

May 12, 2005

Mr. Dan Tangherlini, Director
Department of Transportation
District of Columbia Government
2000 14th Street NW, 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Tangherlini:

We are writing to you regarding the Traffic Barrier that was placed at the intersection of River Road at Fessenden and 45th Streets in December 2004. The placement of the barrier was a recommendation included in DDOT's Friendship Heights Traffic Study, and was initially designed to be a three-month trial step, although we now understand that DDOT has stated that this is a six-month trial.

Since the barrier has been up, we have had the opportunity to hear the opinions of many of our neighbors, both via written comments and in public meetings. Two community-based groups, one in favor of the barrier and one opposed, have formed and have been actively involved in the discussions on the issue. Also, as we hope you are aware, DDOT staff members John Bullock, Sunny Gyani, and Wanda Pinn-Mills met with community members on April 27, 2005 to get public comments on the barrier.

Our unscientific observation has been that the presence of the barrier has certainly reduced the danger of this particular intersection for traffic and pedestrians, but that the placement of the barrier has had a negative impact on some adjacent streets and alleys and has also created a concern about emergency response time. Due to the impact on the adjacent streets and alleys, there is currently no consensus as to whether the barrier, in its current configuration, should be part of the long-term solution to the traffic issues at this intersection and the immediately surrounding streets.

As a result, we are asking the following of DDOT:

1. A comprehensive solution to the safety issues in this neighborhood is needed as part of any proposed long term solution, and additional measures to manage the traffic flow on nearby streets and alleys will be required whether or not some type of barrier

stays in place at this intersection; therefore we urge DDOT to expeditiously follow through on the commitment made by DDOT staff at the April 27 public meeting to examine and present either measures in addition to the barrier, or alternatives to the barrier, for implementation at this intersection and the adjacent streets. A number of constructive ideas were presented by the public on April 27, and we urge DDOT to seriously consider these ideas. We ask that DDOT develop and present alternatives at a public meeting to be held no later than the end of June 2005.

2. We urge DDOT not to take any steps to make the barrier permanent until additional safety measures or alternatives have been developed and proposed, and community members who live near this intersection, near the adjacent streets and alleys, and from the surrounding neighborhood have had a chance to provide feedback. Again, we ask that this dialogue occur no later than the end of June 2005. If the ultimate decision from DDOT is that a barrier of some sort should stay, this determination must be part of a plan that includes traffic calming measures for the adjacent streets and alleyways.
3. If the ultimate determination is that the existing barrier is to be removed, we urge DDOT not to remove the barrier without other safety measures in place at the River/Fessenden intersection and/or at the adjacent intersections and alleys at the time of removal.

We plan to continue our discussions with the leaders of the two neighborhood groups that have organized around this issue. We are hopeful that our discussions with these groups, in addition to the dialogue with DDOT that we have requested in this letter, will lead to a general consensus on appropriate next steps. We urge you to ensure that DDOT has a public and transparent process to evaluate the barrier and to develop the next steps.

It is our goal to work with DDOT staff so that whatever long-term steps are decided upon can be implemented no later than September 1.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amy McVey, Chair
ANC 3E

This letter was presented at a properly noticed public meeting held on May 12, 2005, and was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.