

May 15, 2014

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Richard Sarles, General Manager and CEO
WMATA
600 5th St. N.W.
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Re: Chevy Chase ANC Transportation Task Force

To DDOT and WMATA,

Please note that at our duly noticed May 12, 2014 meeting, the Chevy Chase ANC (ANC 3/4G) voted 6 to 1 (a quorum being four) to submit this letter to the D.C. Department of Transportation (“DDOT”) and Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (“WMATA”). Our ANC adopts the following report completed by our Chevy Chase ANC Transportation Task Force. The Task Force Report, incorporated herein in full, is as follows:

Formation of the Chevy Chase ANC Transportation Task Force

The Chevy Chase ANC created this Task Force at its duly organized public meeting of November 25, 2013, by a unanimous vote of 7-0, and in accordance with its by-laws. The purpose of this Task Force is to study and provide written recommendations and comments on significant transportation matters that affect our Chevy Chase ANC area.¹

The ANC appointed Commissioner Gary Thompson to organize the Task Force. An open call for volunteer members from our ANC area was made at the ANC meeting, on the Chevy Chase listserv, and in the minutes as published in the Northwest Current. Anyone in our ANC area was eligible and welcome to participate. The following members of the community graciously volunteered:

Andrew Aurbach
Allen Beach (ANC Commissioner Emeritus)
Kernan Chaisson
Nadine Mildice Chaisson

¹ Our ANC borders (half in Wards 3 and 4) are (a) *north*: Western Ave.; (b) *east*: Rock Creek; (c) *south*: Military Rd./27th St./Broad Branch Rd./Nebraska Ave.; and (d) *west*: Reno Rd./41st St.

Lionel Collins
Ann Hoffman
Bob Kovach
Janean Mann
Michaela Platzer
Commissioner Gary Thompson (ANC 3/4G02)
Lucinda Wade

The Task Force members devoted many hours to study and review of the major transportation issues that are most relevant to our ANC area. We met three times in person, shared e-mails, and ultimately adopted this report. We comment herein on the following transportation issues within our ANC borders:

- the E6 bus
- the E2/E3/E4 buses
- the M4 bus
- the L1/L2 buses
- DDOT's "Livability Study"
- pedestrian safety
- traffic lights
- stop signs
- speed humps
- bicycles
- sidewalks

Our Task Force appreciates the attention that DDOT and WMATA have provided to our neighborhood. Thank you in advance for your review of our comments and for your ongoing time and commitment to these issues. We hope to follow up with DDOT and/or WMATA in the coming months and years on these issues.

The E6 Bus

As you know, in years past, DDOT has proposed possible elimination or reduction of the E6 bus line (since the E6 runs entirely within D.C., DDOT funds the route and makes recommendations to WMATA, who makes the formal decision about routes). In 2011, many members of our community, including the ANC, testified before WMATA or otherwise voiced strong views in favor of retaining the E6 route as it is (and also expanding service). Thankfully, because of strong neighborhood opposition, there was no elimination or change in the E6 service. Since 2011, ridership on the E6 rose by almost 30% (according to WMATA's annual metrobus ridership report). The community was thus understandably confused when in 2013, DDOT again proposed a substantial reduction in E6 service.

The community again mobilized and the 2013 proposed reduction was also defeated, for good reasons, as we presume DDOT and WMATA recognized. The E6

travels through an area that has limited or no transportation options. The route is important to riders for many reasons, including (but not limited to):

- School children depend on the E6 to get to Deal or Wilson.
- Area workers depend on the E6, such as those who work at Knollwood, where the earliest E6 route arrives at 6:01am (which makes them late for their 6:00 am shifts) and the latest bus departs at 8:50pm.
- Elderly residents, such as those at Knollwood, depend on the bus to travel to the Conn. Ave. commercial corridor and medical appointments at Friendship Heights.
- The E6 is feeder to Friendship Heights, for the Metro, and also shopping in that area.
- Daily commuters depend on the E6 to travel to their jobs throughout the city. A more successful E6 enhances employment opportunities.

We appreciate that DDOT and WMATA examine ridership numbers and consider whether a particular route is, in and of itself, profitable. However, decisions about bus routes should not revolve on mere ridership numbers. An equally important variable is whether the route traverses through areas that would otherwise be abandoned by any form of public transportation. In the broader picture, some bus routes with higher ridership subsidize others with lower ridership, for the larger public good. Another equally important interest is maintaining public transportation for the disabled or those who have no other means of transport.

In the wake of the defeat of the recent proposed reductions, the community, through this Task Force, decided it would be wise to be more proactively involved with the E6 issue (and other transportation issues), so as to avoid being in a reactive posture if there is another suggested route reduction or elimination at some future date.

In short, we want to *help* WMATA and DDOT in creating a more successful E6 route. Overall, this Task Force urges WMATA and DDOT to maintain and expand the E6 bus line as it is a vital weekday link for hundreds of Chevy Chase DC residents. We recommend that WMATA and DDOT consider the following specific actions:

- Expand evening service. Presently, evening service is infrequent (every 20-30 minutes) and ends early (8:50pm from Friendship Heights). Expanding evening service likely would expand ridership. We believe the demand is present, but diverted elsewhere (including to driving and walking) due to infrequent E6 service, especially in the evening.

- Add weekend service. Similarly, we believe the demand is present on weekends (the E6 route once included weekend service). One weekend option might be to merge the E6 route with either the E2 or E4 route.
- Collaborate with our Task Force and ANC 3/4G on a public outreach campaign to increase local awareness and to recruit more E6 riders.
- Improve communication with riders in as many ways as possible. For example: (a) install LCD panels telling riders the wait time(s) for the next bus(es); (b) develop user-friendly applications for bus riders, building on newer programs such as WMATA’s “Next Bus” App; and (c) post QR codes at each bus stop to enable riders to directly view the listing for the next bus.
- Consider consolidation of certain stops (as per the Metrobus Service Evaluation Study 2011).
- Reconsider and redesign routing during snow and ice emergencies. Let riders know the alternate routes and establish a way of letting the area know when this is implemented and when service goes back to normal.

The E2/E3/E4 Buses

We considered these bus lines and do not currently recommend any changes.

The M4 Bus

The M4 bus is especially full with school children traveling to and from Deal and Wilson. It also accommodates many commuters on their way to or from Tenleytown. As with the E6, bus frequency decreases in the evening hours (after school children have gone home). Commuters are dissuaded from riding this bus because of the evening route infrequency and, at times, unreliability in timing (*e.g.*, coming out of the Metro, just missing the bus, then having to wait half an hour or more for the next one). Metro should consider increasing evening frequency, and weekend service, combined with community outreach to let potential riders know. Again, we would be happy to support any such outreach efforts, to help increase commuter ridership. DDOT might also consider the consolidation of certain M4 stops. Finally, until there is weekend service, it would be helpful to add a sign informing riders of “no weekend service,” as sometimes potential riders wait there on weekends.

The L1/L2 Buses

We considered these Conn. Ave. bus lines and do not currently recommend any changes. We note that during snow or inclement weather, these lines are cancelled because this is not a “priority corridor” area. DDOT should nevertheless consider keeping these vital Conn. Ave. lines open during inclement weather, to the extent possible.

DDOT’s “Livability Study”

In 2010-11, DDOT conducted an extensive study in our community called the “Rock Creek West II Livability Study.” There were several DDOT meetings to gather community input and reaction on many transportation-related issues in our ANC area, among others. On March 7, 2011, the final report was released, and remains available at <http://ddot.dc.gov/page/rock-creek-west-ii-livability-study>. DDOT initiated the study to take a big picture look at the street network in our area and identify concrete actions to increase transportation and safety options. The project focused on transportation safety and quality of life issues for all users, including drivers, bikers, and pedestrians.

There were numerous specific recommendations for our ANC area that have never been implemented, which seems odd, given the significant amount of time and expense put into the process and study. For our ANC area, see the Final Report at p.46, figure 22. One completed task is the pedestrian-HAWK signal at Conn. Ave. and Northampton St. (more on that below).

Three specific recommended improvements stand out for need of completion. *First*, DDOT recommended the installation of raised crosswalks at the intersection of Northampton St. and Broad Branch Rd., which is next to Lafayette School and Broad Branch Market, and thus heavily used. (Final Report at p.51). There were, and are, compelling safety reasons for this improvement.

Second, DDOT recommended various improvements for Nevada Ave., including bike lanes or sharrows. We support their implementation. (Final Report at p.51).

Third, DDOT recommended various safety improvements for signage at Chevy Chase Circle. (Final Report at p.47-48). There were several “short-term” measures to improve signage for both drivers and pedestrians. Not all recommendations have been implemented.

Pedestrian Safety

Pedestrian safety has long been a great concern in our neighborhood, especially along our stretch of Conn. Ave., from Nebraska Ave. to Chevy Chase Circle. There have been several very serious pedestrian injuries in the last decade, and also one death. Several excellent recommendations have been made by the Connecticut Avenue Pedestrian Action (“CAPA”) group, some of which are incorporated into the Rock Creek West II Livability Study. Our Task Force supports CAPA’s recommendations and urges DDOT to work closely with CAPA towards implementation of these measures.

As noted above, one area of success has been the installation of the pedestrian-activated HAWK signal at the intersection of Conn. Ave. and Northampton St. It has been about a year since its installation and some people report ongoing confusion regarding how the light operates, namely, when it is a blinking red, cars do not always stop. DDOT might consider the addition of rumble strips as an extra clue to cars to proceed with caution.

Traffic Lights

We considered all traffic lights in our ANC area and other than the HAWK signal issue discussed above, have no specific recommendations about any of them.

Stop Signs

We considered all stop signs in our ANC area and have no specific recommendations at this time. We wish to point to our community that street sign additions or changes can be requested at DDOT's website at <http://ddot.dc.gov/service/street-signs> (or by calling 311).

Speed Humps

We wish to point out to our community that speed humps can be requested at DDOT's website at <http://ddot.dc.gov/page/ddot-speed-hump-request-procedures-and-engineering-guidelines>. In short, subject to various engineering guidelines and limitations, and ANC input, a speed hump may be installed upon receipt of a petition in which residents endorse the measure with at least seventy-five percent (75%) support of the households in the candidate block or street segment. For any speed humps, they should comply with DDOT's engineering requirements, especially allowing for sufficient distance from beginning to end so that a car can travel over the hump at the allowed 25 mph limit.

Bicycles

Our Task Force supports the installation of Capital Bikeshare stations throughout our ANC area, including (1) at or near the Chevy Chase Community Center/Library; (2) at the new apartment building being constructed at 5333 Conn. Ave., which the developer/owner (Cafritz) agreed with our ANC to install; (3) Lafayette School; and (4) at a location closer to Rock Creek Park, such as at St. John's High School. These stations also supplement bus service.

Our Task Force also supports the installation of bicycle-related infrastructure to support increased bicycle usage in our area, including those found in (a) the bicycle-related improvement reflected in the Rock Creek West II Livability Study, (at p.46); and (b) the Bicycle Master Plan (2006).

Sidewalks

We also note for our community that sidewalk repairs or installation can be requested at <http://ddot.dc.gov/service/sidewalk-repair>, with guidelines posted at <http://ddot.dc.gov/page/sidewalk-construction-guidelines-and-policy>.

Cars

Finally, we favor more Zip-Car stations in our area, such as along Conn. Ave. or at retirement communities like Knollwood and Ingleside (as some retired persons have reduced need for a car).

Conclusion

Please note that this is a work in progress and we hope to work together with DDOT and WMATA with respect to any particular issues, being realistic and flexible. Our Task Force plans to stay together and see these issue through, with ongoing involvement from our ANC and constituents.

Thank you for your attention to these issues. We welcome your questions and are available to work further towards improvements in our ANC area.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jim McCarthy,
Chair, Chevy Chase ANC

Gary Thompson
On behalf of the Chevy Chase
Transportation Task Force

cc: Mayor Vincent Gray
D.C. Council Chair Phil Mendelsohn
Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh
Ward 4 Councilmember Muriel Bowser
Chevy Chase list serv