

Draft Letter to DDOT on Pennsylvania Avenue Pedestrian Crossings

To Mr. Bellamy, Director, DDOT

Dear Mr. Bellamy,

ANC6B Commissioners and their constituents have identified short pedestrian crossing times along 6B's stretch of Pennsylvania Avenue SE as an issue that adversely impacts the walkability of the neighborhood and, especially, the safety of pedestrians, such as the elderly, disabled and families with small children.

At our November 2012 meeting at which Mr. James Cheeks explained the rationale for the installation of a traffic signal at 10th and Pennsylvania Avenue, ANC6B Commissioners raised the issue of sufficiency of the timing of the pedestrian crossing signals along Pennsylvania Avenue. In response to these questions, Mr. Cheeks indicated that DDOT is undertaking an initiative to study and improve signal synchronization throughout the city and that DDOT would consider including Pennsylvania Avenue as part of the study.

Pennsylvania Avenue is a primary vehicular artery transiting ANC6B's portion of Capitol Hill. Currently DDOT is studying both Barney Circle and the Pennsylvania & Potomac Avenues and 14th Street SE intersection and we expect that major improvements in pedestrian safety will result at this eastern end of the avenue. With few exceptions, the timings of each pedestrian crossing along the rest of Pennsylvania Avenue to 2nd Street SE are too short (sometimes only 11 seconds), especially during rush hour, to enable a pedestrian to cross its entire width at a brisk pace. While the timing at these intersections may be designed to allow pedestrians to only cross to the median, this is not clear and may not be desirable since it only seems to encourage them to cross against the light to complete the crossing.

Not hearing anything further from the Department about the signal synchronization study and unable to find any reference to the study on DDOT's website, ANC6B, at its properly noticed regular meeting of May 14, on a vote of X -Y, agreed to request that DDOT provide the Commission with information on the status of any relevant Departmental studies and to inform the Commission whether or not Pennsylvania Avenue SE is included in these studies.

However, the Commission's major and immediate concern is about the signal timings for pedestrian crossings of Pennsylvania Avenue SE. We know that according to the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices that (1) the needs of pedestrians as well as vehicles shall be taken into account and that pedestrians are to be given sufficient time to cross roadways and (2) if sufficient time is not provided when there is a median, then signs are to be posted telling pedestrians to wait for the next cycle.

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Along Pennsylvania Avenue SE, however, as mentioned previously, few pedestrians are able to fully cross the street with the walk signal and there are no signs advising them to wait on the median. The Commission and its constituents wish to understand how signal crossing timing decisions are made by DDOT and how they are affected by various factors including the time of day and day of the week and the desire to move vehicle traffic through the area.

ANC 6B requests the opportunity to work with DDOT to improve pedestrian safety for its constituents on increasing crossing times, looks forward to hearing from DDOT on this matter, and invites a representative to make a presentation on signal timing at an upcoming 6B Transportation Committee meeting.