THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM
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2 August 2004

Dear Mr. Douglass,

During its meeting of 15 July, the Commission reviewed the proposed designs for the Rosalie Island deckover and park that are a part of the larger project to replace the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. While the members appreciate the efforts to enhance the experience of the pedestrian and bicyclist as they cross over the river and Rosalie Island, they had significant concerns about the project and did not approve the designs as submitted. Their concerns focused on two areas: the design of the deckover structure and the overall landscaping plans for the park and deckover. The general impression was that the landscape design was far too complicated and did not relate to the natural vegetation found on the island. Although the intention is to utilize native plants, the manner in which they were arranged was felt to be inappropriate and too much of a contrast with the existing natural state of the northern and southern portions of the island. Perhaps a different design approach, one in which the natural setting of the island is emphasized and accentuated would be more appropriate for the island's park and pathway. Undoubtably a simpler scheme would be far easier and more cost effective to maintain in the future.

The other item of concern for appropriateness of design was the deckover structure itself. During the presentation this wide, landscaped pedestrian bridge was characterized as a "gateway" feature for the vehicular traffic crossing the Potomac. If the idea of a gateway is desired, then perhaps a smaller, more thoughtfully designed and creatively engineered pedestrian bridge, celebrating the pathway crossing over the highway, would better achieve this goal. The proposed scheme was thought to be too heavy and utilitarian in appearance and the thought of laminating stone onto its side elevations is unacceptable. The members suggested several different design approaches the structure could take, including a smaller, lighter version replicating the main bridge's arching supports or perhaps a metal cable-stayed foot bridge that could be thought of as a piece of jewelry. Whatever the final configuration, it is hoped that the pedestrian or cyclist could be provided with a view of the main bridge, the passing traffic and the river while they are on this overpass.

Again, let us state that we are greatly supportive of the desire to enhance the Rosalie Island crossing, and we are aware that some of these recommendations may add time and cost to the project's development. Nevertheless, the bottom line should

not be a factor when enhancements such as this are being considered for one of the largest and what will be one of the most heavily traveled transportation corridor projects on the East Coast. We look forward to the continued review of this project as alternative designs are developed for this prominent "gateway" feature on the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge. As always, the staff is available should you or the project team require guidance.

Sincerely,

Frederick J. Lindstrom
Acting Secretary

Mr. Robert D. Douglass, PE, Director
Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project
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cc: Robert J. Healy, SHA
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