

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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NCPC File No. 6265



LINCOLN MEMORIAL LINCOLN MEMORIAL CIRCLE SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS, EAST SIDE WASHINGTON, DC

Submission by the National Park Service

November 29, 2007

Abstract

The National Park Service has submitted final site development plans for the location and design of a vehicle security barrier on the east (Mall) side of the Lincoln Memorial. At its October 2005 meeting, the Commission approved preliminary plans for the location and design of the east side security barrier. In the current submission, the National Park Service requests final approval only for the bollards approved in the preliminary plan in October 2005 around the northeast and southeast portions of Lincoln Circle, as well as the associated repaving and improvements of Lincoln Circle itself. The National Park Service would like to complete improvements to the circle itself before the bicentennial of President Lincoln's birth in February 2009, and has informed the Commission that it intends to place temporary barriers to complete the barrier line across the center of the site until a more comprehensive design effort for West Potomac Park can be undertaken in the future. The National Park Service has also submitted the final details of the pavement plan and the proposed final bollard design and paint color (black).

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of final site development plans for the barrier line location and design around portions of Lincoln Circle and associated repaving and improvements to Lincoln Circle, pursuant to 40 U.S.C. §8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. §8722(b)(1)).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves final site development plans for two lines of bollards that cross the Lincoln Circle roadway at Bacon and French Drives and continue along the outer curb at the northeast and southeast portions of Lincoln Circle, as well as associated repaving and improvements to Lincoln Circle, as shown in NCPC Map File No. 1.44(38.40) 42322.

Requires the National Park Service to submit plans to the Commission for the location and design of temporary security elements to complete the barrier line across the Mall's east-west axis, following consultation under the terms of its 2003 Memorandum of Agreement and following assessment of the temporary barrier against the conclusions of its 2003 Environmental Assessment.

Welcomes and supports the National Park Service's goal of a comprehensive design initiative for the east front of the Lincoln Memorial that will include consideration of design concerns, maintenance problems, accessibility, and security needs in West Potomac Park, especially in the area of the lower approachway stairs and the Reflecting Pool.

* * *

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The Lincoln Memorial was sited by the McMillan Commission and designed by one of Charles McKim's protégés, architect Henry Bacon. Built between 1914 and 1922, the national memorial to President Lincoln is the western terminus of the extended Mall and the focal point of West Potomac Park. The Reflecting Pool and Rainbow Pool were designed by Bacon, who collaborated closely with Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. They were constructed between 1922 and 1924. Olmsted had been a member of the McMillan Commission and was sitting as the landscape architect on the Commission of Fine Arts during that time. Olmsted later served as a member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission from 1926 to 1932.

Background and Previous Commission Action

The current submission by the National Park Service (NPS) is a component of a larger improvement project at the Lincoln Memorial that includes roadway and sidewalk reconstruction; the installation of vehicle barriers around the memorial, including a 35-inch tall retaining wall around the inner edge of Memorial Circle; and the construction of two concession buildings to improve visitor services. The other components of the project were approved by the Commission in December 2003, February 2004, and January 2005.

In July 2002, for the east side vehicle barrier, the Commission approved a barrier location (proposed by Laurie Olin, sometimes referred to as "the landscape solution", and illustrated in the Urban Design and Security Plan) that consisted of bollards and retaining walls below Memorial Circle descending the lower stairs to the Reflecting Pool level.

In December 2003, NPS changed its preferred barrier location and submitted a bollard line at the outer edge of Memorial Circle. The Commission did not approve this location, instead

recommending the development of an alternative that minimized the visibility and extent of the unbroken line of bollards.

In March 2005 the Commissioners made a site visit to study a mock-up of bollards in various locations on the plaza—the inner and outer edges of Memorial Circle crossing the Mall axis, as well as locations for the barrier line to cross the circle. The juncture of the retaining walls with the access ramps was also studied.

At its April 2005 meeting the Commission approved a revised concept design for a bollard line near the base of the memorial stairs (near the inner edge of the Circle).

At its July 2005 meeting, following a reassessment by the review agency staffs of the 2002 landscape scheme, the Commission approved a revised concept submission. The changes in the 2005 submission were that the descending bollards were planted inside hedges and that bollards rather than retaining walls were used at the bottom of the stairs.

At its October 2005 meeting, the Commission approved preliminary site development plans for the concept approved in July 2005, and asked for further development of the bollard design.

Proposal

The current final site development plans constitute a portion of the barrier line approved by the Commission at the preliminary level in October 2005. They include:

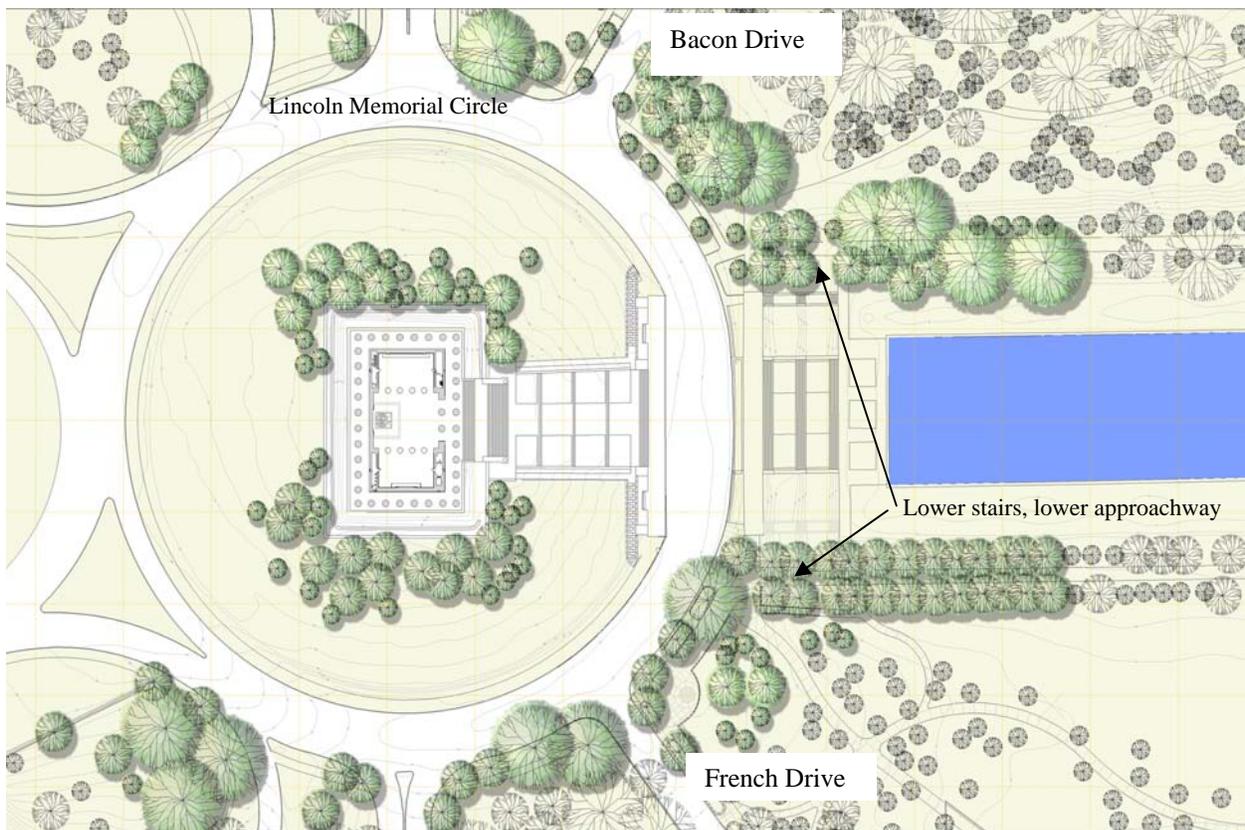
- Terminating the inner circle retaining wall near Bacon and French Drives, leaving the memorial's east walls and ramps unattached.
- Crossing Lincoln Circle to the northeast and to the southeast toward Bacon and French Drives with two lines of 42-inch tall bollards, including three retractable bollards on each side of the circle to allow authorized vehicles to pass. The bollards will be spaced four feet on center. 250 steel bollards, painted black, will be installed.
- Continuing the bollard line at the outer curb line of the circle on both sides until the outer edges of the lower stairs are reached.
- Making surface improvements to Lincoln Circle, including re-grading the roadway to eliminate the curb section and repaving it with concrete aggregate pavers. The original square corners of the roadway at the head of the lower stairs will be restored.

The National Park Service states in its submission letter of September 27, 2007 that it proposes:

- Seeking funds for “specific security additions on the lower approachway, as well as aesthetic, operational, and maintenance concerns, accessibility, and general visitor safety in the area extending from the proposed plaza along the Reflecting Pool to the World War II Memorial. As a result, the NPS has determined the need to see a comprehensive, integrated design for this area that addresses these issues and also minimizes the effects

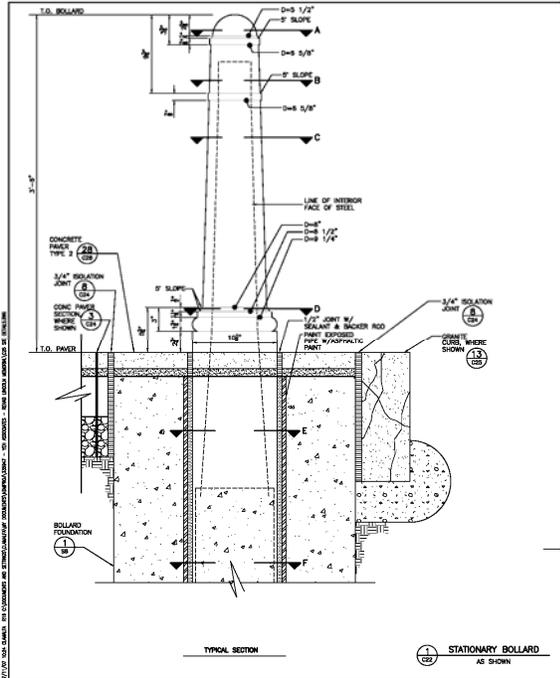
to historic resources. This new look on the part of the NPS would involve significant improvements to the existing stairs, terraces, Reflecting Pool, the elm walks and associated lighting, the asphalt walks connecting the elm walks and the lower plaza, and the ‘social’ paths that parallel both sides of the pool. The NPS will retain a new design team to assist the service in the development of a comprehensive design for this area overall.”

- Placing “temporary barriers to secure the lower approachway.” The current submission from the National Park Service does not include a description of the temporary barriers.





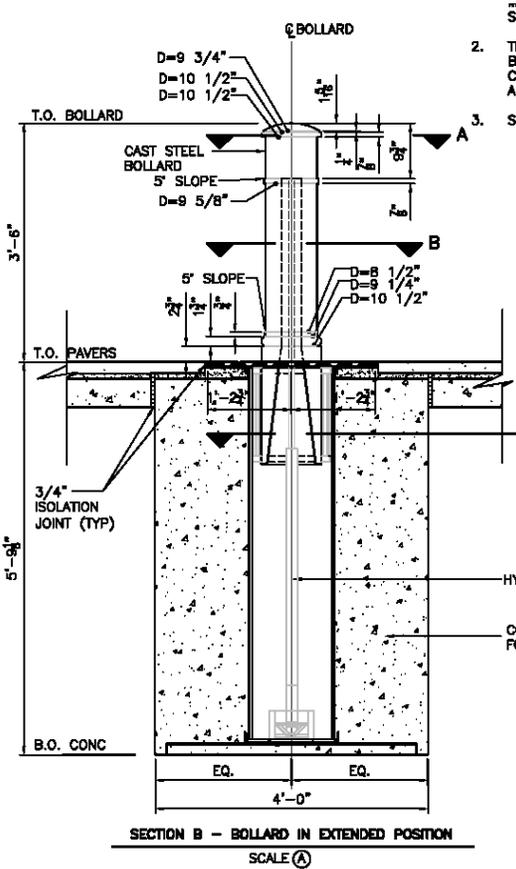
Current conditions

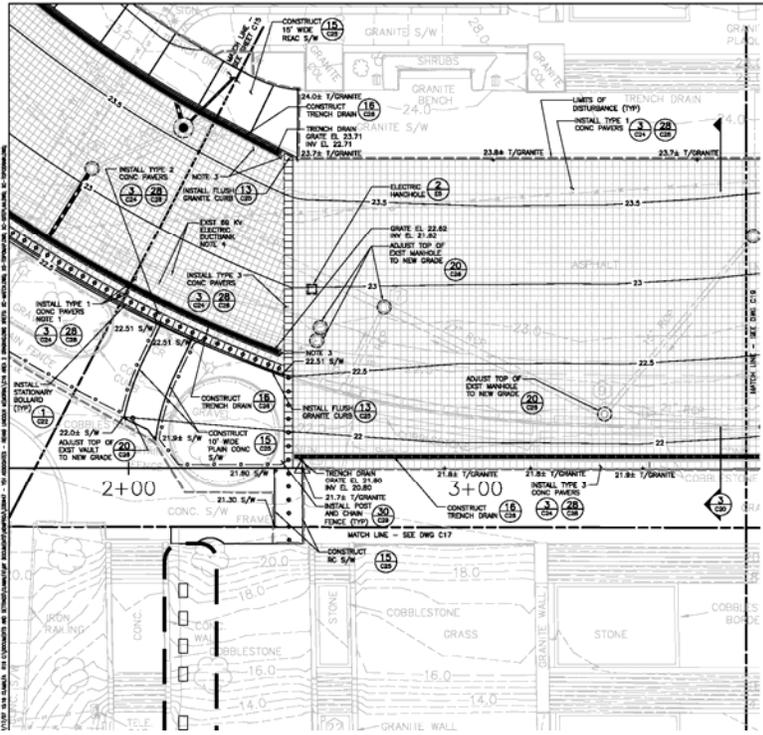


Above, section of the fixed bollard.

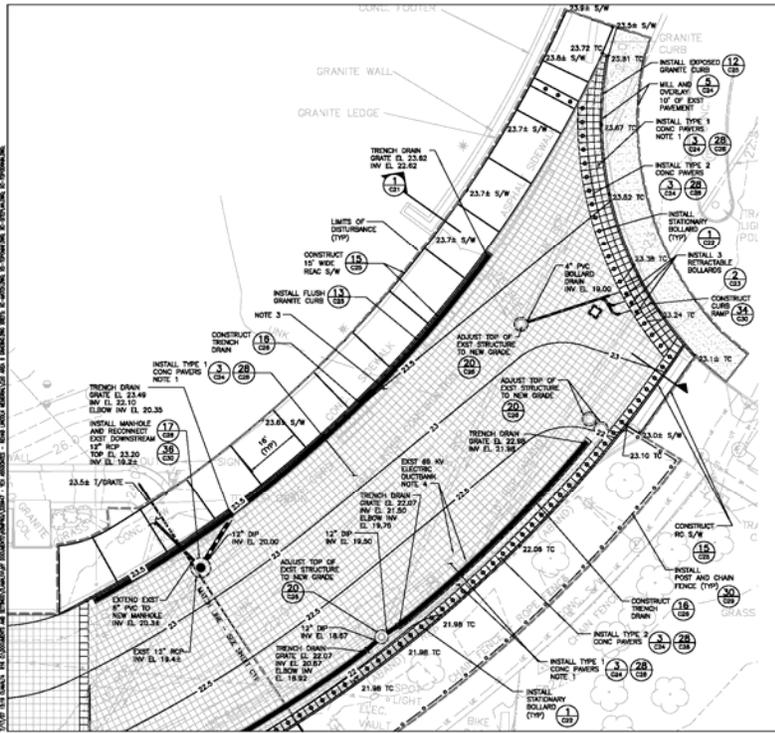
Below, section of the retractable bollard.

The steel bollard sleeves will be painted black.





Above, detail of the bollard and pavement plan at the plaza in front of the memorial.



Below, detail of the bollard and pavement plan immediately to the east of Bacon Drive.

North is to the right in both plan details.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Although the National Mall and West Potomac Park were altered many times in the last century, the formal setting of the Lincoln Memorial at the western terminus of the Mall is recognized and revered as a consummate architectural and landscape design statement about our national democratic principles. Because of the importance of the continuity of access and ascendance, as well as the views of the memorial and its setting, the insertion of a vertical barrier has been especially difficult to even imagine, much less design. Underlying the discussion of this project for the past several years has been the necessity of conceiving of the memorial setting as a whole and the project as a well-integrated landscape design. The proposed security design should be commensurate with the setting of the Lincoln Memorial and the western terminus of the Mall.

The staff commends and welcomes the National Park Service's proposal to seek funding for the initiation of a comprehensive landscape plan for the lower approachway and for the Reflecting Pool and the east-west axis of West Potomac Park and the National Mall that would incorporate security, as well as maintenance and preservation of historic fabric and resources, accessibility, and lighting, among other objectives. The concrete plaza between the Reflecting Pool and the lower stairs—which was not implemented as originally designed and is not historic—should be redesigned in its entirety with materials more commensurate with the quality of the memorial. A new design should take into account proposed security needs and improved accessibility.

The proposed installation of bollards around the outer curb of Lincoln Circle between Bacon and French Drives and the head of the lower stairs on the north and south sides reflects the location of the bollard line that has received approvals from the Commission and other agencies in past iterations of the plans. It is a partial proposal and solution, however, since the two barrier lines must be linked.

Staff agrees with the National Park Service's reasoning that the proposed bollard line is a security design for the roadway curb, just as the granite retaining wall around the inside of the Circle is a security design for the landscape surrounding the Lincoln Memorial, and that the lower approachway will require a landscape design. Consensus has never been reached—or when so, only fleetingly—for a design for a security barrier across the lower approachway, given the extraordinary sensitivity of the historic landscape.

The National Park Service has determined that the lower approachway to the memorial, rising from the Reflecting Pool to the Circle, will require a further, more comprehensive design effort by another design team, an effort that will include a broader range of objectives and encompass West Potomac Park. *Staff welcomes and supports this determination and the ambitious proposal to design timely and needed improvements that are commensurate with the qualities of the Lincoln Memorial and West Potomac Park.*

The temporary barriers will form part of the Lincoln Memorial barrier system in West Potomac Park and thus be part of the current project for at least several years under the most optimistic circumstances while a comprehensive landscape plan is developed, approved, funded, and constructed. It is imperative that they be designed to be as attractive as possible and allow for maximum mobility by pedestrians during those years.

The National Park Service has informed the staff that it will return to the Commission with a plan for the location and design of elements of a temporary, reversible vehicle barrier, following consultation under the terms of the 2003 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The MOA provides the National Park Service a framework to consult with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Office, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Commission, the Commission of Fine Arts, and the other consulting parties on the temporary proposal. In addition, staff notes that the National Park Service should assess the temporary vehicle barrier against the conclusions of its 2003 environmental assessment for a vehicle barrier at the Lincoln Memorial.

The National Park Service has confirmed with staff that the bollards proposed in the current submission must meet the original security requirements established at the beginning of the project: 42-inch tall bollards (including tapered sides and a cap above the structural core) placed four feet on center. The bollard's classical base is 10 1/2 inches across and the bollard sleeve is 8 inches in diameter at its widest dimension at the base. 250 bollards will be installed. The design of the bollard has been reviewed in the field through the use of samples during several consultation meetings; staff recommends that the Commission approve the design and the color. The steel bollard sleeves will be painted black, as are the segments of post-and-chain around the site. The retractable bollards (a total of six) are of a similar design, but with a different cap profile.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The following are the applicable policies in the *Preservation and Historic Features Element* of the Comprehensive Plan:

National Capital Image

1. Express the dignity befitting the image of the federal government in the national capital.
5. Protect and enhance the vistas and views, both natural and designed, that are an integral part of the national capital's image.

Stewardship of Historic Properties

5. Identify and protect both the significant historic design integrity and the use of historic landscapes and open spaces.

The Historic Plan of Washington, DC

2. Promote continuity in the historic design framework of the nation's capital by protecting and enhancing the elements, views, and principles of the L'Enfant Plan.

5. Protect the reservations that contain historic landscapes and features from incompatible changes or incursions.

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

The proposed security barrier for the Lincoln Memorial in the 2002 *Urban Design and Security Plan* indicated a retaining wall around the north, west, and south sides of the inner edge of Lincoln Memorial Circle. This wall has been constructed. The *Plan* proposed a barrier line of bollards around the circle to the head of the lower approachway stairs (coming from both north and south directions), as shown in the current submission from the National Park Service. From those points, the 2002 scheme included bollards descending the lower stairs and retaining walls at the base of the slopes at the Reflecting Pool level. The location of the barrier line around the lower approachway is the line that the National Park Service has indicated it requires for the location of the temporary elements that will be submitted to the Commission in the near future.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The Commission's review of NPS's plans for the Lincoln Memorial East Side Perimeter Improvements is governed by NCPC's Environmental Policy and Procedures, in coordination with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Executive Director issued a FONSI (Finding of No Significant Impact) on November 17, 2003, based on adoption of the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) issued by the National Park Service for the project. NCPC staff's review of the document concluded that the analysis was sufficient and demonstrated no significant environmental impacts from the planned actions examined by that analysis and where similar in extent, location, and impact to the current proposed action. The preferred alternative of that EA analysis was constructing a retaining wall behind the existing sidewalk beginning at Daniel French Drive on the south side of the Lincoln Memorial and continuing around the west side, to the north side, and ending at Henry Bacon Drive. Metal bollards along the outer ring would begin where the retaining wall ended at Henry Bacon Drive and crossed Lincoln Circle to the outer perimeter of the memorial site. Bollards were identified to continue along the outer ring and would descend the outside portion of the middle stairs.

The current proposal for the bollards around portions of the Circle duplicates the evaluated location around the Circle. The modifications do not introduce any additional information or environmentally significant new circumstances regarding the planned action compared to the existing EA and its findings. The conclusion of the environmental review considers the mitigation efforts established under the Memorandum of Agreement, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which establishes important provisions to the proposal in the context of historic resource impacts.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Architecture, landscape, topography, and location combine to create the Lincoln Memorial as the western terminus of the National Mall and the centerpiece of West Potomac Park. The memorial and its setting are of high historic significance and designed to be seen and experienced as a

whole, creating a symbolic and commemorative landscape setting for the Lincoln Memorial within the spacious precinct of West Potomac Park and the Mall itself, and extending westward across the Memorial Bridge to Arlington National Cemetery.

The memorial itself, the circle, and the series of steps and turf and stone terraces leading to the memorial from the level of the Mall at the Reflecting Pool form a significant historic designed landscape that evokes through levels of ascendance a reverence for Lincoln as the savior of the Union. The site is heavily visited and over the years the Park Service has incorporated alterations for handicapped accessibility, visitor services, and construction for temporary events. Lincoln Circle used to be a true traffic circle, and even though the eastern portion has been closed to general traffic since the nation's bicentennial, the rest of the circle continues to serve as a commuter route for traffic entering and leaving the District of Columbia via Memorial Bridge.

NPS initiated consultation with the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) and with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) on July 1, 2002, determining that the proposed security alterations and the loss of the roadway in the eastern portion of the traffic circle would have an adverse effect on the National Register qualities of the Lincoln Memorial. The consultation has included both of the above agencies, as well as NCPC staff, Commission of Fine Arts staff, and public groups such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Committee of 100, and the National Coalition to Save Our Mall.

NPS executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on October 31, 2003 with the DC SHPO and the ACHP. All the parties have been operating under the MOA in the ongoing consideration of a barrier line for the east side of the Lincoln Memorial. The MOA stipulates that the bollard line "be placed at the outer edge of the plaza and circle on the east side of the Memorial."

Consultation on the east side security measures resumed in October 2004 after a year's hiatus and continued through the fall of 2005 with the preliminary approval by the Commission of a line of bollards that descended the lower stairs on both north and south sides and met at the bottom at the level of the Reflecting Pool.

Following another hiatus of almost two years, the National Park Service resumed Section 106 consultation in the summer of 2007, proposing that a portion of the 2005 bollard line around the Circle be installed and that a comprehensive design be undertaken for the area between Lincoln Circle and the World War II Memorial, encompassing the lower approachway stairs, the Reflecting Pool, and the elm walks and taking into consideration security needs, maintenance, accessibility, lighting, and other factors.

The National Park Service has agreed to submit its proposal (when it is developed) for the design and location of reversible elements that will create a temporary vehicle barrier to the Commission and to the Commission of Fine Arts for review and approval and to use the 2003 MOA as the framework for completing consultation with agencies and consulting parties prior to making the submissions. Staff expects to see the proposal in the foreseeable future, as the National Park Service has informed staff that it plans to complete the installation of the bollards and the reconstruction of the Circle roadway by the autumn of 2008, in time for Lincoln Bicentennial celebrations.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed various iterations on this project on different occasions between 2002 and 2005. All agencies coordinated the project.

The Commission of Fine Arts

At its November 15, 2007 meeting, the Commission of Fine Arts approved the plans for the current submission--two bollard lines around the outer edges of the circle between the new retaining wall and the outer edges of the head of the lower stair approachway. The Commission also approved the bollard design and color. The Commission responded favorably to the National Park Service's proposed comprehensive landscape plan.