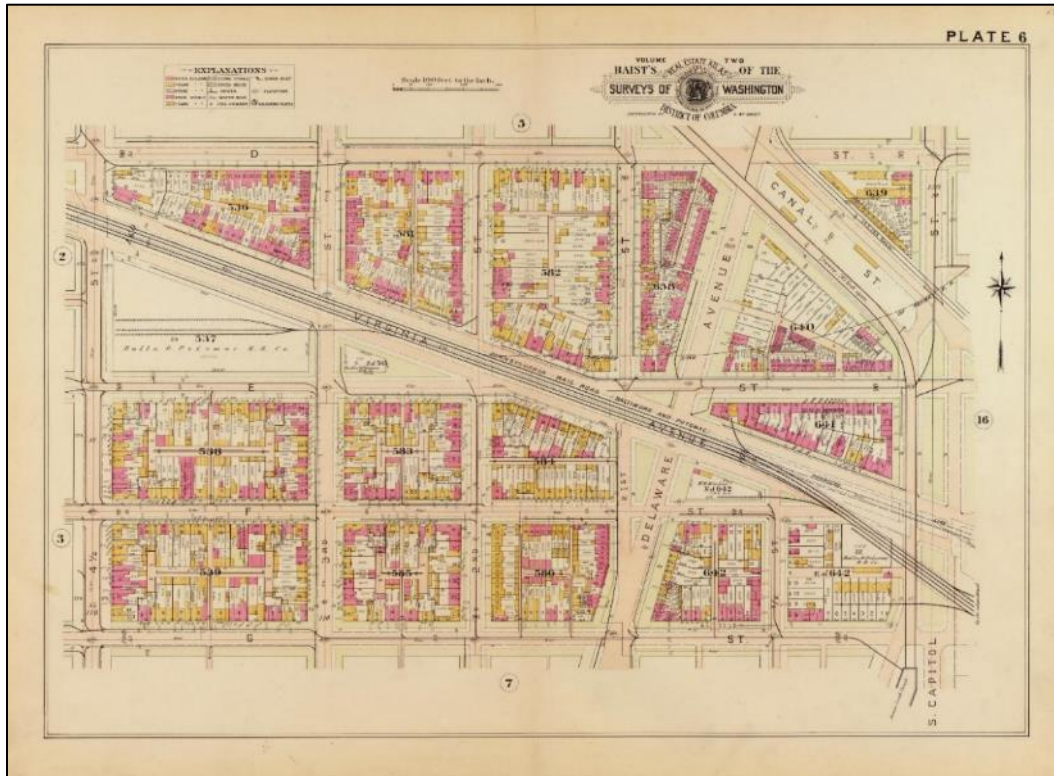


Figure 15. 1903 Baist Real Estate Survey Map of the railroad corridor on Virginia Avenue between 4 1/2 Street SW and Canal Street. Source: Library of Congress.

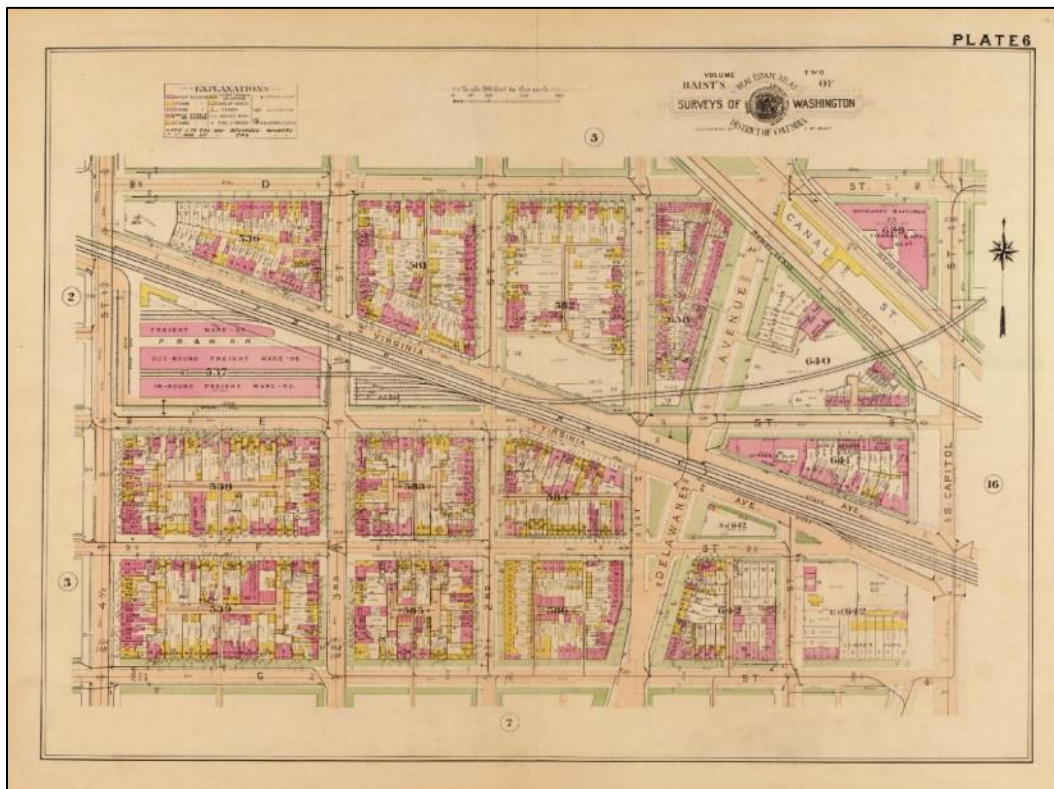


Figure 16. 1921 Baist Real Estate Survey map of the same area for comparison. The map notes places where stone walls have been built on either side of the tracks and enclosing the freight yard. Source: Library of Congress.

In 1903, according to an article in *The Evening Star*, the \$1,000,000 railroad improvement project was entering its last stages with completion expected by 1908. The Drake & Stratton Company of Philadelphia were beginning work on Maryland Avenue SW from 7th Street SW to 14th Street SW. Trains were now operating on “the elevated structure” to 6th Street SW. When completed, 6th, 7th, 9th, and Water Streets SW would pass under the railroad tracks, while 10th, 11th and 12th Streets SW would pass over on bridges.²¹ Eighth, 13th, and 13 ½ Streets SW would be closed. The newspaper did not describe methods or materials used in construction but noted approvingly that “local engineers” were reviewing the plans and that the public could therefore be assured their “rights and comfort will be well taken care of” during construction.²² The grade crossing project was part of an overall railroad improvement project, mandated by Act of Congress in 1901, which included construction of the new Washington Union Terminal (1907), commonly known as Union Station. The resulting rail corridor through Southwest in other respects followed its 19th century alignment on Maryland and Virginia Avenues SW.

Early 20th Century Electrification

During the early 20th century, the PRR began a program of electrifying its mainline between New York and Philadelphia. Workmen completed catenary installation between Philadelphia and Wilmington in 1928. The PRR shelved its plans to complete electrification to the District during the first two years of the Great Depression. Federal officials, unwilling to have the workforce engaged in this work become unemployed, negotiated a loan with the railroad to continue its work. Through electric passenger trains between New York and the District began operations in February 1935, and the railroad through the District to Potomac Yard in Alexandria, Virginia was electrified by June of the same year. While the catenary wires were removed during the 1990s, the support frames are still present along the right-of-way.²³

Mid-20th Century Urban Renewal and Displacement (1940s-1970s)

By the middle of the 20th century, the Southwest quadrant, known then as the Old Southwest, was home to thousands of working-class and low-income Black and Eastern European immigrant residents. Housing in some areas was substandard, lacking electricity or running water, the outcome of decades of urban disinvestment. The B&P tracks on their raised embankment resembled a stone fortification wall and effectively acted as a northern boundary between Southwest and the rest of the District. In the thinking of the time, the preferred option was to tear everything down and start over. In 1945, the Redevelopment Land Agency (RLA) was created by Congress to oversee the process of urban renewal throughout the District. The 1952 National Capital Planning Act gave the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) more control over comprehensive regional planning and new development and charged it with developing a comprehensive plan for the region that would embrace new construction, transportation, parks, and natural resources.²⁴

In 1953-54 the RLA began NCPC’s approved urban renewal plan for Southwest with the acquisition by eminent domain and demolition of approximately 4,800 buildings in the neighborhood. The urban renewal project replaced much of Old Southwest’s dense street grid with superblocks lined with Modernist style multi-story commercial, residential, and government

²¹ Water Street SW is now known as Maine Avenue SW.

²² “Last Link Underway,” *The Evening Star*, Sept. 1, 1906.

²³ AECOM, ‘Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad,’ 4.

²⁴ Robinson & Associates, *DC Modern: A Context for Modernism in the District of Columbia, 1945-1976* (2009): 20.

buildings; major routes such as 7th Street SW remained. The 1957-1970 construction of the Southwest Freeway/Interstate 395 was another significant component of the project. By the time the urban renewal project was completed in the early 1970s, it had displaced approximately 1,500 businesses and 23,000 residents, many of whom were low-income and/or Black, and replaced them with approximately 13,000 middle and upper-class residents living in approximately 5,800 new housing units.²⁵

The urban renewal plan also affected the Southeast quadrant where the RLA condemned large swaths of housing, particularly neighborhoods with high Black homeownership, and erected segregated public housing in place of these homes. The B&P Railroad through the Southeast quadrant remained largely unchanged by these efforts.

During the urban renewal era there was broad support for a bill to submerge the railroad trackage in a tunnel between Union Station and the Virginia state line, but according to the Historic American Building Survey report, “the plan died due to its high \$75 million price tag.”²⁶ Thus, the urban renewal project developed around the raised railroad tracks and tried by means of overpasses and underpasses and to eliminate their influence as a barrier.²⁷ Throughout the urban renewal efforts of the mid-20th century, the features and alignment of the B&P Railroad corridor itself remained largely unchanged.

Late 20th Century Railroad Mergers and the Formation of CSXT

In 1968, the Pennsylvania Railroad merged with the New York Central to form the Penn Central Corporation; by 1970, the Penn Central Corporation had entered bankruptcy. In 1962, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad (C&O) gained a controlling interest in the B&O. Eleven years later, in 1973, “Chessie System Railroads” was chosen to identify the C&O, the B&O, and the Western Maryland railroads under a single corporate umbrella. In 1987, the B&O formally merged into the C&O and this conglomeration became CSX Transportation (CSX), which owns and operates the rail corridor today.²⁸

20th Century Railroad Corridor Modifications

Throughout the 20th century, transportation infrastructure projects within the District required modifications to elements of the railroad corridor, particularly bridges over roadways. These are summarized below.

The Eastern Avenue NE Bridge (c. 1915; contributing)

The Eastern Avenue NE Bridge was constructed circa 1915 as part of the construction of Eastern Avenue along the border of Washington, DC, and Maryland. Like the earlier railroad bridges, the Eastern Avenue NE Bridge was built to elevate the B&P Railroad over the road and avoid the creation of an at-grade crossing. Unlike these earlier bridges, the Eastern Avenue NE Bridge utilized reinforced concrete as a primary building material. The use of concrete reflects the growing popularity of concrete during the early 20th century as a durable, easily shaped construction material.

²⁵ Historic American Buildings Survey, *HABS DC-856, Southwest Washington, Urban Renewal Area: Photographs and Written Historical and Descriptive Data*. Washington, D.C. 2004:112.

²⁶ Historic American Buildings Survey, 112.

²⁷ Historic American Buildings Survey, 113.

²⁸ AECOM, “Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad,” 4.

Benning Rail Yard (c. 1940s-2000s; non-contributing)

The Benning Rail Yard was initially constructed in the 1870s shortly after the railroad was completed and was used to marshal, refuel (first with coal and later with diesel), and assemble freight trains bound for destinations outside the District (see Figures 9, 17, and 18). Nearby industries were served by sidings and spur lines. Topographic maps and historic aerials from the early 19th century through 1988 show a dense cluster of multiple parallel tracks extending from the south end of the yard as far north as the 1960 Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) plant with a spur line serving the plant. The coal-fired PEPCO plant (c.1906-2012) created a heavy demand for coal which was brought in by the railroad, with coal-carrying gondolas shunted between the plant and the railyard. When the PEPCO plant converted to petroleum in the 1970s, the railroad brought oil. The PEPCO plant was demolished in 2014. Other yard users included the Ringling Brothers Circus which stored their circus train in the Benning Yard when they were in town.²⁹ As late as 2017, the yard held coal hoppers, scrap metal gondolas destined for recycling plants, and manifests waiting for clear track.³⁰ By 2014, track removal at the north end of the yard had shortened the overall length of the yard by close to two-thirds its original length, while the number of tracks within the yard had also been reduced. The mid-century rail yard office was allowed to decay and was demolished by 2007.³¹ Modern service buildings and structures have since been erected in recent decades.

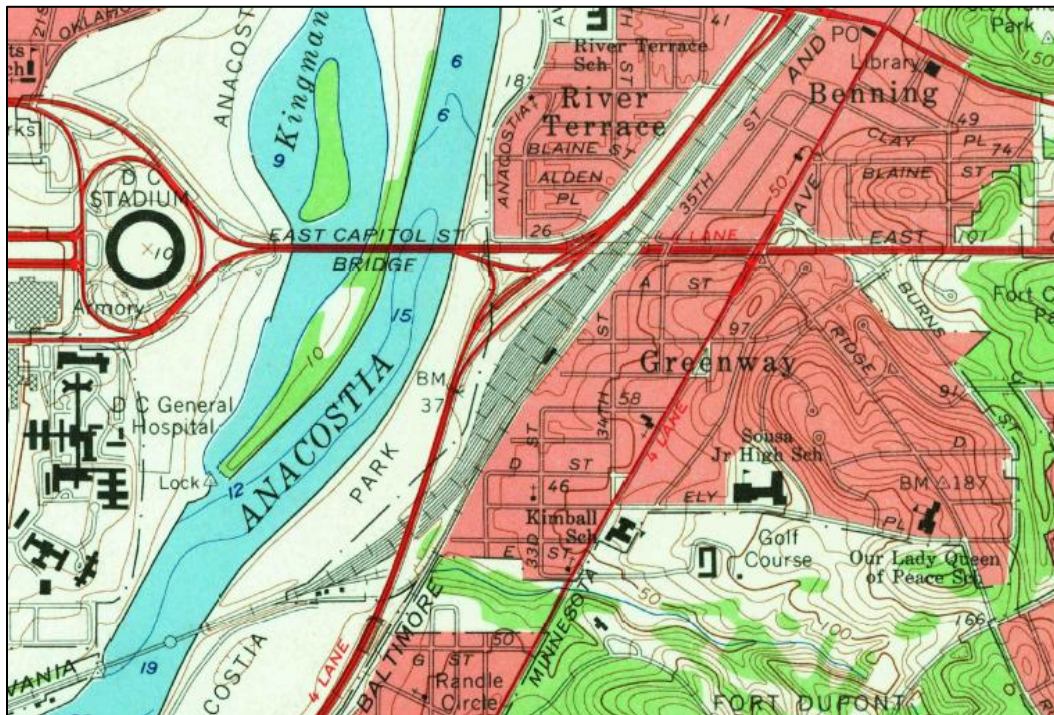


Figure 17. 1965 USGS Topographic Map of Washington, DC showing the modifications to the trackage of the Benning Rail Yard and surrounding urban development. Source: US Geological Survey.

²⁹ Post by StillGrande, January 31, 2007, Benning CSX yard discussion forum, *Trains Magazine*, <https://cs.trains.com/trn/f/111/p/86729/1505153.aspx>. Accessed 1/9/2025. The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus ceased operations in 2017 and its train cars were sold or scrapped.

³⁰ "CSX Landover Subdivision Photo Tour", posted Sept. 2017. <http://www.trainweb.org/oldmainline/alx/dc17a1woverbyddot.jpg>.

³¹ Post by CSXAPE7, October 20, 2007, Eastern Railroad discussion, Old Benning yard office, <https://www.trainorders.com/discussion/read.php?2,1517304>.



Figure 18. Circa 1960 aerial photo of the Benning Rail Yard, taken from above C street SE, looking southwest. Source: DDOT Library: <http://www.trainweb.org/oldmainline/alx/dc17a1woverbyddot.jpg>.

The East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge (c. 1955; non-contributing)

The East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge was built circa 1955 as part of the construction of the Whitney Young Memorial Bridge, which was built across the Anacostia River to provide an additional automobile connection between Northeast and Southeast neighborhoods on the east side of the Anacostia River and the city's core. Whereas earlier railroad bridges elevated the railroad above the surrounding grade, here the railroad sits at grade while East Capitol Street NE/SE was dug below grade to pass beneath the railroad corridor.

I-395 Bridges (c. 1959-1963; non-contributing)

The bridges crossing over I-395 in Southwest were constructed in the mid-20th century to accommodate the newly built I-395/Southwest Freeway. These bridges include the two-span bridge within East Potomac Park (part of the Long Bridge Corridor) and the multi-span bridge between 2nd Street SW and South Capitol Street SW. These bridges were constructed of steel and concrete, common construction materials of the mid-20th century.

7th Street SW Bridge (c. 1970s; non-contributing)

The original bridge over 7th Street SW was constructed circa 1903 as part of the campaign to eliminate railroad grade crossings. It is likely that bridge resembled the other bridges contemporary to the raised rail corridor (such as those over 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th Streets SW). The circa 1903 bridge was replaced by the present Brutalist style cast concrete bridge in the 1970s, at the same time as the L'Enfant Plaza Metrorail station was built below ground using the Brutalist style consistent with the rest of the Metrorail system. The replaced bridge over 7th Street SW in its Brutalist garb was stylistically connected to this Modernist aesthetic. While there is no visual

connection between the bridge and the Metrorail station below ground, the bridge has not been fully evaluated in a Metrorail context.

9th Street Expressway Bridge (c.1979; non-contributing)

Like the 7th Street SW Bridge, the 9th Street Expressway Bridge was originally built circa 1903 as part of the campaign to eliminate railroad grade crossings, and likely had the same appearance as the other bridges contemporary to the raised rail corridor. The circa 1903 bridge was replaced circa 1979 as part of the construction of the 9th Street Expressway. Much like East Capitol Street NE/SE, the 9th Street Expressway travels below grade under the replacement bridge.

Virginia Rail Express L'Enfant Station (c. 1990s; non-contributing)

In the early 1990s, the Virginia Rail Express (VRE) began operating a commuter rail service from the Northern Virginia suburbs to Washington, DC. This commuter rail utilized portions of the existing shared tracks along the former B&P Railroad corridor. As part of that commuter line, VRE constructed a passenger station along the rail corridor between 6th and 7th Streets SW. The passenger station consists of a 555-foot-long platform with gabled canopy on the north side of the railroad tracks that is accessed via a set of concrete stairs near 6th Street SW or an accessible ramp near 7th Street SW (see Figure 2 and Photo 32).

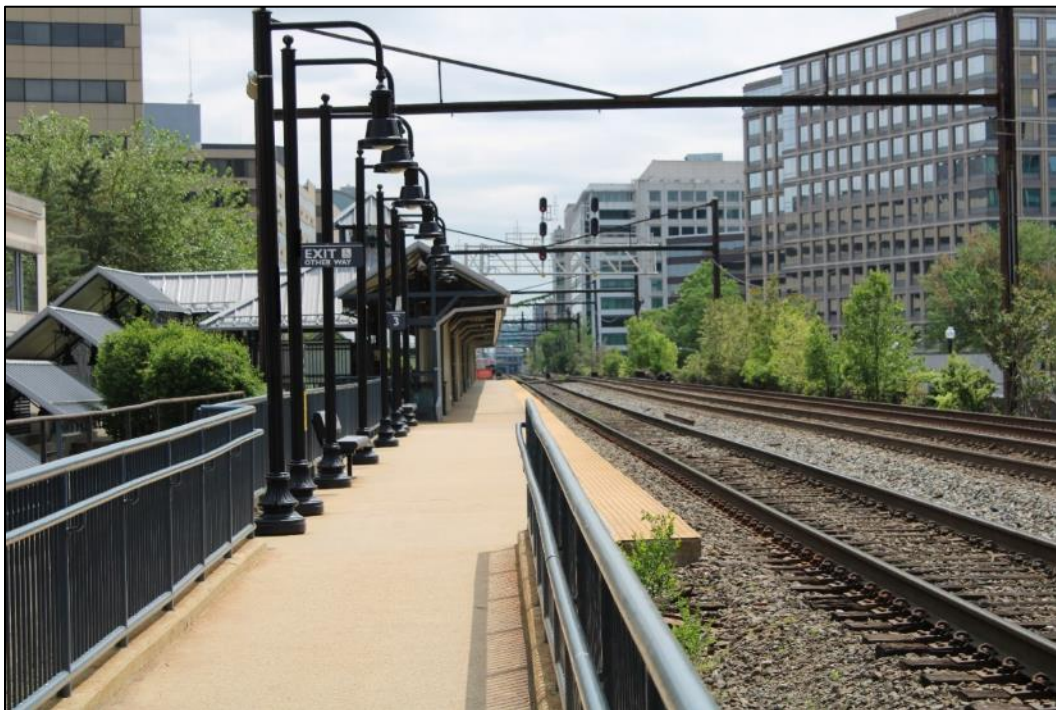


Photo 32. The B&P Railroad corridor as it passes through the Virginia Rail Express L'Enfant Station between 6th and 7th Streets SW, facing southeast (VHB 2024).

Conclusion

The arrival of the B&P Railroad set in motion dynamics which are still in play today. The railroad in conjunction with nearby waterfront shipping contributed to the post-Civil War commercial and industrial development of Southwest DC. At the same time, as the Southwest Citizens Association pointed out in 1905, the railroad introduced significant danger and pollution. It also introduced a physical barrier between much of the Southwest quadrant and the

rest of the city that continues to challenge city planners.³² Within Southeast DC, the B&P Railroad initially passed through a generally open landscape. As a result of the railroad's construction, industrial activity began to develop around the railroad corridor. This development did not lead to a major population boom and much of Southeast DC remained semi-rural until the 1950s. Finally, the history of the B&P Railroad illustrates the tension in the District governance between the federal government (which until the 1973 Home Rule Act also governed the District) and local interests, which had few tools apart from the newspapers to advocate for local issues. The railroads had Congressional support which overrode local interests and concerns, and it required an Act of Congress to remove trackage from city streets and parks.

National Register Eligibility Evaluation

Following the standards set forth by the Secretary of the Interior, eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is evaluated under the following criteria:

- A. Resources that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

These criteria, with additional guidance from National Register Bulletin 15, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, were used to assess the National Register eligibility of the B&P Railroad Corridor.

The B&P Railroad through the District was conditionally determined to be eligible for listing under Criteria A, B, and C, based on the Determination of Eligibility prepared in 2015. Because only a portion of the B&P Railroad was evaluated in 2015, additional research was conducted for this Determination of Eligibility in order to fully evaluate the entire railroad corridor. A summary of the eligibility recommendations from the 2015 documentation is below along with additional determinations based on the research presented in this form. The period of significance for the B&P Railroad is 1872 to 1935, corresponding to the initial date of completion through the electrification of the line. A summary of railroad resources and their recommended eligibility is in Table 1 at the end of this section.

National Register Criterion A

To meet Criterion A, the resource must have a significant association with historical events or trends. In 2015, the B&P Railroad was determined to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Transportation for its association with the diversification of rail service in Washington, DC, its association with the expansion of the PRR and creation of a continuous rail corridor between New York and Washington, DC, and a link between northern and southern

³² See for example "Maryland Avenue Southwest Plan," prepared by AECOM for the D.C. Office of Planning, 2012.

rail systems. The rail corridor's alignment and trackage are considered *contributing* resources to the B&P Railroad as described in the 2015 Determination of Eligibility.³³ In Southwest DC specifically, the B&P Railroad conveys this association as well as its association with early 20th century efforts to beautify the city.

The railroad and associated infrastructure facilitated the post-Civil War commercial and industrial development of Southwest DC and to a lesser extent that of Southeast DC. The rapid expansion of the railroad infrastructure in Southwest DC, the use of coal-fired steam trains, and the fact that the railroad became a physical barrier between the Southwest neighborhood and the rest of the District played a role in the neighborhood's developmental trajectory. Today, most of the industrial railroad infrastructure is no longer extant and the rail corridor no longer conveys the association with the commercial and industrial history of the Southwest waterfront.

The rail corridor continues to convey its association with the McMillan Plan and City Beautiful movement implemented in Southwest DC, and to a lesser extent Southeast DC, as an effort to improve public health and safety through redesigning urban spaces. The rusticated stone retaining wall that carries the B&P Railroad through Southeast and Southwest is a physical representation of the efforts to remove grade crossings throughout the District to address pedestrian fatalities at crossings as well as catastrophic collisions between steam engines and streetcars. The rusticated stone retaining wall is recommended as a *contributing* resource to the rail corridor.

Steel bridges along the rail corridor generally retain a substantial amount of historic material and appearance from their construction circa 1903. The historic riveted steel superstructures and stone masonry substructures remain. Contemporary alterations, such as the modernization of the tracks and utilities that have undoubtedly occurred over the bridges' life, are compatible with the historic bridges and do not detract from the historic character or appearance. The riveted steel deck beams and through girders convey the early design of the bridges, and their continued use as railroad bridges convey their association with rail transportation in the region. Therefore, the bridges over Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue NE as well as the bridges over South Capitol, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 6th Streets SW are recommended as *contributing* resources to the rail corridor. Additionally, the Eastern Avenue Bridge SE which was built circa 1915 as part of the construction of Eastern Avenue SE is also recommended as a *contributing* resource. As the Watts Branch Bridge was not visible from the public right-of-way, a determination of its eligibility is undetermined at this time.

The corridor also possesses two large railroad bridges that span major waterways. The Long Bridge Corridor (consisting of the Maine Avenue SW Railroad Bridge, the Washington Channel Railroad Bridge, the Ohio Drive SW Railroad Bridge, and the Long Bridge) is listed in the National Register as a contributing resource to the East and West Potomac Parks Historic District. The bridges that make up the Long Bridge Corridor are likewise recommended as *contributing* resources to the B&P Railroad corridor. The Anacostia River Railroad Bridge carries the railroad corridor over the Anacostia River and was built in 1872. The bridge was then rebuilt in 1972 and again circa 2010 with the same appearance as the original. The Anacostia River Railroad Bridge is recommended as a *contributing* resource to the B&P Railroad Corridor.

³³ AECOM, "Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad," 6.

In addition to the railroad corridor and bridges, several smaller features dating from the period of significance are also recommended as *contributing* resources. These resources include the 2nd Street SW Signal Tower, aka Virginia Avenue Control Point Tower, which is a DC landmark and listed in the National Register, the rusticated stone wall enclosure at 3rd Street SW, and the surviving catenary poles present throughout the line.

The I-395 Bridges, the East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge, the 7th Street SW Bridge, and the 9th Street SW Bridge were constructed (or reconstructed) after the railroad corridor's period of significance and are of a style incompatible with the historic design, materials, and feeling of the rail corridor. Though the design of the 7th Street SW Bridge is evocative of the design of the Metrorail system, the Metrorail station is located underground and does not offer any physical or visual connection to the 7th Street SW Bridge. The I-395 Bridges, the East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge, the 7th Street SW Bridge, and the 9th Street SW Bridge remain stylistically different than the original rail corridor features and are unable to convey any significance in terms of architecture or design. Therefore, it is recommended that the I-395 Bridges, the East Capitol Street NE Bridge, the 7th Street SW Bridge, and the 9th Street SW Bridge be considered *non-contributing* resources to the rail corridor.

The Benning Rail Yard was initially constructed in the 1870s and continues to function as a switching yard for CSXT, though the yard's size and trackage is greatly reduced from its historic configuration. The Benning rail yard retains its original location and setting but has lost a significant amount of trackage as well as associated buildings and structures. This has resulted in a loss of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Much reduced in size and in operating capacity, and with modern buildings and structures, its historic association with the B&P Railroad is difficult to convey; therefore, the Benning Rail Yard is recommended as a *non-contributing* resource to the B&P Railroad corridor.

The Virginia Avenue Railroad Tunnel was built in 1872 and expanded to its current extent in 1904. The tunnel is a critical piece of railroad infrastructure and played a major role in moving railroad traffic through Washington DC. The Virginia Avenue Tunnel as originally constructed was determined eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for providing important railroad access to Washington, DC, and also under Criterion C for its demonstrated engineering prowess. However, between 2015 and 2018 the tunnel was removed and rebuilt using new materials. The tunnel was also enlarged to permit the passage of double stacked railroad cars. Due to these significant alterations, the Virginia Avenue Railroad Tunnel is recommended as a *non-contributing* resource to the B&P Railroad corridor.

The VRE L'Enfant Station located between 6th and 7th Streets SW was constructed well after the period of significance for the B&P Railroad corridor; therefore, it is recommended as a *non-contributing* resource.

National Register Criterion B

To meet Criterion B, the resource must have a significant association with the lives of persons significant in our past. In the 2015 Determination of Eligibility, the B&P Railroad was determined to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion B for its association with John Edgar Thomson, a significant person in railroad transportation history. According to that documentation, Thompson achieved early success in the survey and establishment of railroad lines, including the challenging Horseshoe Curve (a National Historic Landmark) outside of

Altoona, Pennsylvania. Thomson then went on to lead the Pennsylvania Railroad’s significant expansion from 1852 to 1874, including creating a continuous operating corridor between New York City and Washington, DC., which required breaking the B&O monopoly in the District.³⁴ The B&P Railroad through the District continues to convey this significance and it is recommended *eligible* as such under Criterion B.

National Register Criterion C

To meet Criterion C, the resource must embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. In the 2015 Determination of Eligibility, the B&P Railroad was determined eligible under Criterion C in the area of Engineering for its association with the electrification of railroads in the early 20th century.³⁵ Contributing resources as described in the 2015 Determination of Eligibility include the remaining catenary poles. The B&P Railroad through the District continues to convey this significance, and it is recommended *eligible* as such under Criterion C.

National Register Criterion D

The railroad was not evaluated as an archaeological resource.

Summary of Eligibility Evaluation

Table 1 below provides a summary of the eligibility recommendation for each element of the railroad corridor discussed above.

Table 1. Summary of Recommendations for Railroad Resources

Railroad Resource	Recommendation
Alignment	contributing
Trackage	contributing
Catenary poles	contributing
Rusticated stone retaining wall	contributing
Eastern Avenue NE Bridge	contributing
Nannie Helen Burroughs Avenue NE Bridge	contributing
Watts Branch Bridge	undetermined
East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge	non-contributing
Benning Rail Yard	non-contributing
Anacostia River Railroad Bridge	contributing
Virginia Avenue Railroad Tunnel	non-contributing
South Capitol Street SW Bridge	contributing
I-395 Bridge	non-contributing
2 nd Street SW Signal Tower	contributing
Rusticated stone enclosure at 3 rd Street SW	contributing
2 nd Street SW Bridge	contributing

³⁴ AECOM, “Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad,” 7.

³⁵ AECOM, “Baltimore & Potomac (B&P) Railroad,” 7.

Railroad Resource	Recommendation
3 rd Street SW Bridge	contributing
4 th Street SW Bridge	contributing
6 th Street SW Bridge	contributing
7 th Street SW Bridge	non-contributing
VRE L'Enfant Station	non-contributing
9 th Street Expressway Bridge	non-contributing
Maine Avenue SW Railroad Bridge	contributing
Washington Channel Bridge	contributing
Ohio Drive SW Bridge	contributing
I-395 Bridge (East Potomac Park)	non-contributing
Long Bridge	contributing

Integrity Assessment

The B&P Railroad in the District retains enough historic integrity to convey its significance under Criteria A, B, and C. The rail corridor remains in its historic alignment after trackage was removed from areas in Southwest DC such as the National Mall and avenues; therefore, it retains integrity of location. Because the stone retaining wall and most of the bridges are substantially unchanged since their construction circa 1903, they retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Although the 7th Street SW Bridge, 9th Street SW Bridge, and East Capitol Street NE/SE Bridge detract from the overall historic feeling of the rail corridor, the remaining bridges retain their original material and style, conveying their historic appearance; therefore, the rail corridor retains its integrity of feeling and association. The B&P Railroad no longer retains its integrity of setting due to the substantial urban renewal implemented in the mid-20th century and the development that continues today.

Conclusion

Applying the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad is eligible under Criterion A for its association with transportation and urban renewal, Criterion B for its association with John Edgar Thomson, and under Criterion C as an excellent example of engineering associated with electrification of railroads in the 20th century. Elements of the rail corridor that are recommended as contributing to the significance of the B&P Railroad include the alignment, trackage, rusticated stone retaining walls, original steel bridges, and catenary poles. Table 1 above provides a summary of the railroad resources and the recommendations as contributing to the railroad corridor.

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PREPARER'S DETERMINATION

Eligibility Recommended

Eligibility Not Recommended

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Applicable Considerations:

A B C D E F G

Prepared By: Erin Leatherbee, Jenny Fulton, and Matthew Shoen, Preservation Planners, VHB
Date: January 15, 2025

DC SHPO REVIEW AND COMMENTS

Concurs with Recommendation

Does Not Concur with Recommendation

David Maloney
District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer

Date:

DC Government Project/Permit Project Log Number: