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Suite 400
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Subject: Pennsylvania and Potomac Avenues SE Intersection Pedestrian
Improvement Project

Dear Mr. Ganvir:

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society (CHRS), a consulting party, submits comments concerning this project before the deadline of June 30, 2017.

DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) has clearly worked very hard to improve the options for this important project to improve pedestrian safety. The three build alternatives, Triangle Parks, Rectangle Park and Ellipse Park, appear largely or totally unchanged from DDOT's 2014 plans. The Rectangle Park and the Ellipse Park each improve pedestrian safety, are based on historic streetscapes, and better follow the L'Enfant Plan. The Rectangle Park and the Ellipse Park are versions of Washington traffic circles and offer more green space. In our 2014 comments, we supported both these alternatives, and we continue to support them. In contrast, the Triangle Parks alternative lacks some of these positive features.

However, our support of Rectangle Park and the Ellipse Park is conditioned on a caveat. At the June 1, 2017 public meeting, a number of residents of Jenkins Row Condominiums described problems with people waiting for busses forcing their way into the secure building lobby to wait for the bus, and possible loitering. They made an excellent point that the bus stops should not be near the entrance to a residential building. According to DDOT representatives, the Triangle Parks alternative would keep the bus stops in approximately the same place as currently; it was not yet clear where the bus stops would be located for the Rectangle Park and the Ellipse Park. We believe that bus stop locations are very important.

We have several questions and comments:

Triangle Parks: What is the function of the two small squares at each end of the park? A skateboard area? If so, the community should be consulted.

Rectangle Park: This park suffers from a serious design flaw that we have flagged before: There are eight pedestrian paths (crossings) entering the park from 14th Street, Potomac Avenue, and Pennsylvania Avenue, but only four of these pedestrian paths continue into the park. In contrast, in the Ellipse Park, all pedestrian paths continue through the park. The current design of the Rectangle Park will result in pedestrians making their own dirt "cow paths" through the shrubs and groundcover. These muddy cow paths already exist in the median at this intersection, and are shown on DDOT's map of current conditions as unmarked pedestrian paths. After all the community's time and money, it is essential that the final design take into account known human habits to seek the shortest path. It was irresponsible for a DDOT representative to suggest on June 1, that people will just make their own paths. The final design must have paved paths through the park for all pedestrian crossings.

Additional questions and comments:

1. The National Park Service (NPS) owns the median, and would need to agree to a land swap to implement any of the build alternatives. Is NPS on board with the necessary land swap?
2. Will there be irrigation in the center of each of the build alternatives? (There is no irrigation now.) If there will be no irrigation, what ground cover, trees and shrubs will be planted to thrive in dry conditions?
3. What is the lighting plan for the three build alternatives? We urge DDOT to install fully shielded 2700 K lights.

4. Will the build alternatives include automated traffic enforcement? This is very important for public safety.
5. Which agency (NPS or DDOT) will be responsible for maintaining any fountain in the build alternatives? What is the estimated cost? NPS has stopped operating several fountains because of budget limits. See e.g., the Mayan fountain in Pershing Park. If a fountain is installed, it must be maintained and operational at all times.
6. What is the estimated cost of each build alternative? Is there funding for this project in DDOT's FY 2018 capital budget?
7. We urge DDOT to continue to engage with WMATA on building a canopy at the Potomac Avenue Metro stop, and to improve the area around the station.

Thank you for considering our comments. Responses to our questions can be directed to Beth Purcell at beth@eapdc.com. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Nelson
President

cc:

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