

Government of the District of Columbia

Department of Transportation



July 1, 2015

Jonathan Bender, Chair, ANC 3E
5425 Western Avenue NW, Suite 219
Washington, DC 20015

Dear Mr. Bender:

Thank you and your fellow commissioners for your resolution supporting DDOT plans to install a bike lane in the 5200 block of 44th Street, NW, and plans to modify the traffic diverter at 44th and Harrison Streets, NW, as part of our neighborhood bikeway plan for the area.

DDOT recognizes that diverters prevent commuter and shopping-center traffic from cutting through local streets which helps maintain the residential character of the neighborhood. Our intention is not to alter this function, but to allow bicyclist passage.

On two recent occasions – May 20, 2015 and June 4, 2015 – DDOT met with residents who are opposed to these modifications. We value this dialogue with adjacent neighbors, as we seek solutions that balance the needs of all users and stakeholders. DDOT intends to proceed with the modification to the diverters with some changes based on the concerns and responses detailed below.

- *Concern 1:* Some people already drive over the diverters. Cutting into them will allow more vehicles to do so.
 - *DDOT Response:* Motor vehicle incursion of the diverters indicates that the current design is ineffective. DDOT can redesign the diverters using vertical elements such as higher curbing, bollards, planters, and additional landscaping to make them virtually impregnable. DC Fire and EMS have been contacted; they do not need access through the diverters.
- *Concern 2:* Cutting through the diverters will allow, and encourage, more motorcycle intrusion into the neighborhood
 - *DDOT Response:* Motorcycles can bypass the diverter currently by using the sidewalk ramps. This action is a potential hazard for pedestrians and the motorcyclists. Furthermore, there is little reason to believe that modifying the diverters will encourage additional motorcycle traffic. There is minimal motorcycle traffic in the area today.

- *Concern 3:* Except for two people, those opposed are not against allowing bicycle access; however, many people said that bicyclists can simply bypass the diverters by using the sidewalks.
 - *DDOT Response:* Bicycling on the sidewalk is a safety concern. The existing diverter landscaping makes it difficult to see pedestrians. The landscaping also hinders drivers' ability to see bicyclists when they reenter the roadway. Using the sidewalk is also less convenient for bicyclists, which runs counter to the goal of the neighborhood bikeway.

- *Concern 4:* The four-foot proposed cut-through is too wide; two-feet would be adequate.
 - *DDOT Response:* National guidance recommends four-feet of clearance. While standard bicycles are typically two-feet wide, the extra space allows for navigation and error. The national guidance recommending a two-foot space for bicycles is specifically for bicycle parking spaces. Just like with motor vehicles, parking spaces can be narrower than travel lanes. Furthermore, the width of cargo bicycles and child trailers is usually 32" or more. The vast majority of four-wheel motor vehicles are more than four feet wide.

- *Concern 5:* Traffic volumes are high on 44th Street. By encouraging more bicyclists, DDOT could be putting cyclists into a dangerous situation.
 - *DDOT Response:* In 2013, the average daily traffic on 44th Street between Harrison and Jenifer Streets (the block north of the diverter) was 2,500 vehicles per day. This is a low volume and compares with the adjacent parallel local streets. Bicycling on streets with this level of traffic is safe and does not require additional bicycling facilities. However, the fact that the bicyclists may be making different movements at the intersections – going straight while cars are turning – is an important point. DDOT will add signs as necessary to warn motorists and bicyclists at these possible points of conflict.

- *Concern 6:* DDOT should choose other streets for the neighborhood bikeways.
 - *DDOT Response:* These streets were chosen in the Rock Creek West II Livability Study, a publicly vetted process. They provide good access to the Friendship Heights metro, and are excellent connections between the residential and commercial areas of this neighborhood. Regardless of the streets identified for signed bikeways, it is a best practice at diverter intersections generally to allow for the passage of bicyclists.

- *Concern 7:* Cutting the diverters for cyclists will encourage more bicyclists on the neighborhood bikeway streets.
 - *DDOT Response:* In fact, increasing bicycle trips, and making them safer and more convenient, is the goal of the neighborhood bikeway project and of the District generally. While we don't have bicycle counts for these streets, the amount of bicycle traffic on these streets today is low, and even if it doubled (common for new bikeways), it would still be relatively low in comparison to the amount of cars and compared to other similar bikeways.

- *Concern 8:* Cutting the diverters was not recommended in the livability study.
 - There are a number of techniques used to create neighborhood bikeways, also known as bicycle boulevards. Traffic diverters, and breaks in them for bicyclists, are one of them. While the study doesn't mention cutting these diverters specifically, it does have the following language in the recommendations section:

“Bicycle boulevards are also well-suited for many local street livability measures such as curb extensions, neighborhood traffic circles, speed humps, raised crosswalks or intersections, traffic diverters, distinct paving materials, and gateway treatments.”

The diverter as currently constructed is not consistent with the neighborhood bikeway. We believe the proposed design adequately balances concerns raised by adjacent neighbors with the desire from the broader community to create safe bicycle connections.

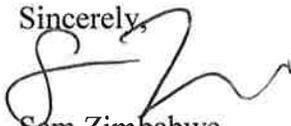
Nest Steps

DDOT believes that the proposed modifications to the diverters will adequately address the residents' concerns. Our planned approach will be:

- Proceed with diverter modifications but also reinforce the diverters to make them impregnable to traffic. This could be done by adding steel bollards or additional landscaping materials (e.g. rocks, planters, etc.)
- Incorporate the five recommendations in the ANC 3E resolution into construction.
- Monitor before and after pedestrian, bicycle, motorcycle, and car traffic volume and user behavior by cyclists, drivers, and motorists.
- Report back to community and solicit feedback on any additional modifications necessary.

Again, DDOT thanks you for your support on this project, and welcomes future opportunities to work with the ANC and community. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me, Sam Zimbabwe, Associate Director, Policy, Planning & Sustainability Administration, at 202-671-2542 or via email at sam.zimbabwe@dc.gov.

Sincerely,



Sam Zimbabwe
Associate Director
Policy, Planning & Sustainability Administration
District Department of Transportation

Cc: Attendees of May 20, 2015 and June 4, 2015 community meetings

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1: Two-Channel Diverter Design.

Attachment 1. Two-Channel Diverter Design.

