



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

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Tammy Stidham
Chief, Planning, Compliance & GIS
National Capital Region
National Park Service
1100 Ohio Drive SW
Washington, DC 20242

Comments on the Georgetown Nonmotorized Boathouse Zone Development Plan and EA

Dear Ms. Stidham,

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (“WABA”), I am pleased to submit these comments in support of the National Park Service — Georgetown Nonmotorized Boathouse Zone Development Plan and EA.

Of specific interest to WABA are the transportation elements of this study. This includes the solutions for better connections from the Capital Crescent Trail to the on-street bike network, the Georgetown Waterfront Park and Rock Creek Park Trail. As the plan notes, the Capital Crescent Trail is a high-volume bicycle and pedestrian corridor, yet the current accommodations at the trail's southern terminus are inadequate.

A section of the K St/ Water St NW corridor was recently deemed one of the top priorities of NPS within the Paved Trails Study. Out of more than 120 distinct recommendations, Project C1.1: Closure of Gap on Water Street NW between 30th St. NW and 31st St. NW was ranked in the top 18 projects. The significance of this speaks to the corridor’s importance in connecting the regional trail network.

The Water/K Street Bicycle – Pedestrian Connectivity Enhancements Plan (a project of DDOT and Georgetown BID) also focus on this corridor. Multiple plans have made this trail connection a regional priority, so it must be designed to handle a high volume of bicyclists of all skill levels.

The study addresses important safety concerns over tour bus parking. WABA supports the proposal of off-site parking solutions for tour buses; tour bus parking is not appropriate use of the space within the study area because it is incompatible with heavy pedestrian and bicycle use.

WABA also supports the limited access design for Water Street on the west side of the cul-de-sac. A reclaimed public space, free of parking and through traffic, but still providing boathouse access, would keep people safe from unpredictable traffic created by drivers who are lost or looking for parking. It would also enhance the visitor experience.

Clarifying questions:

- On Table 1 on Page 15, under the category “Multi-use Trail,” NPS has listed “Shared bike lanes in Water Street NW with transition between trail and cul-de-sac.” What is meant by “shared bike lanes” here? Does that mean there will be a lane with sharrows? If that is the correct interpretation, we recommend rephrasing to “Shared lane with bike markings/sharrows.”
 - If a shared lane marking is used, please ensure that the markings are installed in the middle of each lane, rather than to one side. Furthermore, since research shows that shared lane markings have little impact on vehicle speeds, consider other traffic calming and speed reduction measures to ensure that Water Street is a safe space for bicyclists of all ages, comfort levels, and abilities.

Recommendations:

- Reconsider the location of the cul-de-sac. By placing the cul-de-sac further east from the proposed location, bicyclists and pedestrians will have a longer car-free zone, while maintaining access for boathouse traffic. The location proposed in the K & Water Street Corridor Bicycle - Pedestrian Connectivity Enhancements study, completed by DDOT and Georgetown BID, at 34th Street NW, is our preferred location for the cul-de-sac. The steel girders provide for a wider turnaround circle than the concrete support pillars to the west. With proper street design, it will be clear to users how the space to the west of the cul-de-sac should be used.
- Placing the cul-de-sac further to the east will result in a positive environmental impact because of fewer vehicle miles traveled. Creating a more inviting plaza area would reduce the unpredictable interactions between car drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians. It would also provide more opportunities for pervious paving.
- As the study notes, the proposed non-motorized zone will attract additional bicycle and pedestrian trips to and through the study area. Particularly in these pedestrian heavy areas, a multi-use trail functions best when it is wide enough to mix different uses. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) trail standards recommend 12 foot width on trails where heavy use is anticipated. Therefore, the Capital Crescent Trail should be 12 feet wide except where constraints, such as support girders, require a narrower width. The long-term recommendation of the DDOT and Georgetown BID plan for Water and K Street includes a trail extending towards the Rock Creek Park Trail.

WABA thanks NPS for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Gregory Billing, Executive Director
Washington Area Bicyclist Association