

Dear Mr. Kumar,

On June 11, 2013, at a properly noticed meeting with a quorum present, Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 6B voted X-X to send the following letter outlining our position and comments on the “Pennsylvania and Potomac Avenue SE Intersection Pedestrian Safety Study.” At the 2nd public meeting held on May 16, 2013, DDOT presented four options for improving pedestrian safety while taking neighborhood and through vehicle traffic into consideration. We feel that, during the course of the meeting, DDOT adequately answered the community’s questions and provided concise and useful information about each concept and rationale for its summary analysis.

In our letter to DDOT of March 14, 2013, in reaction to the information provided at the study’s scoping meeting, the Commission identified four principles that would guide its evaluation of alternatives: (1) enhancing pedestrian safety, (2) minimizing impacts on nearby residences, (3) creating green space, and (4) minimizing disruption during construction. ANC6B believes that “Concept 3: T-Intersection” is the alternative that best meets our criteria.

Further, ANC6B agrees with DDOT's recommendation to drop Concept 4 from further study because of its minimal improvement to pedestrian movements, negative impact to the clear zone between homes and the shifted roadway, poor traffic operations and high cost. We also do not support Concept 1 and Concept 2 due to their minimal improvement to existing conditions for pedestrians. None of these concepts appear to achieve the objectives of the study as well as Concept 3 does.

The “T-Intersection” concept shuts off the north portion of 14th Street from access to and from Pennsylvania Avenue. While many neighbors who live on the 700 block of 14th Street would appreciate this change, the Commission asks that DDOT check the impact this closure might have for fire trucks at the 1520 C Street SE station that use 14th to access Pennsylvania Avenue. Also, we ask that DDOT study the traffic flow impacts this closing may have on 15th Street SE and G Street SE. In addition, the Commission asks DDOT to provide information and data on how the T-Intersection concept will affect the current flow of commuter vehicle traffic that turns onto and off of Potomac Avenue. For instance, will signaling be used to prevent backups during peak periods on Potomac Avenue and in the left lane on Pennsylvania Avenue?

While DDOT is planning a major change to this intersection, ANC6B believes it would be an opportune time to renovate/rehabilitate the plaza around the Potomac Avenue Metro Station and add public amenities to the open area south of the intersection between Potomac Avenue and 14th Street SE. It is these two areas that enable the intersection to appear as a rectangular square in keeping with the original L’Enfant map.

As to the Metro plaza, we understand that this space is controlled by WMATA, but we ask that DDOT do all it can to encourage WMATA to join this project so that full renovation of this area

is possible. Usable, attractive green space around the station would create a public amenity to the benefit of Metro riders, pedestrians, and residents alike. One major issue involves the Kiss-and-Ride portion of the area. Currently, vehicles accessing the Kiss-and-Ride lot tend to create a fair amount of confusion, causing a hazardous situation for pedestrians crossing from 14th and G Streets. DDOT mentioned at the meeting that less than 10 cars a day use this lot for its designated drop off purpose. The community has long known that—although it is clearly designated as a ‘No Parking’ zone—cars illegally park there all day without consequence on a regular basis. We suggest the provision of a short pull over space curbside for the few drop offs and pickups and the conversion of this space into an inviting landscaped park/plaza, with a Capitol Bikeshare Station, benches, and shade trees.

Currently, the complementary open area south of the intersection is a patch of grass and weeds without any sense of place, shelter from the elements for Metro bus passengers, or designated pedestrian paths. The Commission asks DDOT to add amenities for waiting transit passengers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. These could include but not be limited to: trees, benches, covered shelters, bike racks, a drinking fountain, a bike tire pump station, a large installation of public art, and a wide pedestrian passage with a defined landscaped border between the new Potomac Avenue and 14th Street SE. The Commission also requests that DDOT consider the addition of a crosswalk on Potomac Avenue directly outside of the main entrance to Harris Teeter as the removal of the pedestrian crosswalk currently just south of Pennsylvania Avenue may lead to increased jaywalking to access the store.

The Commission thanks DDOT for its interest in the safety of our constituents. We believe that this project has the ability to make a safer, more user-friendly intersection for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. We do have serious concerns, however, about how the changes at this intersection will be coordinated with the various transportation projects and studies on Capitol Hill, such as the 11th Street Bridges project and the Barney Circle & SE Boulevard Study, so that multi-modal traffic flows will—in the end—be improved overall. Finally, the Commission looks forward to reviewing and evaluating the Draft EA document later this year.

Sincerely,

Cc: Bellamy
WMATA
CHRS
National Park Service
Commissioner Oldenburg