



NCPC File No. 6468

H STREET, NE CORRIDOR TRANSPORTATION STUDY
H Street between North Capitol Street and 17th Street, NE

Delegated Action of the Executive Director

May 28, 2004

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996, I comment favorably as described below on the concept site development plan for the H Street, NE Corridor Transportation Study between North Capitol Street and 17th Street, NE, Washington, DC, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.13(05.17)-41372.

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The District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) has submitted its study of the H Street, NE corridor, which is intended to improve transit, vehicular, and parking services and implement streetscape and public realm improvements along H Street, NE. The streetscape improvements would accommodate a future streetcar line (if that were determined feasible). Street parking would be retained except at transit points that would occur at certain intersections. The plan envisions brick sidewalks and street trees lining H Street, NE. Near the western end of the corridor, the intersection of H Street and the Union Station parking garage entrance and exit would be improved with an additional traffic light. A landscaped plaza would be constructed around the Hopscotch Bridge over the railroad tracks to improve the appearance and pedestrian safety in the area of future air rights developments. Major intersections such as H and 8th Street, NE would be marked with special pavement designs and “bulb-out” sidewalks at the four corners to improve pedestrian visibility and safety. Near the eastern end of the corridor, the “starburst” intersection would be modified in order to improve pedestrian safety and insert a plaza at the complicated intersection of Maryland Avenue, Bladensburg Road Benning Road, 15th Street, and H Street, NE. The plaza would be designed to include special pavement and trees, as well as a place for a major work of civic art. The plan has been developed with community and public contributions.

I have reviewed the proposed transit and streetscape improvements and generally agree with them at the concept level indicated in this study. We look forward to reviewing individual components of the study as DDOT begins to design and implement them. In particular, we recommend that the pavement markings at intersections be simplified and made more consistent with the character of Washington streets and brick sidewalks. We recommend that the history of the community be conveyed through a heritage trail consisting of informational signs similar to others being developed throughout the city. The H Street corridor has an interesting commercial history that could be presented distinctively through historic photos and text, as well as through sculpture, special benches, and other art work.

When it is implemented, the Union Station intersection should be coordinated with the Union Station parking garage expansion, which is now in draft. At the starburst intersection, the proposed realignment

of Maryland Avenue through the intersection should be avoided, if possible, by adjusting the location of the pedestrian plaza. If that is not feasible for reasons of traffic and pedestrian safety, the plaza should be designed so that the sightlines along Maryland Avenue remain intact by carefully studying tree placement. If designed and placed properly, it could enhance the public appreciation of the plaza and also mark the Maryland Avenue axis toward the U.S. Capitol (or the Arboretum). The intersection of H Street and Bladensburg Road might also be enhanced with a focal point visible from the sidewalks of H Street. This project is not subject to the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Historic Preservation Act. The project was coordinated by the Coordinating Committee on May 12, 2004.

I am pleased to submit these comments for DDOT's consideration. We look forward to working with DDOT in the further design development of the study's elements for the enhancement of the H Street corridor and the federal interests nearby, particularly Union Station and the Maryland Avenue intersection.

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP
Executive Director