

Sherman Circle Transportation Safety Project

SUMMARY

In September 2016, DDOT completed the Rock Creek East II Livability Study, which proposed several recommendations for Sherman Circle. These included the removal of one traffic lane, the addition of a bike lane, raised crosswalks for streets entering the circle, and green infrastructure improvements. The livability study noted that the recommendations were conceptual and would require further design and environmental work. The estimated time frame and cost were 4-8 years and \$940,000. The full study can be reviewed at www.rockcreekeast2.com/final-report/

From the community, DDOT heard about the need to improve safety at Sherman Circle and frustration with the long-term timeline, and DDOT investigated what could be done in the short-term. We heard similar concerns at Grant Circle, and used a similar process to address Sherman Circle that was used at Grant.

DDOT performed data collection and analysis at Sherman Circle, and used modeling software to explore the feasibility of reducing one travel lane at Sherman Circle. The results supported the feasibility of reducing Sherman Circle to one lane, showing no significant increases to delays and queuing. These results were shared with the public at a community meeting in July 2017. Initially, DDOT did not plan to perform a trial period to close one lane at Sherman Circle because we trusted our model.

At this meeting and in subsequent comments from the community, DDOT heard support about testing these results in real time. In response to community request, DDOT moved forward with a temporary closure of one lane in Sherman Circle. The closure took place for three weeks in September 2017, beginning September 11. During this time, DDOT collected additional data and conducted field observations.

DDOT issued a Notice of Intent for Sherman Circle to provide for a formal comment period for the proposed improvements, which are the closure of one traffic lane, the addition of a bike lane, and additional signage and markings to manage traffic, reduce turning speeds, and improve safety. The Notice of Intent was released on September 12. The comment period for the NOI is 59 days, and the comment period will end on November 10. DDOT welcomes comments from residents during this time.

DDOT will consider all comments received, along with data collection and analysis, and come back to the community to share what we heard, present the data analysis, and lay out potential next steps. There will be an opportunity for ANC 4D to pass a resolution after the NOI comment period closes and we present this information to the community.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are existing conditions at Sherman Circle?

Sherman Circle has an average daily traffic volume of 7,000 vehicles. There are no traffic signals at the circle, and all approaches are controlled by stop or yield signs. Sherman Circle has two travel lanes, which are 11 and 12 feet wide. The circle also has a parking and bus stop lane, which is 17 feet wide. There are ten crosswalks into the circle park.

How will reducing Sherman Circle to one lane improve pedestrian safety? How did you measure this during the temporary lane closure?

Reducing Sherman Circle to one lane would improve pedestrian safety at the circle by shortening the distance pedestrians need to travel to cross into the circle. DDOT is also looking at opportunities to shorten crossing distances for the crosswalks around the circle. In addition, reducing Sherman Circle to one lane would eliminate the risk for a multiple-threat pedestrian crash. This occurs when a driver in the nearest lane stops for a pedestrian in the crosswalk, but a driver in the next lane does not stop for the pedestrian. The stopped driver can block the view of the pedestrian from drivers in other lanes. DDOT observed pedestrian behavior during the temporary lane closure.

How do near-misses (cars almost hitting pedestrians) factor into DDOT's proposal for one lane?

Near-misses are not collected by MPD crash data, thus DDOT cannot perform quantitative analysis on these occurrences. Near-misses are best captured anecdotally through resident comments.

How would closing a lane impact streets around Sherman Circle? Would neighborhood streets experience increased traffic?

According to DDOT's modeling software, neighborhood streets would not experience a significant impact if a lane at Sherman Circle was reduced.

Is closing a lane just a way to get a bike lane around Sherman Circle?

No. DDOT can add a bike lane to Sherman Circle whether or not a traffic lane is reduced. Grant Circle has similar dimensions as Sherman, and DDOT is adding a bike lane to Grant while retaining two traffic lanes around the circle.

How will it impact parking around the circle?

DDOT is not currently proposing any improvements that would require a loss in parking. If any improvements are proposed that require a loss of parking, DDOT will communicate this with the community.

Did you consider the needs of larger vehicles in your plans? Did buses cause traffic issues during the temporary lane closure? How will emergency vehicles and snow removal operations be impacted?

DDOT has discussed the potential lane closure with WMATA, and will continue to coordinate with them as the project advances. DDOT notified MPD when the lane closure was underway. DDOT also takes turning radii of larger vehicles into account when we design changes to pavement markings, and works with the relevant agency when necessary.

DDOT heard concerns from residents about buses contributing to traffic backups during the temporary lane closure. DDOT is coordinating with WMATA about these concerns, and will also take them into account with data analysis. DDOT has received comments regarding impacts to emergency vehicles and snow removal, and will consider these uses as we evaluate next steps.

Has DDOT considered a Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB), lit up signs, or other similar measures? Has DDOT considered raised crosswalks for Sherman Circle?

DDOT is currently considering improvements at Sherman Circle that would be implemented using signage, markings, and flexposts. These improvements are discussed in more detail in the Notice of Intent. Any additional measures, such as a flashing light / walk button, may be considered after installation of signage and markings is complete. Raised crosswalks are not possible on arterial streets. Kansas Avenue and the circle roadway are arterials, and it is not feasible to put raised crosswalks across these roadways. Raised crosswalks for the non-arterial streets that enter the roadway may be considered as additional measures.

Is DDOT studying safety at other circles in the city beyond Grant and Sherman in Petworth? What do other cities around the U.S. and internationally do for this?

DDOT has worked with improving safety at other circles in the District. Each circle has its own set of challenges, conditions, and levels of traffic, and using other circles as case studies for Sherman Circle has limited utility.

If we move to one lane, what other changes would come with it?

If a lane is reduced at Sherman Circle, crosswalks into the circle would be much shorter, and safety would improve due to the elimination of risk of multiple threat crashes. DDOT would also implement changes to signage and markings to reduce turning speeds, manage traffic, and improve safety.

How long would implementation take and when would it start?

Implementation would happen in Spring 2018. DDOT would be able to provide more specific information closer to this time.



CONTACT

DDOT has released a Notice of Intent (NOI) for Sherman Circle to provide a formal comment period on the proposed improvements. The NOI can be accessed at ddot.dc.gov/service/ddot-notice-intent

All comments on the NOI must be filed in writing with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), Planning and Sustainability Division at 55 M Street SE, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20003. Comments may also be sent via email to Ted Van Houten at theodore.vanhouten@dc.gov. The comment period for the NOI closes Friday, November 10.