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April 11, 2013

Sanjay Kumar
Program Manager
Anacostia Waterfront Initiative
DDOT/IPMA
55 M Street, SE, 4th Floor
Washington, D. C. 20003

RE: Barney Circle & Southeast Boulevard Transportation Planning Study

VIA E-MAIL: sanjay.kumar@dc.gov

Dear Mr. Kumar:

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6B comprises much of the southeast side of Capitol Hill, including the Anacostia waterfront from north of the Sousa Bridge down to the Navy Yard on the west side of 11th Street SE. The Commission, thus, plans to be fully engaged in the DC Department of Transportation's "Barney Circle & Southeast Boulevard Transportation Planning Study," which held its first public meeting on February 21, 2013.

ANC6B appreciates that DDOT is conducting this study as the Commission feels the outcomes have the potential to improve the circulation of all modes of travel throughout our neighborhoods, expand the availability of green space, and open up to public use an area of the Anacostia Waterfront that has been largely inaccessible for many years.

Several ANC6B Commissioners attended the initial, Scoping Meeting of the study; and the Commission has, so far, discussed the study at two of its public meetings. On April 9, 2013, at a properly noticed ANC6B meeting, the Commission voted 8-0 to send this letter to DDOT outlining its concerns about and requesting additions to the study's scope. Our intent is to help improve the information and data gathering at this stage of this complex study so that ANC6B and the community it represents have confidence in the ultimate analyses that evolve.

The SE Boulevard

First and foremost, ANC6B needs to understand DDOT's justification for creating the SE Boulevard out of what was the SE Freeway between 11th and Barney Circle. We recognize that DDOT studied this concept in its *Middle Anacostia Crossings Transportation (MAC) Study (2005)* and carried this idea forward, although as a separate project, in the *11th Street Bridges: Final Environmental Impact Statement (2007)*. These studies mention why this freeway segment is no longer needed by characterizing it as "underused, dead-end section of the Southeast Freeway" and offer a rationale that a boulevard "would provide a better connection between the neighborhoods and the waterfront by creating a park-like environment, accessible by all modes of travel."

Page 2

ANC 6B Letter to DDOT Program Manager Sanjay Kumar

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We are, however, unable to find in these previous studies the explicit regional and local transportation needs for the proposed boulevard or any discussion of the positive and negative impacts of such a road on Capitol Hill neighborhoods. At this early stage of the study, ANC6B is not opposed to any form of a SE Boulevard. But, the Commission does not have sufficient information to make the first order decision that should precede consideration of alternatives including not building the boulevard. Each of these alternatives will have varying impacts on Capitol Hill.

In addition to these main comments, the Commission asks that that DDOT identify the full extent of the land area that could be taken up by a boulevard, bike and pedestrian paths, and green space and, for each boulevard alternative, provide a breakdown on the percentage of the total land area that is roadway, bike/pedestrian trail, and green space.

The Commission understands that because of the varying elevations of the current right of way, the alignment of a boulevard may be a determinate of the appropriateness of creating vehicle intersections with the existing street grid. For any alternatives that do enable intersections with 13th, 14th, and/or 15th Streets SE, the Commission asks DDOT to provide relevant traffic calming options for these residential streets. Finally, ANC6B feels that this study's projected traffic volumes rather than the 7-year old MAC study should determine the configuration of a new road for vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians between 11th Street SE and Barney Circle.

Barney Circle

ANC6B recognizes that there are a limited number of ways that a "true" Barney Circle could be designed. Thus, our major focus at this time is how a traffic circle will change travel patterns onto, off of and across the Hill and on whether it will provide appropriate routes for bicycles and ensure the safety of pedestrians who transverse it. What new vehicle traffic volumes and flows, if any, will this circle induce? How can the residential neighborhoods in the vicinity of a new traffic circle be protected from through traffic use of local streets? Conversely, how can through traffic be encouraged to use appropriate arterials?

The current configuration of local streets in the vicinity is a mix of two-way and one-way roads that do not necessarily work well today, even for residents. The Commission asks DDOT to consider options that provide appropriate traffic circulation for local residents while discouraging through traffic that may be generated by a new traffic circle. We ask, therefore, that the scope of the study include the 700 block of 16th Street SE, the 700 and 800 blocks of Kentucky Avenue SE, Freedom Way SE, and 17th Street SE from Potomac Avenue to Barney Circle. (The latter three blocks were not included in DDOT's recent "17th & 19th Streets Safety Improvement Study" and ANC6B was told that traffic calming for these blocks would be part of the Barney Circle study.)

Regarding "Park Drive," does DDOT intend to propose options in this study for creating a through road from Barney Circle to Independence Avenue as was described in the MAC study as Option R-1 (Park Drive Connector Road)? If so, its impact on redevelopment plans for the Hill East Waterfront (Reservation 13), especially on its street grid and future residents and businesses must be considered. ANC6B is also concerned that "Park Drive" could become an attractive through route when traffic gets backed up on I-295.

A Bus Facility

One of the most surprising and disconcerting elements of the study unveiled at the February 21 meeting was the idea of putting a “municipal or bus parking facility” underneath a portion of the boulevard. The Commission has two major issues regarding this facility. First, the concept needs to be fully examined by DDOT: What is the purpose and need of such a facility? Why is this area, somewhat isolated from major thoroughfares and retail areas, appropriate for a parking facility of any kind? In addition to needing answers to these broad questions, the Commission is concerned about many operational problems such a facility might cause on the residential area South of Pennsylvania Avenue including bus traffic congestion on local streets, elimination of parking, the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists, and increases in air and noise pollution by the vehicles attracted to it.

Second, the MAC study mentions “future land uses/redevelopment” for this area under the boulevard. Thus, might some other land use be more appropriate? Today, this area is zoned CM-1 (Commercial-Light Manufacturing), which permits a wide range of facilities, but zoning regulations only govern privately-owned land. ANC6B assumes that the land is publicly-owned DDOT Right-of-Way. The Commission asks DDOT to clarify the status of the land ownership and how that might affect consideration of a range of other possible uses for an area underneath an elevated boulevard.

Other ANC6B Comments on the Study’s Scope:

- Expand the scope of the Section 106 adverse impacts study to include historic Congressional Cemetery;
- Expand the scope as far south and east to include M Street SE and Water Street SE and Boathouse Row to, among other things, ensure that appropriate access to the waterfront is fully addressed and impacts identified;
- Include the CSX tracks in the study scope and explain in boulevard alternatives the best ways to overcome this barrier to waterfront areas;
- Consider the impacts of future commercial development of the triangle shaped area bounded by M Street SE, Water Street SE and 11th Street SE that currently includes the Maritime Plaza buildings;
- Link this study’s options to those being proposed under the DDOT’s “Pennsylvania-Potomac Avenues and 14th Street SE Intersection Safety Transportation Study”;
- Because the decisions to be made are broader than simply building a boulevard and a circle but, rather about building a neighborhood, add DC’s Office of Planning to the list of Stakeholders to provide input on appropriate ways to use the available land identified in the study and add the DC Department of Parks & Recreation for its expertise on park management;
- Identify the study’s Design Year. While this study is underway, transportation impacts on Capitol Hill are in flux because the 11th Street Bridges project is not completed and will not be until 2015. As a result, today commuter and resident travel patterns can change on a month-to-month basis as Bridge access roads are opened and closed. We also expect to have a CSX Virginia Avenue Tunnel project in the near term that will cause 3-years of disruptions.
- Include noise analyses for residential areas in the proximity of alternatives; and
- For any green/park areas created through this study, designate the city agency that would be responsible for upkeep and maintenance.

Page 4

ANC 6B Letter to DDOT Program Manager Sanjay Kumar

April 11, 2012

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In conclusion, the Commission asks that the study be guided by three overarching principles: First, while the study has to consider the needs of through traffic, this traffic should be directed along appropriate arterials with local, residential streets protected from it as much as possible. Second, the project should strive to connect surrounding neighborhoods to the Anacostia Waterfront. Third, the options presented under this study should adhere to the relevant goals expressed in the *Sustainable DC Plan*.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with you on this important project. Please contact Commissioner Kirsten Oldenburg, ANC6B Transportation Committee Chair, at 202-546-8542 or kirsten6b04@anc6b.org if you have questions or need further information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Brian Flahaven
Chair

cc: Councilmember Tommy Wells
Councilmember Mary M. Cheh
Councilmember Vincent Orange
ANC6B Commissioner Kirsten Oldenburg
Terry Bellamy, District Department of Transportation
Ravi Ganvir, District Department of Transportation
Harriet Tregoning, Office of Planning
Janet Quigley, Capitol Hill Restoration Society
Karl Kaiser, CH2M HILL