

Government of the District of Columbia

Department of Transportation



District of Columbia Department of Transportation
Connecticut Avenue NW Reversible Lane Operations & Safety Study
Minutes from Community Advisory Committee Meeting No. 2
Thursday, June 11, 2020 - 6:00 p.m.
Microsoft TEAMS Virtual Meeting

ATTENDEES

DDOT Team (Alphabetically by Last Name)

Ed Stolof, Project Manager, Project Planning Branch, Planning & Sustainability Division, DDOT

Cynthia Lin, Deputy Project Manager, Project Planning Branch, Planning & Sustainability Division, DDOT

Ellen Jones, Chief Project Delivery Officer, DDOT

Jim Sebastian, Associate Director, Planning & Sustainability Division, DDOT

Community Advisory Committee Members (Alphabetically by Last Name)

David Cristeal, ANC 3F01

Robert Deyling, Chair of the ANC 3F Streets & Sidewalks Committee

Beau Finley, ANC 3C04

Chris Fromboluti, ANC 3G07

Eileen McCarthy, Chair of the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC)

Tom Quinn, ANC 3E04

Lee Brian Reba, ANC 3C01

Josh Rising, ANC W3BA

Randy Speck, ANC 3G03

Project Team (Alphabetically by Last Name)

Charlotte Ducksworth, Partner with Commun-ET (Public Engagement Specialist)

Michael Glickman, Project Manager with AMT Engineering

Sabrina Hamm, Transcriptionist with Commun-ET (Public Engagement Specialist)

Ian Swain, Partner with Commun-ET (Public Engagement Specialist)

I) Call to Order

- a) Ed Stolof called the second meeting of the Community Advisory Council (CAC) to order at 6:01 p.m. on Thursday, June 11, 2020. The meeting was convened via Microsoft Teams due to the social distancing requirements mandated by COVID-19.

II) Logistics

- a) Mr. Stolof provided an overview of the meeting's logistics, including how to use the various functions of the Microsoft Teams system; and the ground rules/protocols for the meeting.

II) Welcome and Introductions

- a) Mr. Stolof welcomed all participants to the meeting. Introductions were made for DDOT representatives, the project team from Commun-ET and AMT Engineering, and the members of the CAC.

III) Meeting Objectives

Mr. Stolof summarized the meeting's objectives, which were to:

- a) Provide a status report regarding where we are within the project life cycle;
- b) Explain the major components of the Existing Conditions Report;
- c) Review the four corridor concepts, along with DDOT's perceived pros and cons for each; and
- d) Gather feedback from CAC members regarding the four concepts.

IV) Project Updates & Announcements

Mr. Stolof presented the following project updates and announcements:

- a) DDOT will establish a start time for CAC meetings at 6:30 p.m.
- b) CAC meetings under the COVID-19 restrictions are for CAC Members only. The intention is to hold briefings in June and July 2020 with the ANCs and other stakeholder groups.
- c) A set of minutes will be produced for each CAC meeting. Everyone in attendance should review the minutes, note any action items, and offer feedback on potential revisions.
- d) The goal is to begin the analysis of viable Alternatives in July 2020.
- e) There is now an active project website (<https://ddot.dc.gov/page/Connecticut-Avenue-NW-Reversible-Lane-Safety-and-Operations-Study>) and an active project email account (Conn-Ave-RevStudy@dc.gov).
- f) Calibration of the existing conditions traffic model is nearing completion. The goal of the model is to replicate existing conditions.
- g) A draft Environmental Inventory has been completed and will be added to the project website.

V) Existing Conditions Report

Ms. Lin presented an overview of the Existing Conditions Report and stated the report will be uploaded to the project website for review during the week of June 15, 2020.

- a) Project Study Area Intersection Operations Summary. Two (2) of the 24 primary study area intersections operate at an overall Level of Service (LOS) “E”. The remaining 22 intersections operate at an overall LOS of “D” or better. Specific approaches or lane groups operate at LOS of “E” or “F”. Queues greater than 100 feet are evident at a number of intersection approaches/lane groups.
- b) Parking and Curbside Summary. A significant amount of parking along the Connecticut Avenue corridor is unregulated. Time limited parking is scattered throughout the corridor within and outside of the primary commercial activity centers. Metered parking is predominantly located near commercial activity centers. Loading primarily takes place in close proximity to the three corridor commercial activity centers. Overall, the demand for on-street parking is low. The Van Ness corridor has the highest on-street parking utilization, while Cleveland Park shows more moderate utilization. Commercial loading zones within activity centers are consistently used during off-peak hours.
- c) Transit Summary. Veazey Terrace/Connecticut Avenue showed the highest area of transit activity with 1,200 boardings/alightings during fall 2019.
- d) Bicycle and Pedestrian Summary. The long-range transportation plan for the District of Columbia, moveDC, incorporates a Protected Bicycle Lane along Connecticut Avenue. Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS) along the corridor ranges from “fair” to “poor” depending on the location. The highest bicycle activity was observed near the southern end of the Connecticut Avenue corridor, which coincides with the “poor” BLOS rating from moveDC. The top intersections for pedestrian activity were concentrated around Metrorail Stations and commercial activity centers along Connecticut Avenue NW.
- e) Safety Analysis. 1,507 police-reported crashes occurred during the five-year study period from 2015-2019. Although the reversible lanes are in effect only 15% of the time, it was found that 44% of all crashes occur in the reversible lanes. *Note: Refer to Existing Conditions Report, Safety section.*

Following presentation of the Existing Conditions Report summary, the following CAC members offered questions and comments:

- Josh Rising asked whether the number of crashes on Connecticut Avenue is high compared to other comparable roads.
Mr. Glickman stated the crash numbers for Connecticut Avenue were found to be higher than comparable roads - particularly when the reversible lanes were in effect.
- Josh Rising asked whether data was reviewed concerning the use of Bikeshare stations on Connecticut Avenue.
Mr. Stollof explained forecasting of bicycle usage will be performed.

- David Cristeal asked whether CAC members will receive a copy of the June 11, 2020 slide presentation.
Mr. Stolof replied in the affirmative.
- David Cristeal asked whether bike traffic on sidewalks was included in the data
Mr. Stolof said bike traffic on sidewalks was not included in the traffic counts.
- Randy Speck sought clarity regarding the difference between reversible lane encroachment and reversible lane hesitation.
Mr. Glickman explained “encroachment” refers to drivers moving into someone else’s lane, while “hesitation” is unsurety.
- Tom Quinn asked whether compliance was studied concerning left turn restrictions during reversible lane hours.
Mr. Glickman stated U-turn and Red-Light violations were documented as part of the Existing Conditions Report.
- Robert Deyling suggested adding observations for scooters and similar devices - anything mode other than pedestrians that may be within a bike lane.

VI) Initial Concept Alternatives

Mr. Stolof presented four concept alternatives for the corridor. As a summary:

- a) Three of the alternatives include a protected bike lane - Concepts A, C, and D.
- b) Concept B does not include a protected bike lane.
- c) Only Concept B retains off-street parking.
- d) With regard to reversible lanes, two of the alternatives - Concepts B and C - remove both reversible lanes.
- e) Concept D removes one reversible lane.
- f) Concept A retains both reversible lanes.
- g) Concept A includes only one lane outbound in the non-peak direction
- h) Concepts A, B and D carry three travel lanes during the peak period, peak direction.
- i) Concept C includes two peak period, peak direction travel lanes (a reduction of two PPPD travel lanes compared to existing conditions)
- j) Concept C also includes a consistent cross-section of two lanes inbound and two lanes outbound during all times of the day.
- k) Concept C allows for the inclusion of left turns pocket and a floating bus island in the design.

VII) Discussion/CAC Member Feedback

Josh Rising

- Asked whether floating bus stops are an option in Concept A.

Ms. Lin described the concept of floating bus stops, and reported they are a possibility for Concept C.

- Asked why none of the concepts factored in dedicated bus lanes.

Mr. Stolof explained that DDOT will be meeting with WMATA to discuss dedicated bus lanes that have been on Connecticut Avenue in the past; and whether dedicated bus lanes are a viable option now given all the other modal priorities.

Mr. Reba echoed the sentiments raised by Josh Rising regarding designated bus lanes.

- Asked whether there is any data that compares [the business impacts] of various cycle tracks; relayed concerns about other cycle tracks in D.C. such as the one on 15th Street.

Stated there is data that shows people who are driving tend not to stop at shops and restaurants. Rather, people who are biking are more likely to do so.

- Asked whether the analysis will take into consideration a higher number of teleworkers.
Mr. Stolof explained DDOT is slated to look at conditions as they were in the pre-COVID environment. DDOT can look at the thresholds and make inferences when we look at future traffic volumes and LOS. Stolof noted that traffic today is 30 percent of what it was prior to March 2020.

Eileen McCarthy

- Asked how injuries/fatalities on Connecticut Avenue compare to other roads - not just crashes.
Mr. Stolof explained, according to police-reported data, a total of 1,507 crashes occurred along the corridor during the five-year study period (2015 through 2019). Of that number, there were 20 disabling crashes, 400 non-disabling injuries, and the remaining crashes were reported as property damage only.

Lee Brian Reba

- Expressed an initial preference for Option D
- Concerned with Concepts A, B, and C: drivers must be mindful of bike lanes on the inbound and outbound flow of traffic.
- Can a Concept be developed similar to Pennsylvania Avenue (center-running)? Mr. Reba spoke in favor of mirroring the Pennsylvania Avenue concept to redesign a more livable, walkable, sustainable corridor along Connecticut Avenue.

Mr. Sebastian explained Pennsylvania Avenue is unique and had 15 feet of existing space in the middle of the road that was not used for anything except the inauguration, and also contained signals. Therefore, two-way bike lanes were able to be introduced with a buffer, but without affecting the traffic. Connecticut Avenue is a higher speed, higher volume road than Pennsylvania Avenue.

Tom Quinn

- Expressed the opinion that there are safety and traffic flow advantages to Concept C.
- *Relative carrying capacities of the road for each option. Mr. Stolof explained, after gathering feedback from members of the CAC, the next step will be to analyze each of the concepts from a traffic operations standpoint.*
- Eliminate parking so that buses do not have to pull into and out of traffic.
- Spoke in favor of the city boosting transit usage along the Connecticut Avenue corridor - particularly in light of the Purple Line connecting the area to Montgomery County.
Mr. Stolof said DDOT will meet with WMATA to discuss alternatives.

Spoke in favor of ensuring a safer, calmer, more livable corridor for those residents who live on Connecticut Avenue rather than focusing on parking/vehicles.

Eileen McCarthy

- Opposed to any of the concepts that do not eliminate the reversible lanes.
- Opposed to Concept A's widening of vehicle lanes from 10 feet to 11 feet.
- Pedestrian signal time along Connecticut Avenue can be problematic for older and disabled persons.
- Protected turn lanes usually result in shorter pedestrian crossing signals.
- Opposed to implementing the Pennsylvania Avenue bike lane arrangement on Connecticut Avenue, as pedestrians could become stuck on medians while attempting to cross.
- In favor of implementing bus lanes.
- Pointed out that the right-of-way statute in D.C. requires a traffic island if pedestrians will be required to stop in the middle of an intersection.
- Noted there are more residents on Connecticut Avenue than on any of the surrounding streets, and therefore asked DDOT to keep that in mind when moving forward with any design concept.

Randy Speck

- Is it necessary for the entire corridor to have the same concept from end-to-end, or if there is flexibility for modifications to be implemented in particular sections of the corridor?
Mr. Stolof noted parking/loading may be desired in some areas; we may consider a hybrid at some locations.
- Does DDOT expects the concepts to extend just as far as it currently extends with the reversible lanes, or if the concepts can go all the way to the Chevy Chase Circle.
Mr. Stolof explained the study is scoped to consider the area from Legation Street NW to Calvert Street NW (the length of reversible lane operations).
- Will any studies be done to look at the direction of bicycle traffic? Would it be possible to have a single reversible lane in place at specific times?

Mr. Stolof stated DDOT can look at the bicycle numbers and the directionality of the bicycle numbers.

Mr. Glickman noted people tend to ride both ways on one-way bike lanes and this could be a safety issue.

- Roads could become severely jammed as part of Concept A if they were reduced to one lane during peak hours going the opposite direction of the primary traffic flow.

Mr. Stolof noted that the traffic operations analysis during the next couple of months will identify congestion issues associated with the alternatives.

- Mr. Speck asked whether any concepts that include reversible lanes will be eliminated since they do not seem to be in line with the noted design standards/objectives.

Mr. Stolof stated the concepts will be evaluated through the lens of the purpose and need of the project. If a particular concept does not appear to meet the purpose and need in the evaluation process, it may be eliminated.

Beau Finley

- Agreed with comments raised by Tom Quinn and Josh Rising.
- Expressed the opinion that widening the traffic lanes (as in Concept A) does not address speeding along Connecticut Avenue.
- Parking is more desirable in some areas than others.
- Expressed an initial preference for Concept C,
- For commercial areas, can we have parking over an extended period next to the bike lane on one side of the street.

Mr. Stolof stated DDOT will consider this suggestion,

- Can we consider a cycle track similar to those on L and M Streets?

Mr. Sebastian stated off-peak parking could be considered, but both lanes will be needed during rush hour.

- Asked how consensus will be reached concerning which concepts will be eliminated?
Mr. Stolof explained that the decisions will be based on technical analyses, stakeholder feedback and an assessment of if a particular concept meets the purpose and need. Please note that one of the study objectives is to assess the impacts of either removing, maintaining or improving the reversible lane system. We are not assessing potential removal of the reversible lanes only.

Chris Fromboluti

- Stated residents and businesses within his service member district would be displeased with the elimination of parking full-time on both sides of Connecticut Avenue. He suggested considered parking for at least one side of the street.

- Expressed hesitancy about reducing Connecticut Avenue to two travel lanes (in each direction), as it would create a major traffic issue on Connecticut Avenue and the surrounding roads.

David Cristeal

- Stated the original goal was to do away with reversible lanes along the corridor. Therefore, that would eliminate a few of the concepts that have been presented.
- Although many residents and business owners along the corridor may not agree with the decision, Mr. Cristeal spoke in favor of removing parking along Connecticut Avenue since it would encourage a freer flow of traffic.
- Expressed the opinion that Concept C seems to offer the best compromise of all the options, although parking would have to be addressed.

VIII) Next Steps

Mr. Stolof indicated the next steps are:

1. Send the June 11, 2020 slide presentation to all CAC members.
2. Post the Existing Conditions Report on the project website.
3. CAC members to provide written comments on the four initial concept alternatives by Thursday, June 25, 2020.
4. Brief the ANCs in June or July 2020 after coordinating with CAC members.
5. Holding small stakeholder meetings in June and July 2020.
6. Planning the next CAC meeting for August/September 2020.
7. Provide additional safety data to the CAC members. Stolof notes that CAC Members should review the Safety section of the Existing Conditions Report.

IX) Adjournment

The June 11, 2020 CAC meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.