



Commission Action

April 5, 2018

PROJECT

South Capitol Street Corridor and Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge

Southwest and Southeast Quadrants of the District of Columbia from I-295 Suitland Parkway Interchange to P Street Washington, DC

SUBMITTED BY

District of Columbia Department of Transportation

REVIEW AUTHORITY

Advisory
per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1)

NCPC FILE NUMBER

7529

NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER

75.00.01(38.00)44722

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

Approval of comments on concept design for the South Capitol Street Corridor and approval of preliminary and final design for the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge

ACTION TAKEN

Approved comments on the concept design for South Capitol Street and approved the preliminary and final design with comments for the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge

The Commission:

Notes that the District Department of Transportation is seeking preliminary and final approval of the Frederick Douglass Bridge design and comments on the South Capitol Street corridor concept design, including the two oval shaped parks, esplanade areas, and landscaping for the I-295 interchange with Suitland Parkway.

Notes that the South Capitol Street Corridor is one of the most symbolic gateways to the U.S. Capitol and is also home to one of the fastest growing, high-density neighborhoods in the District.

Notes that this proposal presents a significant opportunity to develop the oval-shaped parks on the east and west sides of the bridge into a sequence of gateways as proposed by NCPC in 2005, and connect both sides of the Anacostia River.

Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge

Approves the preliminary and final site plans for a new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge, which is 1,445 feet in length and includes three pairs of steel arches with a maximum height of 168 feet, six travel lanes, separated bicycle and pedestrian paths on both sides of the bridge, four overlooks, and two v-shaped piers.

Notes that the November 2013 Commission recommendation found that the proposed bridge design, which was a modest bridge design with slightly arched spans and supported by seven pairs of piers, was not an appropriate response given its importance as a gateway for the city and its setting.

Finds that the revised design with three pairs of large arches, up to 168 feet in height, and multimodal transportation elements is a strong, elegant design that distinguishes the bridge from the eleven other bridges in the District.

Notes that the proposed architectural lighting of the bridge combined with the existing lighting of the Nationals Park Stadium and new development in the South Capitol Street corridor could cumulatively impact views of the U.S. Capitol from Poplar Point and the topographic bowl.

Notes that the District Department of Transportation recognizes the potential impacts of bridge lighting on views to the U.S. Capitol and states it will develop an agreement to determine the operational parameters for the appropriate brightness, duration, use of special colors and other related lighting concerns for the bridge in an effort to minimize any adverse effects on views or the historic character of federal properties within the viewshed.

Requests that the District Department of Transportation include the Commission staff, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, the National Park Service, and other relevant consulting parties as it develops the operational lighting agreement.

Requires the District Department of Transportation submit the lighting plan and operational agreement for Commission review.

Notes that architectural and/or colored lighting on the South Capitol Street Bridge will add to existing and proposed lighting on other bridges in the District (Case, Key, and 11th Street Bridge Park).

Recommends the District Department of Transportation develop an overall lighting plan for all of the Potomac and Anacostia River bridges that analyzes the cumulative effects of bridge lighting on natural systems and larger views of the monumental core.

Requires the District Department of Transportation provide more detailed information regarding the pedestrian/bicycle area that addresses anticipated volumes and potential conflicts

East Oval

Notes that for diplomats arriving at Joint Base Andrews and for District residents entering downtown, the east oval is the first opportunity in the sequence of park spaces that frame the bridge and mark the entrance of the South Capitol Street gateway to the U.S. Capitol.

Notes that from southbound on South Capitol Street, the east oval will serve as the gateway into Anacostia, one of the District's most historic neighborhoods.

Finds that given its passive setting located adjacent to Poplar Point and the wooded areas of Suitland Parkway, and it is outside of direct views to the U.S. Capitol, the east oval presents an opportunity for a more dramatic gateway element such as a national or local memorial, or public art, to distinguish the oval from nearby open space.

Requests that the future design consider how the east oval could better accommodate both visitors and residents by incorporating design elements such as a national memorial, local memorial or public art in a way that serves its dual role as a gateway to both the U.S. Capitol and the neighborhoods east of the river.

Notes that while pedestrian and bicycle access to this site from the west seems appropriate, the connections from the east, where the future Poplar Point redevelopment is located, needs to be strengthened.

Requests the District Department of Transportation explore a direct pedestrian/bicycle connection to the northeast from the oval, connecting to the proposed traffic island.

West Oval

Notes that while several NCPC plans and studies proposed a major memorial for the west oval - due to its axial relationship with the U.S. Capitol - the area surrounding the oval has substantially changed over the last decade into a more vibrant District entertainment area/neighborhood, which will require a memorial that is both compatible in program and design with surrounding uses and the intent to use this space as an urban park.

Supports the proposed concept to use the west oval as an active park/gathering space for residents and visitors with uses like a farmer's market, active recreation, children's play space, seating and a fountain.

Finds that given the size of the 3-acre oval, a gateway element such as a major memorial or public art installation can still be appropriate, however, unlike the east oval, the focal point of the west oval should continue to be the U.S. Capitol, which serves as the backdrop to this public space.

Requests that future designs consider how the west oval could accommodate gateway elements such as a memorial or public art, and show them at different scales.

Notes that there are two important axes that intersect and move through this site: a north axis with a view towards the U.S. Capitol and a northeast/southwest axis along Potomac Avenue, which is part of the L'Enfant Plan Street network.

Finds that the South Capitol Street axis is strengthened by the north-south orientation of the park and the landscape elements; however, the Potomac Avenue axis through the oval which is delineated with paving, is less successful because it does not fully align with the cartway.

Requests that the District Department of Transportation explore design concepts (including landscape, paving, and/or additional crosswalks) that better reconcile the change in the Potomac Avenue cartway width across the oval.

Overall Comments

Recommends the District Department of Transportation explore incorporating elements that describe the life and legacy of Frederick Douglass into the esplanade area or the ovals.

Requests a lighting plan for the ovals and esplanades in addition to the bridge that identifies the amount, placement and intensity of lighting.

Requests a signage plan that describes the number and placement of all signs for roadway navigation, pathway directions and interpretation.

Requests information regarding how the project will meet the District Department of Energy and the Environment requirements for stormwater management.

//Original Signed//

04/05/2018

Julia A. Koster

Date

Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission