

ANC 6A Transportation & Public Space Committee Meeting Minutes
Capitol Hill Towers (900 G Street NE)
April 19, 2010

I. Call meeting to order at 7:01 pm

II. Introductions

- A. Committee members present: DeLania Hardy, Andrew Hysell, Sean Lovitt, Marlon Smoker and J. Omar Mahmud (Chair).
- B. Committee members absent: Shane Artim and Lance Brown.
- C. Others in attendance: Jamie Henson of DDOT; ANC 6A Commissioners Bill Schultheiss, Kelvin Robinson, David Holmes, Nick Alberti, Gladys Mack and Drew Ronneberg; ANC 6C Commissioner Anne Phelps; Ken Granata and Rob Stephens of the Rosedale Citizens Alliance; and other community members.

III. Community Comment

- A. Commissioner Holmes asked that the committee take up review of an additional agenda item. Mr. Mahmud asked that the committee possibly take it up at the end of the meeting or wait until next meeting, since there is a lot on the agenda. Commissioner Holmes agreed to wait until next meeting.
- B. Sondra Phillips-Gilbert read a statement to the committee (please see Attachment A).

IV. Announcements

- A. Mr. Mahmud made the following announcements:
 - i. 800 Block of 11th Street NE to be Restricted to Northbound Traffic Only for About One to Two Months Due to Streetscape Construction.
 - ii. H Street/Benning Road Streetcar Community Meeting Hosted by ANCs 5B, 6A and 6C on April 20 at 6:30 pm – Wheatley Elementary School, 1299 Neal Street NE.
 - iii. Further Discussion Regarding the Capitol Hill Transportation Study to Take Place at a Special Committee Meeting to be held April 26 – Location at Miner ES. The May 17 monthly committee meeting will still be held at Capitol Hill Towers.

V. New Business

- A. C Street Corridor Transportation Project Open House: Presentation of Three Conceptual Designs by Bill Schultheiss, as a Representative of Toole Design, and Jamie Henson of DDOT Followed by Q&A
- i. Materials were handed out to residents (Attachment B).
 - ii. The C Street Study was born from the Capitol Hill Transportation Study (CHTS). In the CHTS, C Street was identified as corridor with a major traffic speed problem.
 - iii. Temporary solutions to deal with this problem have included placement of a police car along the street.
 - iv. The study team is looking at ways to reduce traffic volume, including the reduction of at least one lane, in order to make the area safer and more livable.
 - v. The project team is now down to three possible scenarios for redesign of the corridor. The designs were shown on poster boards at the front of the room. All designs may contain some optional features which would have no significant impact on traffic):
 1. Curb extensions;
 2. Placement of bus stops; and
 3. Include left turn lane.
 - vi. Option A would eliminate one lane of eastbound traffic since the evening traffic will not be significantly impacted by losing one lane. The eliminated passing lane would become a parking lane. It is expected that traffic will move at the same rate as it does now.
 - vii. Option B would also eliminate one lane of eastbound traffic. However, the parking lane on the westbound side of the street would become a travel lane during morning rush hours. It is expected that traffic will move at the same rate as it does now.
 - viii. Option C would permanently eliminate one lane of traffic in both directions. It is believed this option will result in the redirection of traffic to other eastbound streets. However, given traffic volumes have increased of late due to the streetscape work on the H Street/Benning Road corridor, it is believed traffic levels along side streets like C Street will reduce again once the streetscape work is finished. The project team estimates much of the redirected traffic will use E. Capitol Street, where the street can carry an additional load of traffic according to Mr. Schultheiss. No increase in traffic along D Street NE is expected.

- ix. The C Street project is not slated to begin until other projects are finished like H Street/Benning Road, the 11th Street Bridge, Pennsylvania Avenue SE.
- x. All options may also contain additional features and certain “green” elements:
 - 1. Additional green space between homes and traffic. The idea is to push traffic away from homes with green space and chicanes (slight curves in the road intended to slow traffic).
 - 2. Shift bicycle lanes to sidewalk level to create a more enjoyable bike ride.
 - 3. Raised crosswalks (speed tables) at intersections to slow traffic down as cars cross or turn onto another street
 - 4. Wider sidewalk at bus stops to allow for installation of bus shelters.
 - 5. Closure of the 18th Street crossing at C Street to allow for safer pedestrian crossing only. This may be done at 16th street as well if possible. After doing the closure(s), additional green space may be created.
 - 6. Restrictions of left turns onto Oklahoma from C Street to eliminate “cut through” traffic, improve traffic flow and create less backups and spillover of traffic.
 - 7. Permeable surfaces on sidewalks and cycle tracks which will allow rainwater to infiltrate the ground. This option is also being considered for parts of the roadway to reduce storm water runoff. Permeable roadway surfaces can reduce runoff by as much as 40-50%.
 - 8. Installation of plants natural to this environment so they can withstand drought and high water levels, and look nice in all seasons.
 - 9. Maintain the median as a key safety feature for pedestrians (especially during rush hour).
- xi. Mr. Henson passed on the following advice as the community weighs what type of feedback to provide DDOT on all three current options, which may change at any time:
 - 1. Don’t think of this as picking one of the three options. None of these options will be the final option implemented by DDOT since

the designs still need to be vetted by others within DDOT and other city agencies and stakeholders.

2. Try to prioritize elements of the plans that are favorable when submitting recommendations to DDOT. This way DDOT can prioritize according to budget constraints.
- xii. Mr. Mahmud thanked Messrs. Schultheiss and Henson for giving the presentation and opened the floor to questions:
1. Ms. Phillips-Gilbert asked if the C Street plan will be feasible if the conversion of 17th Street NE from one-way to two-way traffic is not done. Messrs. Schultheiss and Henson both replied yes. Ms. Phillips-Gilbert asked that all three options be reconsidered. Mr. Schultheiss indicated that any final decisions on 17th Street will be made ahead of the C Street project moving forward.
 2. Mr. Stephens indicated all three options are an improvement over what we have now, but also indicated he is most concerned about traffic reduction. Accordingly, Mr. Stephens is in favor of option c since it will do the most out of the three options to eliminate commuter traffic and reduce bottlenecks westbound at the intersection with 20th Street and 17th/16th Streets. Option C would push the bottleneck back further prior to 20th Street. Options A and b will still create bottlenecks at these points. Mr. Henson responded that Option C will be a “hard sell,” but that DDOT is looking at it closely. Mr. Henson reiterated that DDOT has to be careful about how reductions in traffic lanes will impact other nearby streets. Where will the traffic be pushed? DDOT has to grapple with these questions internally.
 3. Commissioner Holmes reminded the committee that if traffic is being pushed to East Capitol Street as a result of any lane closures, there is already a significant bottleneck there too, meaning traffic may have to be pushed through other streets not appropriate for high levels of traffic. Mr. Henson responded that this is the exact same concern DDOT has at the time. According to Mr. Henson, there are always tradeoffs when considering street improvements. However, there may be diversion of traffic to C Street given streetscape work which will reduce C Street traffic volumes once construction is completed. Mr. Henson pointed out that changes for C Street as a result of high traffic volumes were being considered before streetscape construction, so chances are high traffic volumes will still be a problem unless DDOT acts.
 4. A resident expressed an interest in keeping the median at 20th Street since it will make it safer for school children to cross the

street. Regarding the safety point, Mr. Henson also pointed out that the street design must also accommodate emergency access.

5. Mr. Granata indicated that he understands traffic volumes neighborhood wide is a concern. He hopes DDOT considers making E. Capitol Street one lane so that traffic will be pushed to the 11th Street Bridge as opposed to it moving through our community. Or DDOT could think about this problem more broadly and, for example, open up the RFK parking lots to commuters as a park and ride for bike, buses and metro. DDOT could provide free or reduced parking for commuters using bike or public transit for the last leg to work.
6. Cody Rice encouraged DDOT to think about this project as if the street were being designed from scratch. If designing from scratch, we wouldn't design a solution that made for a bottleneck of traffic in this one place. Mr. Rice encouraged DDOT to break out of the mindset of what exists now and to think about how much real estate is being devoted to motorists in Options A and B. He feels very strongly about Option C even though he is aware of a possible diversion of traffic to other streets.
7. Dana Wyckoff indicated that as a resident living at 17th and C Streets, she lives at the intersection of two commuter pathways, which causes reduced livability on these streets. We need a larger integrated pattern for the whole area to address how motorists are using C Street. Ms. Wyckoff is also concerned that traffic has been encouraged to race down 17th Street. She thinks two-way traffic may slow things down on 17th, but she would like to see 19th tried first as a test case. Mr. Henson asked that comments and questions be limited to C Street and not two way conversions on 17th and 19th Streets.
8. Mr. Lovitt asked whether the 11th Street Bridge project is going to lower the high volume levels of traffic along C Street. Mr. Schultheiss replied that he believes the 11th Street project will reduce traffic along C Street, but that he's not sure. Mr. Henson further explained that the southbound movements on 295 are not currently accommodated so the 11th Street Bridge project may reduce some of the volumes of traffic on C Street now by accommodating the 295 southbound traffic. Mr. Schultheiss added that spillover from lane reductions can be unpredictable, as was learned from converting Constitution to a two-way street. This has caused spillover to other streets so the city must be careful about removing a lane of traffic addressing larger traffic volume problems first. Regarding Option C, concerns and reasons for

support are being hashed out at DDOT. Trying to be sensitive to the larger concerns.

9. A resident asked what design elements would go first if DDOT has to prioritize based on lack of funds and how much time will pedestrians have to cross the street? Mr. Schultheiss replied that there will be more time to cross the street since crosswalks are being shortened 30-50%. Regarding cost constraints, the expensive elements will be eliminated first. For example, chicanes may be eliminated since they are very expensive to build, but they may also remain regardless if Options A or B are chosen since chicanes are the main traffic calming measure for those options. Widened sidewalks may also drop out and bulb outs may be reduced.
10. Mr. Stephens pointed out that there may not be a zero sum game regarding traffic spillover if Option C is chosen. He encouraged DDOT to show data on spillover effects. If the data shows Option C would not cause significant spillover, which would help sell Option C. Mr. Henson informed the committee DDOT is doing a very good traffic analysis to show how the different options will impact traffic.
11. Commissioner Holmes pointed out that medians are good for pedestrian crossings of wide streets, especially for mothers with a stroller. The more the median is narrowed the more dangerous it is. Mr. Schultheiss promised not to install anything narrower than the median on Maryland Avenue, which is 4 feet.
12. Mr. Smoker asked what the construction budget is and who the federal stakeholders are on this project. NCPS? CFA? These stakeholders may have an issue with a chicane given the District has straight streets throughout city. Mr. Schultheiss indicated there is \$7M allocated for construction in 2012 and that he anticipates about \$6M to \$7M in construction costs now.
13. Mr. Lovitt expressed confusion about the timeline for this project. Mr. Henson responded that the schedule will depend largely on other prior projects, including the 11th Street Bridge project, because of the uncertainty about how traffic will be impacted by these projects.
14. A resident asked about short term changes that can be made to mitigate C Street traffic problems ahead of the C Street redesign. Mr. Henson informed the committee that DDOT is looking at developing short term solutions now as well. The resident also indicated that DDOT could look into changing signal timing at

night. Mr. Henson expressed caution about implementing certain short-term solutions given DDOT does not want to aggravate drivers, which could make traffic conditions more dangerous.

15. Commissioner Holmes asked about finding ways to reduce traffic coming to our neighborhoods from East Capitol Street east of the Anacostia River. Commissioner Schultheiss indicated a study is now being done regarding this issue. DDOT did a study on this issue in the past, but it was never implemented. Mr. Henson indicated that DDOT has already received pushback from ward 7 residents concerned about pushing traffic into their neighborhoods as a result of the C Street project and other DDOT proposals.
16. Mr. Stephens asked that DDOT give residents the hard data on traffic volume levels so that the problem can be dealt with objectively between neighbors and neighborhoods. Mr. Henson responded that the study is not to the point where DDOT is confident about the conclusions to be drawn in it.
17. Mr. Mahmud urged DDOT to continue focusing on reducing traffic volumes so that there is less of a concern about redirecting C Street traffic. Focus on the big picture.
18. Commissioner Robinson asked that DDOT take the view further back in the pipeline to consider the impacts of the 11th Street Bridge project. He feels DDOT cannot consider impact on C Street without first looking at other projects like 11th street. Mr. Smoker informed the committee that the 11th Street Bridge project team is not seeing major reductions in traffic volumes as a result of the project, maybe 5%. The 11th Street Bridge project keeps traffic on the freeway, but the impact it will have on side streets is uncertain at this point.
19. Mr. Stephens asked that ANC 6A be concerned about advocating for a solution that is in the best interests of ANC 6A residents. We all want to reduce the amount of spillover traffic, but the ANC needs to stand up to say we don't want this traffic in our ANC.
20. Mr. Granata suggested DDOT educate drivers to stay on 295 and to get on the 11th Street Bridge. He also suggested DDOT incentivize drivers to use public transit. He would also like charter buses to use the RFK access road as opposed to residential streets.
21. A resident suggested DDOT make subtle low cost changes designed to make it less desirable for motorists to drive through the neighborhood. That way there will be fewer motorists to deal with when the project begins. Mr. Schultheiss indicated his team is

working short term wins/solutions into the project report for DDOT. Mr. Schultheiss would also like to explore the idea of using RFK stadium as a parking lot to handle commuter traffic.

- xiii. Mr. Mahmud thanked the presenters and asked for suggestions on next steps on the C Street project. Mr. Schultheiss promised to provide additional analysis for next meeting which will help the committee make some preliminary recommendations to the ANC.

VI. Additional Community Comment - None

VII. Adjourn meeting at 7:55 pm