



May 10, 2021

To: Concerned Citizens of Tenleytown
Tenleytown Preservation Association

Re: The River School

Dear Members of Concerned Citizens of Tenleytown and the Tenleytown Preservation Association:

Thank you for attending our April 22, 2021 information and listening session regarding transportation issues associated with the proposed relocation of The River School to 4220 Nebraska Avenue, NW. We are pleased that you found the session to be useful and hope you will continue to participate in upcoming opportunities for continued engagement with members of our project team. As we have said from the outset, our goal is to establish a new home for River that embodies the spirit of our inclusive community and provides a nurturing and enriching educational environment for our children, while at the same time respecting the surrounding neighborhood and serving as an asset to the community and the District.

We remain firmly committed to working directly with residents of the surrounding community to better understand questions and concerns, and to work collaboratively to address them in a manner that will have positive impacts on the Tenleytown neighborhood. The transportation information and listening session provided just the kind of input we are looking for. Our team is already working on integrating the feedback we heard into the analysis of our Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR), using the opportunity of our CTR review process to not only address the potential impacts associated with River's relocation to 4220 Nebraska Avenue, but also to work with DDOT and residents of the surrounding neighborhood to develop potential solutions to address traffic-related concerns that already exist in the community.

In response to your request, written responses to each of the 20 questions posed in your April 26, 2021 e-mail are provided below. In addition, our [project webpage](#) is now available and provides resources that you may find useful, including the recorded transportation information and listening session and presentation PowerPoint, FAQs, and a [community input portal](#) to facilitate additional community feedback. Information about project updates, as well as any upcoming community engagement opportunities, will also be posted on the webpage as they become available.

1. *What would be the total estimate of the number of people on the proposed River School property **each day** including all students, faculty, staff, visitors?*

The River School has proposed a maximum enrollment of 350 students. Growth to that number would occur over time at a measured and controlled pace, adding

between one and two cohorts, each of approximately 14 – 16 students each year. Accordingly, assuming that enrollment at the MacArthur location resumes its maximum capacity of 220 students following COVID and prior to relocation to 4220 Nebraska Avenue NW, it is anticipated that growth up to the maximum enrollment of 350 students would be achieved over a period of five or more years following relocation to Nebraska Avenue. We anticipate between 326 and 338 children will be *scheduled* to arrive and depart campus on any given day. (This number is smaller than total enrollment due to partial-week toddler enrollment.) When one accounts for the anticipated reduction in school population associated with the average daily student absence rate of 5 to 10 percent, the projected number of students on campus on any given day is expected to range from 294 to 321 children. At full enrollment, these students would be supported by up to 90 faculty and staff. At full capacity, as many as 20 patients (who are not already on campus) might visit the clinic on a daily basis. We do not anticipate other visitors to be regularly on site to any significant extent.

2. *Completing a transit plan after the school has purchased the property and constructed a school is too late in a neighborhood already plagued with traffic and parking issues. Please review your timeline and provide a new timeline to the community with your written responses.*

We have been actively studying the transportation environment near 4220 Nebraska and River's potential impact on it, in addition to having preliminary conversations to obtain feedback from DDOT, neighbors, and ANC members, since mid-2020. A thorough plan is warranted, of course, but completion requires the type of feedback we have been seeking. The River School's traffic consultant is in the process of conducting a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR), which includes a detailed analysis of traffic conditions before and projected conditions after the school opens and will identify traffic impacts associated with the proposed project as well as improvements required to mitigate those impacts. The CTR will be completed prior to the BZA review of The River School proposal, allowing ample time for community review and input well before the school is constructed and operational.

The separate but related monitoring study also was discussed at the April 22, 2021 transportation information and listening session. That monitoring study is designed to measure the number of trips that would be generated by The River School once the Nebraska Avenue campus is open. The monitoring study also measures the pick-up/drop-off queues to ensure that the queues are being adequately handled on-site.

3. *If The River School purchases the Buchanan Estate, and the BZA approves the special exception request, when would you begin talks with the ANC about rules and sanctions related to construction? When would construction begin? Where would the construction vehicles enter and exit the property? What would be the hours of construction? Would construction take place at night and on weekends? Who would monitor the traffic, parking, noise and safety issues related to construction and workers? Would the 42nd Street curb-cut be used during construction?*

Similar to other projects, The River School will commence discussions regarding the construction management plan as part of the BZA process. Depending on the timing of BZA approval, we anticipate that construction would start no earlier than the fourth quarter of 2022. The preliminary site logistic evaluation calls for using the existing curb cut as the entrance for construction vehicles. The 42nd Street curb cut is not intended for construction use.

The normal construction work week for any and all work on the project will be Monday through Saturday from 7:00 AM until 7:00 PM. If construction work is performed on Saturdays, only activities that produce minimal noise will be undertaken between 7:00 AM and 8:00 AM; after 8:00 AM, other construction activities would commence. All trucks for delivery of materials, construction and otherwise, will arrive, depart, and operate on the property only during such construction hours.

The River School will designate a representative to be the key contact during the period of construction of the project for interaction with the neighbors. The River School representative will be available by telephone to receive complaints or other communications from the neighbors during business hours, as well as all other hours during which construction activity is occurring on the property.

In addition, The River School will instruct its general contractors involved in construction of the project to comply with all District of Columbia ordinances and regulations regarding hours of work, noise, dirt, trash, public health and safety, stormwater management, erosion, and sediment control and to comply with the applicable terms of the construction management plan.

4. *If there were only 29 parking spaces on the proposed campus available for teachers, families and patient families visiting the clinic, and the child care center, where would excess cars park? How would the school control parking in the neighborhood by school-related cars and the public visitors?*

Our plan proposes a total of 60 parking spaces on-site, not 29, to accommodate faculty, staff, and visitors. The vast majority of parents dropping off students would be required to use the pick-up/drop-off (PUDO) lanes, rather than park their vehicles. The PUDO lanes have been designed to accommodate 22 vehicles at any given time during the PUDO operation. Three spaces in the garage will be designated for parents who must walk their children to/from school buildings. These parking spaces would be assigned as 10-15 minute, short-term spaces during PUDO times, but would be used by visitors during non-PUDO times.

In addition, the PUDO plan has built in additional safeguards, including:

- The proposed plan can accommodate 7 vehicles of overflow storage at-grade while still keeping the garage entrance open (i.e., unblocked).
- The proposed plan can accommodate another 7 vehicles (in addition to the 7 overflow spaces) between the garage entrance and the sidewalk on Nebraska Avenue.
- If necessary, in an emergency situation, the circle in front of the mansion, which can accommodate 10 vehicles, can be used as additional overflow stacking.

In total, 49 cars could be stacked on site at a single point in time before traffic would back up onto Nebraska Avenue. However, to be clear, the queuing analysis conducted by Wells + Associates indicates that the maximum queue would be 16 vehicles during the morning drop-off, 21 vehicles during the primary afternoon pick-up, and 9 vehicles during the aftercare pick-up.

5. *How many cars each day would be related to families of children in pre-k and younger who your colleagues stated will not be required to carpool?*

Currently, 103 students are pre-K and under and 21 of them have siblings at The River School; accordingly, at least 20% of our current pre-K population is already arriving to school with more than one child in the car. With our program extended to sixth grade, we would anticipate an even higher percentage of pre-K and younger students to have siblings attending The River School.

6. *Would there be a drop off AND pick up carpool mandate for K-6th grade families in perpetuity?*

Yes.

7. *In the discussion held in December 2020, between The River School and the “200 Footers,” you made clear that you would close off the curb-cut on 42nd Street based on neighbor concerns and clearly stated that you would not use it **at all** for **any** entry and exit. Yet, in your April 22, 2021 presentation, your Transportation expert said that DDOT would likely “force you to make one.” Please explain that change.*

The River School is not proposing to keep the 42nd Street access open for vehicles, pedestrians, or bicycles. DDOT has stated that they want the 42nd Street vehicular access closed. However, based on similar school projects (specifically GDS), we anticipate that DDOT may require that a pedestrian and bicycle entrance be maintained on 42nd Street. We would only open 42nd Street to pedestrians and bicycles if DDOT requires us to do so, and we will be prepared to take appropriate action in the event that occurs.

Based on the plans you have shared, the school would have entry and egress on Nebraska that is fully compliant with safety and code requirements so therefore it would not be necessary to add an entry/egress on 42nd or Warren. Clearly, despite the verbal

proclamation that the school would not have any entry/egress on 42nd, the school is exploring the option of maintaining the curb cut in some capacity.

The 42nd Street curb cut will be closed. As stated above, pedestrian and bicycle access via 42nd Street would only be permitted if DDOT requires us to allow pedestrian and bicycle access via 42nd Street. To be clear, a curb cut is not required for pedestrian and bicycle access.

If the school had an entry/exit for bikes and pedestrians on 42nd what would it look like, and how would the school control drop off, pick up and parking by parents who choose not to wait in the long lines on Nebraska each day.

If DDOT requires us to allow pedestrian and bicycle access to 42nd Street, there would likely be a gate in the fence that would be open during PUDO times. Our team will incorporate that requirement and present design details to the community if DDOT makes the request. If DDOT requires that pedestrian and bicycle access be maintained, the school will monitor the 42nd Street gate to ensure that parents are not parking on 42nd Street and dropping off or picking up students. In addition, our team is currently evaluating appropriate protocols that could be put in place to effectively deter River School parents from using 42nd Street for pick up and drop off.

You and your colleagues stated in the meeting last night that currently your parents don't abide by your requests to not come early to queue up for pick up. Yet, they come early every day and queue up despite the school telling them not to. If you cannot control your parents now, what makes you think that you will be able to control their driving behavior in this new location where parking, traffic and safety are already major issues?

One of the reasons the 4220 Nebraska campus is attractive is because it permits the on-site queueing not possible at the MacArthur Boulevard location. We are confident that The River School community will work together for the benefit of all stakeholders to abide by the conditions of our Transportation Management Plan. Importantly, student enrollment contracts will include a clause stating that continued enrollment is contingent on compliance with all carpool requirements.

8. *What do you mean by "peak hours for the area" in reference to your chosen proposed drop off and pick up times each day? There are 12+ schools and child care centers in the area, a senior center and a senior living residence as well as an active public library. The community considers "peak hours" of particularly dangerous traffic, from 7:30-9AM, 12-1PM, 2:15-4:15PM and 5:00-6:30PM. With significant speeding and erratic traffic at other times of day and night.*

Traffic counts are conducted from 6:30-9:30 AM, 2:00-4:00 PM, and 4:00-7:00 PM. The single highest hour during each of these three windows is the hour selected for analysis.

9. *The size and scope of The River School plan would be too large for the busy corner where the Buchanan Estate is located. How would you assure the community that you would actually accommodate the safety, traffic and parking issues that the community already faces BEFORE you begin construction?*

The River School has committed to a comprehensive Transportation Management Plan (TMP) that is among the most aggressive adopted by any school in the District. The TMP includes a monitoring program that requires The River School to hire an independent transportation consultant to conduct annual monitoring studies to ensure that the school is in compliance with the TMP and is not creating adverse impacts on the surrounding roadway network. Details of the TMP are included in the presentation made by The River School transportation consultant Wells + Associates at the [April 22, 2021 transportation information and listening session](#).

Also, as noted above, The River School's traffic consultant is conducting a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR), which includes a detailed analysis of traffic conditions before, and projected conditions after, the school opens and will identify traffic impacts associated with the proposed project, as well as improvements required to mitigate those impacts. The CTR will be completed prior to the BZA review of The River School proposal, allowing ample time for community review and input well before the school is constructed and operational.

10. *Sanctions on River families after 6 transportation-related violations would not curb behavior. Changing to 3 or less might make a minor impact. Please develop and share a new sanction plan for school related visitors and families.*

We are processing this valuable input and The River School will re-evaluate the violation policy included in its preliminary Transportation Management Plan (TMP) as part of the Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) process.

11. *What sanctions would be put on the school, before year 5, to encourage timely compliance with your transportation plan? How would you control the visitors to the school who do not have to sign a contract to abide by the traffic and parking rules? Please reevaluate your plans and submit them to the ANC and community for review.*

We will update the Transportation Management Plan (TMP) to provide for monitoring to begin in Year 1. Accordingly, The River School will be required to adhere to the trip caps and other elements of the TMP as soon as school operations begin at 4220 Nebraska Avenue NW. Visitors to the school are a very minor component of the trips generated by the school and will be provided parking on-campus. In any event, the impact of any trips generated by visitors will be included in the trip counts which will be measured annually to monitor compliance with the TMP.

12. *In your April 22, 2021 presentation, your traffic experts said that they looked at Maret, St. Patrick's and the Lab School as well as the old GDS location for transportation related data. Please explain why you have not reached out to schools, child care and senior care centers in Tenleytown that serve young and or vulnerable populations like Janney Elementary, National Presbyterian School, St. Columba's, GDS, the Public Library, the Iona Senior Center and Sidwell Friends.*

Maret, St. Patrick's, the Lab School, and GDS were three schools used by our traffic consultant to evaluate the queuing potential of the pick-up/drop-off zone. Those three schools were selected because: 1) they included younger students in whole or in part and 2) detailed queuing data were available for them. Our traffic consultant also collected queuing data at our current location and refined the queuing model based on the data collected.

Our traffic consultant also obtained and reviewed the most recent traffic study for the National Presbyterian School, which indicated that a queuing capacity of 11 vehicles was necessary for its 320 students. By comparison, The River School will have a maximum of 326 to 338 students on any given day and will have double the capacity in the PUDO lanes.

Traffic associated with the other schools in the area (including, but not limited to, GDS, Sidwell, NPS, and Janney Elementary) is included in the pre-pandemic baseline traffic counts being used for the Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) currently in progress.

13. *The number of car trips estimated by The River School has changed dramatically from what was submitted to the BZA in their application for Special Exception. Yet, the math still does not work. Please review your calculations and provide new calculations related to the number of estimated total cars, bikes and pedestrians to and from the school each day and timing for drop off and pick up per car. Please also show the delta from your current location.*

The trip generation estimates provided in the Draft Transportation Management Plan submitted with the BZA application have been refined by our traffic consultant based on additional, more detailed information provided by The River School. For example, the original estimates assumed that 350 students would be on campus every day. Because a portion of River School students are part-time and attend either two days/week or three days/week, the maximum number of students on campus on any given day would be 326 to 338 students rather than the full enrollment of 350 students. Additionally, the original estimates assumed 100 percent attendance every day, but The River School historically has a 10 percent absentee rate. The refined trip generation analysis conservatively assumes a 5 percent absentee rate.

14. *Based on the age of your student population, with many under age 3, why would Tenleytown neighbors have any confidence in your assertion that a large percentage of*

your students would be able to walk and bike up the steep hills and dangerous streets between Spring Valley, Palisades and Tenleytown each day?

We believe the walkability of the Tenleytown neighborhood (which has earned a score of 89/“Very Walkable” at walkscore.com) will greatly benefit our school community and will promote walking and biking as effective and healthy modes of travel for our families, faculty, and staff.

15. *What would the school do to stop River-parent cars from Maryland and Virginia from using side streets to get to the “mandatory” right turn entry into the campus from Nebraska Avenue? In the April 22, 2021 meeting, there was no response to questions from the neighbors about MD and VA vehicles that will likely approach the campus from points other than southbound Nebraska Avenue.*

The River School’s traffic consultant is in the process of conducting a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR), which will address the traffic impacts associated with school traffic and will recommend improvements to mitigate those impacts. The CTR will be completed well in advance of the BZA review of The River School proposal, allowing ample time for community review and input.

16. *The potential new traffic caused by The River School would be more far reaching throughout Tenleytown than you have addressed in any of your plans. One important example of the significant negative impact on the community would be cars coming from Massachusetts Avenue to get to school each day. What would The River School do to curb traffic turning onto 45th Street NW from Massachusetts Ave to access Van Ness each morning and then back in the afternoon? This route would take drivers past the coveted community resource and very active, Friendship “Turtle” Park. Any additional cars would exacerbate the already dangerous traffic caused by cut-through cars. Please provide a plan to address that concern.*

The River School’s traffic consultant is in the process of conducting a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR), which will address the traffic impacts associated with school traffic and will recommend improvements to mitigate those impacts. The CTR will be completed well in advance of the BZA review of The River School proposal, allowing ample time for community review and input.

17. *20016 is a large zip code. How many current River families live up to 8 blocks of the proposed location at 4220 Nebraska?*

We anticipate the location demographics of our families will change following the relocation to the Nebraska Avenue campus, and several families already live within walking and biking distance of the campus. None of our current families live in residences within 8 blocks of 4220 Nebraska Avenue.

18. *How many current River faculty, students and staff ride their bikes or walk to The River School's Palisades location each day?*

Currently, approximately 10 percent of students are walked or biked to school and approximately 15 percent of faculty and staff take transit. Adding students in older grades should increase the walkers and bikers.

19. *How would the school manage cars leaving the campus after drop off and pick up when there is a full bike lane on Nebraska Avenue?*

Like many other schools in the District, if necessary, The River School will hire a traffic control officer (TCO) to help manage traffic during PUDO times. It is envisioned that the TCO would assist in directing traffic across the bike lane and also would ensure that traffic stopping for the signal at Van Ness does not block the exit from the school, providing opportunities for traffic to exit the school during each traffic signal cycle.

20. *DDOT has created several "fixes" to traffic issues in Tenleytown to help deal with traffic safety and parking issues. Unfortunately, many of their "fixes" have made pedestrian safety, traffic and parking issues worse. How do you expect that DDOT would "fix" the traffic safety and parking issues that it is clear the relocation of your school to Tenleytown would cause?*

The River School's traffic consultant is in the process of conducting a Comprehensive Transportation (CTR) Review, which will address the traffic impacts associated with school traffic and will recommend improvements to mitigate those impacts. The CTR will be completed well in advance of the BZA review of The River School proposal allowing ample time for community review and input.

Thank you again for your participation in this important process. We look forward to continuing to work constructively to address the concerns of members of the Tenleytown community.

Very truly yours,



Nancy Mellon
Head of School