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August 10, 2020

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Laura MacNeil
DDOT/ PSD
55 M Street, S.E., 5th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20003
laura.macneil@dc.gov

Dear Ms. MacNeil,

The Dupont Circle Citizens Association (DCCA) is submitting these comments on the proposed reconfiguration of 17th St. NW to accommodate new, protected bike lanes, as described in the Notice of Intent # 20-69-PSD (“NOI”) issued on June 5, 2020. This NOI engenders several procedural and substantive concerns.

Procedural Issues:

1. The process DDOT used, and the announced timeline to finalize the plan, were and are woefully inadequate and deprive the community of necessary and meaningful input. The NOI was issued without any open community meetings hosted by DDOT and after only limited input from a small number of ANC2B members. The only public meeting was convened by the ANC after the NOI was issued. Finalization of the plan is set to occur approximately 4 weeks after the receipt of comments, due on August 13th.
2. The public was deprived of meaningful input into the ANC engagement with DDOT because communication was limited to a handful of ANC members.
3. At this time, because of the pandemic, the area benefits from extended sidewalks and outdoor “streateries.” Under the circumstances, and given the concerns expressed by residents and businesses in the area, it makes little sense to rush ahead with new protected bike lanes until we have a sense of whether these pandemic-related experiments provide insights into safe, effective and beneficial use of the street and other public spaces.

Substantive Issues:

Our comments below are focused on the section of 17th Street between P and S Streets. This section is an unusual mix of residential and business establishments. In particular, the blocks between P and Q Streets are zoned commercial on the east side and residential on the west side, including several large residential buildings. The businesses, in addition to restaurants and bars, include a well visited grocery store, the last remaining hardware store in the Dupont Circle neighborhood, a liquor store with a robust delivery business, and an art gallery/framing store. Consequently, there

is a large amount of pedestrian traffic, car traffic, vehicles delivering to the multitude of commercial establishments, and customer vehicles transporting large items.

1. Given the mix of businesses, the heavily residential character of the immediate area, and the importance of this section of East Dupont as a commercial, dining and gathering center, we remain convinced that a serious study of transforming the area into a shared street (“woonerf”) is appropriate. DDOT’s summary dismissal of the idea has not been justified.
2. Per federal classification guidelines: urban minor arterial streets “provide *intra*-community travel, do not penetrate neighborhoods, and are generally spaced no more than 1 mile apart in fully developed areas.” Our understanding is that DDOT classifies 17th Street as a minor arterial, but a bike lane stretching from Adams-Morgan to the West End built as part of a District-wide network of protected bike lanes would be for *inter*-community travel, rather than the *intra*-community travel stipulated for minor arterials, and would thus represent an unapproved change of use for 17th Street.
3. The NOI is focused on creating and facilitating bike transit through the area. Given the large volume of pedestrians, and the proposed introduction of a contraflow bike lane, it is essential that if the plan goes forward, significant calming measures and visible signage be incorporated into the plan to protect pedestrians.
4. The NOI clearly makes inadequate provisions for commercial loading and handicapped parking and access. More engagement with the impacted businesses and residents is needed.
5. Given the nature of this area as the heart of East Dupont Circle, rather than the typical white bollards, planters, or some other type of aesthetically pleasing protective devices should be used.
6. Much of this stretch of 17th Street has narrow, congested sidewalks. Care must be taken with the placement of any additional bike stands to avoid further reduction of the area available for safe use by pedestrians.

Given the multiplicity of serious issues presented by this location and the current situation, the attempt to push through a poorly developed plan makes little sense. More consultation with the public and businesses is needed to ensure the safety and robustness of the neighborhood. We urge that the timeline for finalizing the plan be extended at least six months from receipt of comments to allow for sincere engagement with the residents and businesses.

Sincerely,



Glenn Engelmann, President
Dupont Circle Citizens Association



Susan Volman, Chair
DCCA Transportation Committee

CC:

Councilmember Brooke Pinto, Ward 2 bpinto@dccouncil.us

Councilmember Mary Cheh, Transportation Committee Chair mcheh@dccouncil.us

Mayor Muriel Bowser eom@dc.gov

DDOT Director Jeffrey Marootian jeffrey.marootian@dc.gov

Commissioner, ANC2B 2B@anc.dc.gov

Anna Chamberlain, DDOT anna.chamberlin@dc.gov

Kimberly Vacca, DDOT Kimberly.Vacca@dc.gov

Bill McLeod, HDCMS execdirector@dupontcircle.biz

Colleen Hawkinson, Dupont Circle BID chawkinson@dupontcirclebid.org