

**Notes from the Virtual Meeting on the Matter of Little Falls
Parkway/Capital Crescent Trail Mid-Block Crossing**

Sept. 8, 2020

Many thanks to Senator Susan Lee for enabling the meeting to occur and to the Parks Dept. for hosting it. Parks' was represented by Miti Figueredo, Deputy Director, and Andy Frank, Division Chief.

Delegate Marc Korman attended as did numerous community leaders.

A summary document, and the history and timeline on this project can be accessed at the website for the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCCFH): <https://www.cccfhmd.org/capital-crescent-trail>

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See notes below on the meeting. Any omission of comments is not intentional. Paraphrasing is used throughout – Parks Dept. =**PD**:

Participants repeatedly emphasized the increased hazards to the surrounding communities due to diverted traffic. This was ignored except to note that a speed table was provided for that portion of Hillandale Rd. that Parks controls.

PD – The issue of the crossing is a closed subject, dead issue, off the table. i.e., what you see is what you get and what it will be. It is now permanent. No longer any consideration in the future. County Council removed it totally from further study.

PD - Parks is not going to go back to four lanes under any circumstance.

PD - It's not the County's road. It's Park's road. (Note - Parks reports to the Planning Dept., and the Planning Dept. reports to the Council, not the County Executive).

Parks Depts. did a public poll which showed a public preference for the signal crossing.

PD - Mr. Frank said that a traffic study had recommended a mid-block crossing. Parks then commissioned partial construction drawings for the mid-block crossing. (These were done by April 19, 2019).

In so doing Parks ignored their own poll of the public which was completed prior to commissioning the drawings.

They also had not yet presented the alternatives to the Planning Board for the Board to make its decision on the Board's preferred alternative – that was done on the June 13, 2019, public hearing.

On that June 13, 2019 hearing the Planning Board directed the Parks Dept. to proceed with design of a crossing at the Arlington Rd. signal and reopen the Parkway to four lanes utilizing the simplified design proposed by the communities.

PD - Acknowledged that regardless of public input the Parks Dept. strongly preferred the mid-block crossing.

On August 28, 2019 all stakeholders met at the site. PD staff had preliminary engineering drawings that were shown to the assemblage. The drawings were in accordance with the Planning Board's June 13, 2019 directive, i.e., crossing at the signalized intersection, using the community's recommended simplified concept and reopening to four lanes for traffic. All present concurred with the concept and assumed that Parks was proceeding with implementation.

Prior to the Sept. 12, 2019 Planning Board meeting on capital budgets Parks inflated their prior costs for the signalized intersection crossing by \$500,000. Parks made no cost estimate of the more simplified crossing at the signalized intersection that Parks had been directed to implement by the June 13, 2019 Board decision.

On Sept. 12, 2019 the Planning Board directed the Parks Dept. to proceed temporarily with the mid-block crossing and defer further consideration of the crossing at the signal to beyond 2026.

PD - Mr. Frank said in proceeding with the mid-block crossing that Parks was simply following the Planning Board Sept. 12 directive.

PD - Repeated comment – “we simply followed the Boards directives (*note: the directive of June 13th was not followed*), and secondly, it is history, not on Parks' worklist in any way anymore, a dead issue”.

Jenny Sue Dunner's comments on the abuse of process, the dismissive approach to the communities, the polling with results favoring the signal and the complete disregard of that – received no response other than that “we were following the Board's directives” and the admission/acknowledgement that their (Parks) preference was for the mid-block crossing. She further noted that “road diets” commonly have engineering standards, e.g., not to be employed on commuter roads. The response was that PD had talked to the police and to MC DOT. Using the Public Information Act the Citizens Coordinating Council on Friendship Heights obtained MC DOT communications with Parks on the trail crossing issue. There was no record of Parks requesting MC DOT review of a road diet for this roadway.

David Kathan's (bicycle commuter) comment regarding safer crossing at the light and return to four lanes to reduce the hazards to the communities was met with

disagreement and with the note that signal delays would cause cars to divert to neighborhood streets.

Stephanie Lewin of Kenwood emphasized the considerable hazard posed by the diverted and speeding commuter traffic to the many pedestrians who enjoy strolling Kenwood streets which have no sidewalks. The Kenwood residents' expectation is that this will result in serious injury or death. She did not receive a response from Parks.

Lynn Balzer Martin of Kenwood Forest II noted that Parks' own study showed a peak time increase of 102 cars per hour over volume before road diet on Hillandale Road and that her community has faced the greatest traffic problems and safety threat due to density of residences on Hillandale. .

Summary:

PD - What you see is permanent, and it is a dead issue. It is not on Parks plate of work for future consideration any longer. It is done, over.

Puzzling Thoughts:

Why is the safety of the surrounding communities of so little concern?

Why is the increased traffic due to future growth of Bethesda and Westbard not a consideration?

Why has Parks not acknowledged that the diversion to the signalized intersection is Vision Zero compliant?

Why does Parks not acknowledge that the mid-block crossing does not adequately address the potential of human or driver error, and gives trail users a false sense of security?