



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: June 3, 2021

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<b>PROJECT</b> <b>15th Street Safety Improvements</b> National Mall 15th Street from Pennsylvania Avenue to Maine Avenue, NW Washington, DC	<b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b> 8272
<b>SUBMITTED BY</b> United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	<b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b> 1.71(00.00)45313
<b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b> Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	<b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b> Approval of preliminary and final site development plans
	<b>PROPOSED ACTION</b> Approve preliminary and final site development plans as requested
	<b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b> Consent Calendar

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### PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service (NPS) has submitted preliminary and final site developments plans for bicycle and safety improvements to 15<sup>th</sup> Street between Maine Avenue, NW and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW in Washington, DC. The NPS, in partnership with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) proposes a physically separated, two-way cycle track in place of the western most lane of traffic on 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The project also includes pedestrian and bus stop improvements in the corridor. The proposed improvements will be implemented in two phases with temporary vertical physical cycle track barriers installed in phase 1 and permanent vertical barriers installed in phase 2. These phases align with planned road repaving in the corridor.

### KEY INFORMATION

- The NPS, in partnership with DDOT is planning to implement a physically separated, two-way cycle track in place of the western most lane of traffic on a portion of 15<sup>th</sup> Street with additional pedestrian and bus improvements.
- The new cycle track will replace the western most lane of traffic or parking on 15<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Pedestrian improvements include changes to traffic signals to increase pedestrian crossing time and add pedestrian only movements, and closure of the slip lane to Maine Avenue, NW.
- Plan includes improvements to existing bus lay-bys to create safe and efficient mixing of bicyclists, pedestrians, and bus passengers.
- The design process included public engagement with the primary goal to improve safety for all users in the corridor.
- The installation will occur in two phases that align with planned roadway repaving. The first phase will include temporary vertical physical cycle track barriers such as concrete

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curbs and plastic bollards. Phase two would replace the temporary elements with permanent granite curb style barriers and K71 bollards as needed.

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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final site development plans for the proposed safety improvements to 15<sup>th</sup> Street between Pennsylvania Avenue, NW and Maine Avenue, NW in Washington, DC.

**Supports** the intended goal of improving safety for all users and reducing vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle conflicts in the heavily traveled corridor.

**Notes** the proposed use of vertical physical barriers that includes low concrete and granite curbs for the majority of the cycle track and limits the use of flexible posts or permanent bollards in the National Mall is a context sensitive design approach that maintains important viewsheds on the Mall.

## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

<b>Previous actions</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Remaining actions</b> (anticipated)	<b>None</b>

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

Staff evaluated the submitted preliminary and final site development plans and finds that the project, which includes the addition of a physically separated, two-way cycle track, changes to traffic signals, closure of the slip lane to Maine Avenue, NW, and upgrades to the bus lay-bys, will greatly improve user access and safety on the 15<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. Accordingly, staff recommends the **Commission approve the preliminary and final site development plans for the proposed safety improvements to 15<sup>th</sup> Street between Pennsylvania Avenue, NW and Maine Avenue, NW in Washington, DC.**

### Analysis

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The National Park Service, National Mall and Memorial Parks, in conjunction with DDOT, is proposing to implement a safety improvement project on 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The project includes a two-way cycle track physically separated from traffic with vertical barriers for bicyclist safety, improvements to intersections and removal of the right turn slip lane to Maine Avenue, NW to improve pedestrian safety, and new designs for bus lay-bys to ensure bus user safety. The project fills a void in a cross-city bicycle route and will improve access to the National Mall and surrounding areas. The project is part of an effort to install twenty miles of protected bike lanes by 2022 with the priority of improving high injury and crash locations. The purpose is to improve safety in a highly traveled corridor by balancing the needs of all users. As such, staff recommends that the **Commission supports the intended goal of improving safety for all users and reducing vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle conflicts in the heavily traveled corridor.** The proposed cycle track was included in the National Park Service 2010 National Mall Plan as well as the Districts MoveDC Plan and Vision Zero strategy.

The proposed cycle track will be a two-way design where both north and south directions are side by side and separated by painted lines, except at intersections where plastic or permanent bollards will be used to ensure drivers do not enter the cycle track mistakenly. The proposed cycle track will replace the western-most lane on 15<sup>th</sup> Street which changes from on street parking to a travel lane. The replacement of the lane with a cycle track requires that turns and traffic signals be updated to include turn arrows to eliminate cross-use conflicts. Traditional cycle tracks utilize plastic flex post bollards to separate the cycle track from vehicle traffic. As these features are not in keeping with the design aesthetic and quality of the National Mall, NPS is proposing to initially use temporary concrete wheel stops or rubber wheel stops as the physical separation with a small number of flex posts used only at intersections and north of Constitution Avenue. The permanent phase of the project will replace the concrete wheel stops with granite curbs and replace some of the flex posts with either a stainless steel or K-71 bollard.

Currently there are three bus lay-bys on the western side of 15<sup>th</sup> Street for bus drop off and pick up by several bus users including the National Mall Circulator. The addition of the cycle track requires a new design for the lay-bys that will balance safety with access. The proposed design includes a larger separating island that will become the actual bus stop. The cycle track will be routed between this new bus stop island and western curb of the street. This routing will include lane markings and signage to indicate an upcoming user conflict point that requires bicyclists to slow down and yield to pedestrians. This design is also referred to as a floating bus stop.

The proposed project will be implemented in two phases based on currently planned repaving projects by DDOT and NPS. In the first phase, which will take place by the end of 2021, DDOT will install the cycle track between Constitution Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW to include concrete barriers and flex posts. During this phase, NPS will install rubber and concrete wheel stops with flex posts at intersections only, and the redesigned bus lay-bys south of Constitution Avenue. In the second phase of work, which will occur in 2022, NPS will replace the temporary separation features with granite curbs and most flex posts will be replaced with permanent bollards on the National Mall. Staff recommends that the **Commission notes that the proposed use of vertical physical barriers that includes low concrete and granite curbs for the majority of**

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**the cycle track and limits the use of flexible posts or permanent bollards in the National Mall is a context sensitive design approach that maintains important viewsheds on the Mall.**

## **CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE**

### **Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital**

As noted in the analysis above, NCPC staff has reviewed this proposal for compliance with relevant guidance and has determined that it is not inconsistent with the policies established in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, the project is supported by policies in the Federal Environment, Urban Design, Parks and Open Space, Transportation, and Visitors and Commemoration Elements.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

The National Park Service has indicated that National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) review for this project will be streamlined in accordance with a nationwide programmatic agreement (PA), which the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has confirmed. The PA allows the NPS to streamline many maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, or other activities that are not anticipated to have impacts on historic properties and are completed in accordance with a treatment plan. Given its approval authority over the project, NCPC also has an independent responsibility to satisfy the regulations implementing Section 106 of the NHPA. NCPC designated the NPS as the lead agency for Section 106 purposes related to the approval actions regarding this project.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

The National Park Service has indicated that it will apply categorical exclusion C.18 *Construction of minor structures, including small, improved parking lots, in previously disturbed areas* from National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis under its agency regulations. To meet its own NEPA obligation, NCPC staff applied a categorical exclusion for the proposed project (§601.12 [2]), which allows for “approval of the installation or restoration of minor site elements, such as but not limited to identification signs, sidewalks, patios, fences, curbs, retaining walls, landscaping, and trail or stream improvements.” Staff determined no extraordinary circumstances existed prior to applying the categorical exclusion.

## **CONSULTATION**

NPS, in coordination with DDOT, has utilized an extensive online public engagement campaign to both publicize the proposed project and gather feedback. There were two public meetings, online surveys and stakeholder meetings that generated more than 150 comments.

### **Coordinating Committee**

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The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposed preliminary site and building plans at its May 12, 2021 meeting. The Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that it has been coordinated with all participating agencies, except the District Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE). DOEE noted that the project has not initiated coordination yet and should consult with DOEE to ensure compliance with applicable stormwater management requirements. The Coordinating Committee agencies included NCPC; the National Park Service; the General Services Administration, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the State Historic Preservation Office; the District Department of Transportation, and the District Department of Energy and Environment via email.

### **U.S. Commission of Fine Arts**

The 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements project will be reviewed at the May 20, 2021, meeting of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

### **ONLINE REFERENCE**

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at [www.ncpc.gov](http://www.ncpc.gov):

- Submission Package
- Project Synopsis

Prepared by Jamie Herr  
05/14/2021

### **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

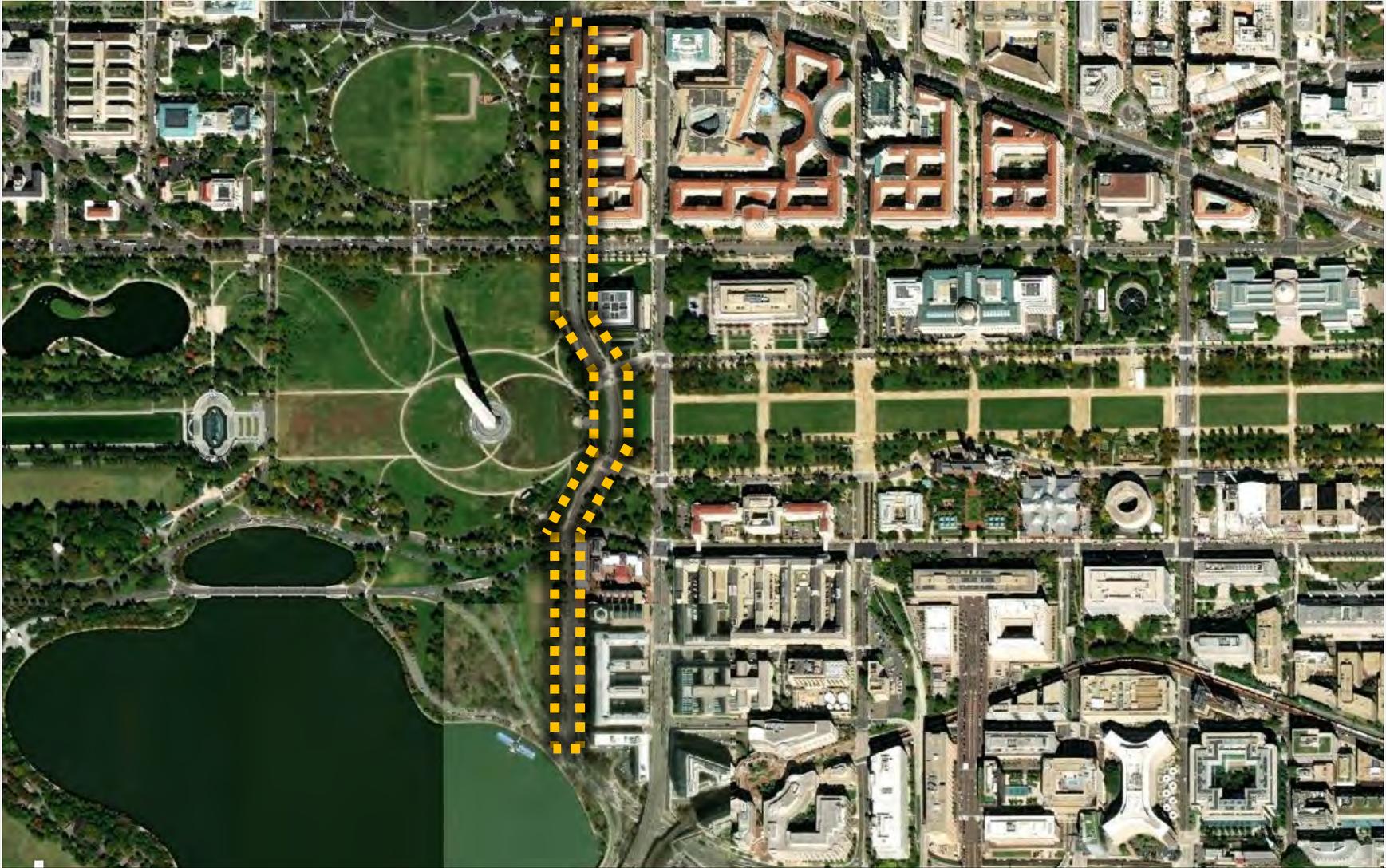
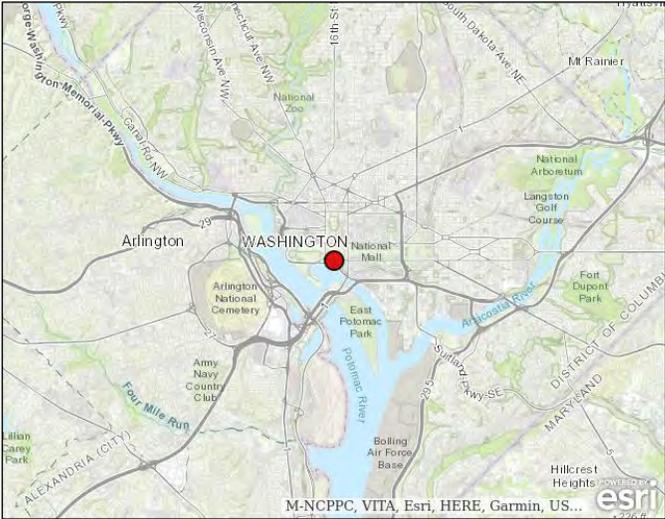
# 15th Street Safety Improvements

15th Street from Pennsylvania Avenue to Maine Avenue, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary and Final Site Development Plans

United States Department of the Interior

# Site Location



Location Map

# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements - Purpose

**Conflicts Can Lead to Crashes**

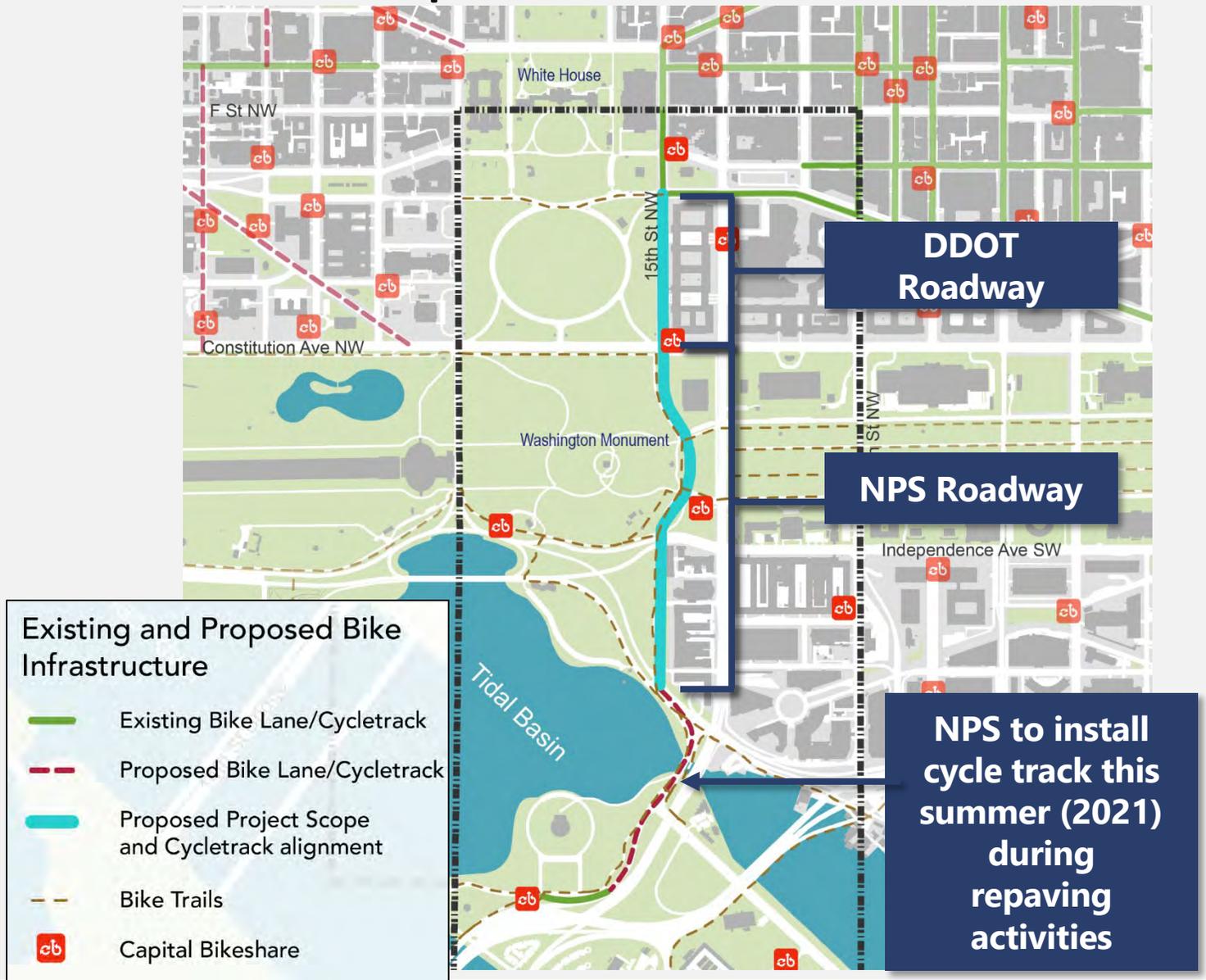
**200+**

Number of crashes (all modes) that occurred on the 15<sup>th</sup> Street corridor within our study area between 2015 and 2020



# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Proposed Elements

- Closes the bikeway gap from Pennsylvania Avenue to the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge
- This scope of work focuses on 15<sup>th</sup> Street between Pennsylvania Avenue NW and Maine Avenue SW



# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Vertical Protection Elements

- Concrete wheel stops with reflective strips are preferred for durability and have limited impact on viewshed.
- Along the Mall, **no flexible posts will be used (except at intersections)**
- North of Constitution Avenue, flexible posts will be considered for added vertical protection
- A **short-term application is needed** for the 15<sup>th</sup> Street portion through the National Mall (permanent application can occur with mill/paving in summer 2022)



# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Vertical Protection cont'd

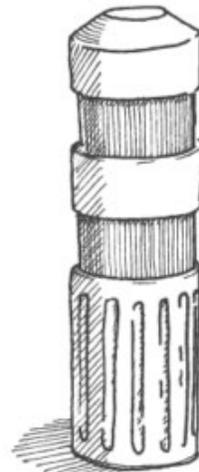
- A vertical element at intersections is needed to provide visibility (and to deter vehicles from entering bike facility)
- Design would seek to minimize the number of flexible posts at each intersection
- 2-3 flexible posts used to add visibility to concrete buffer



# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Vertical Protection cont'd

- A vertical element at the centerline of cycle-tracks are also needed – due to the facility's width (to deter vehicles from entering facility)
- Options for centerline post:
  - 2-3 flexible posts
  - 1 stainless steel or K-71 bollard

K-71



1<sup>st</sup> Street NE cycletrack, north of K Street



1<sup>st</sup> Street NE at Columbus Circle

# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Timeline 2021



4<sup>th</sup> Street SW, National Mall

**Concrete barrier with flexible posts**



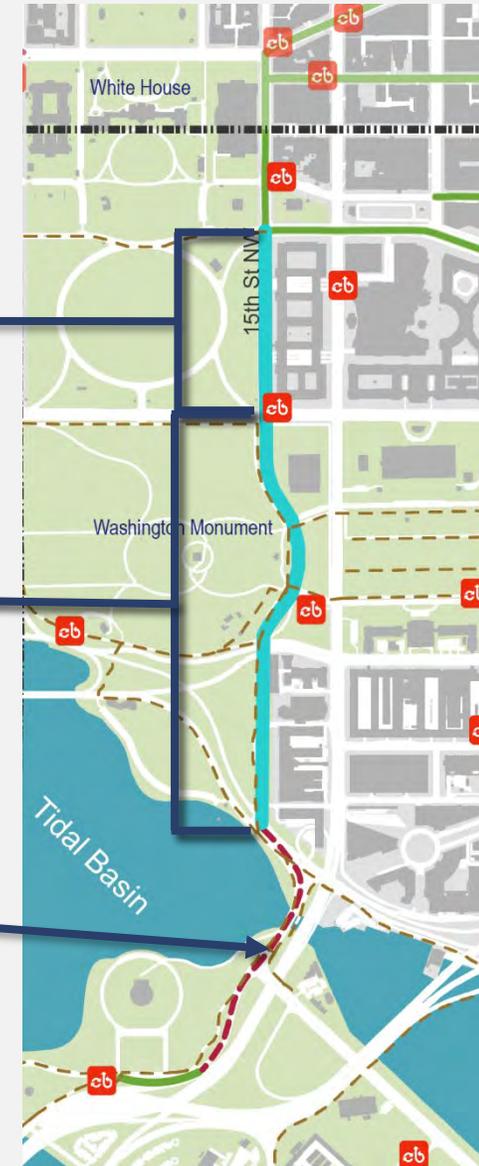
East Basin Drive , Jefferson Memorial

**Rubber wheel stop with flexible posts  
(at intersections only)**

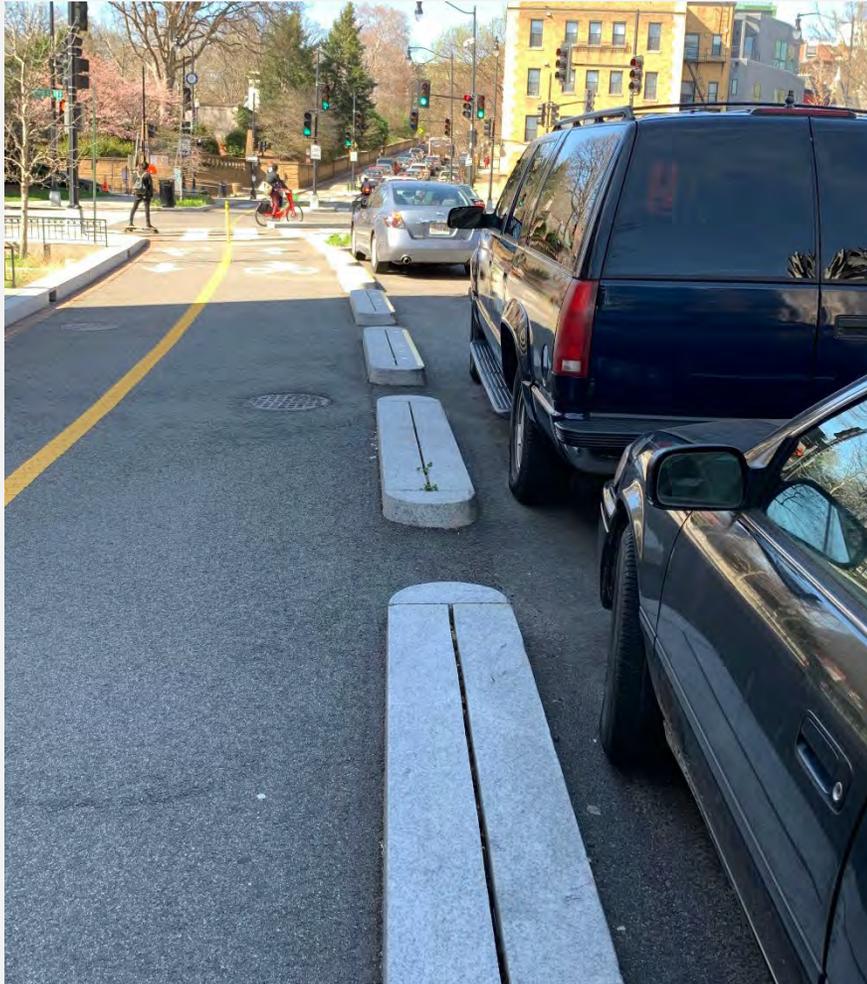
**Long-Term Condition**  
Concrete barrier with flexible posts

**Interim Condition**  
Rubber wheel stops with flexible posts  
Bus lay-by reconstruction

**Long-Term Condition**  
Rubber wheel stops with flexible posts



# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Timeline 2022



Permanent granite curb buffer

2021 Condition

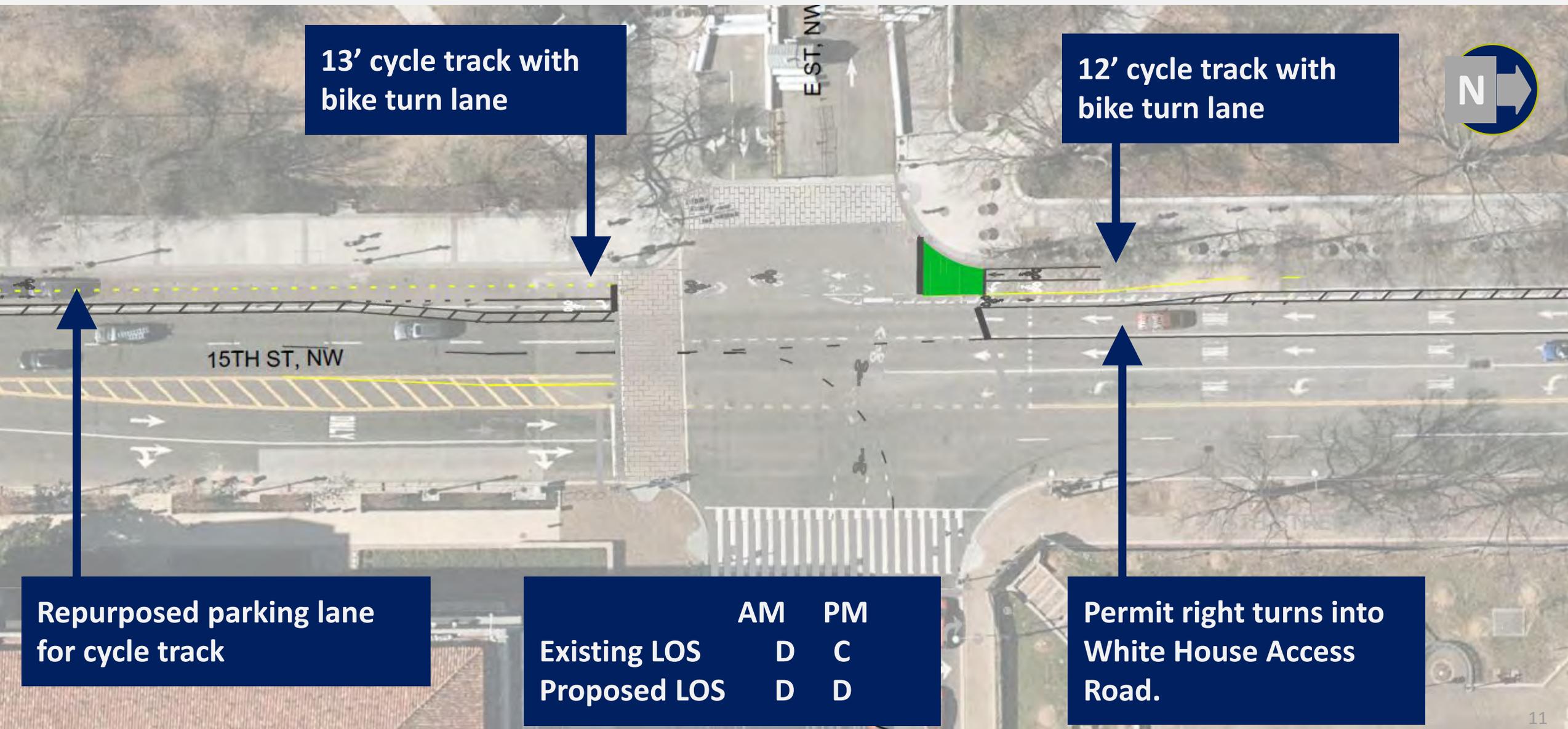
Long-Term  
Condition

Permanent curb buffer for  
cycletrack  
No change to bus lay-bys

2021 Condition



# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Segment 1 Pennsylvania Avenue



**13' cycle track with bike turn lane**

**12' cycle track with bike turn lane**

**Repurposed parking lane for cycle track**

	AM	PM
Existing LOS	D	C
Proposed LOS	D	D

**Permit right turns into White House Access Road.**

# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Segment 2 Constitution Avenue

10' cycle track, 3' buffer  
10' vehicle lanes

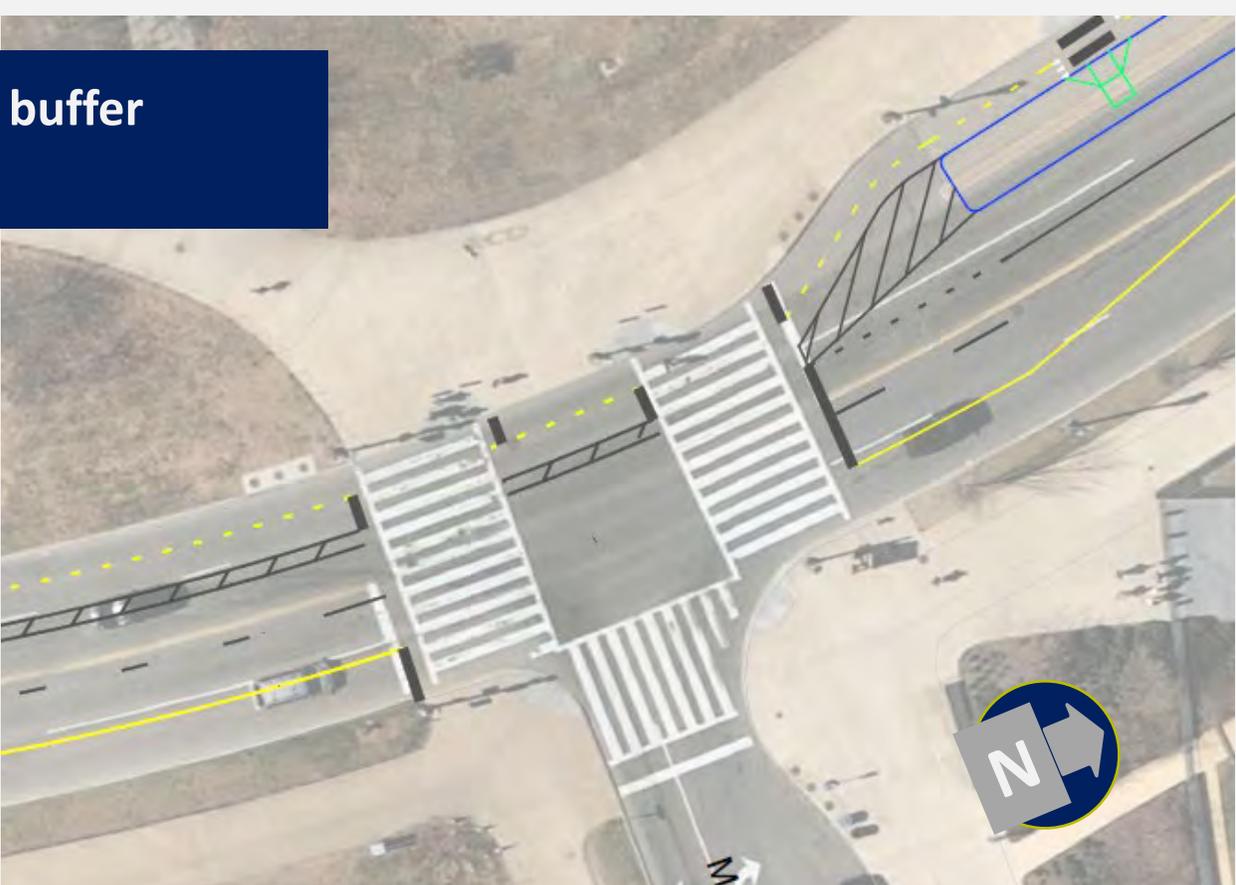
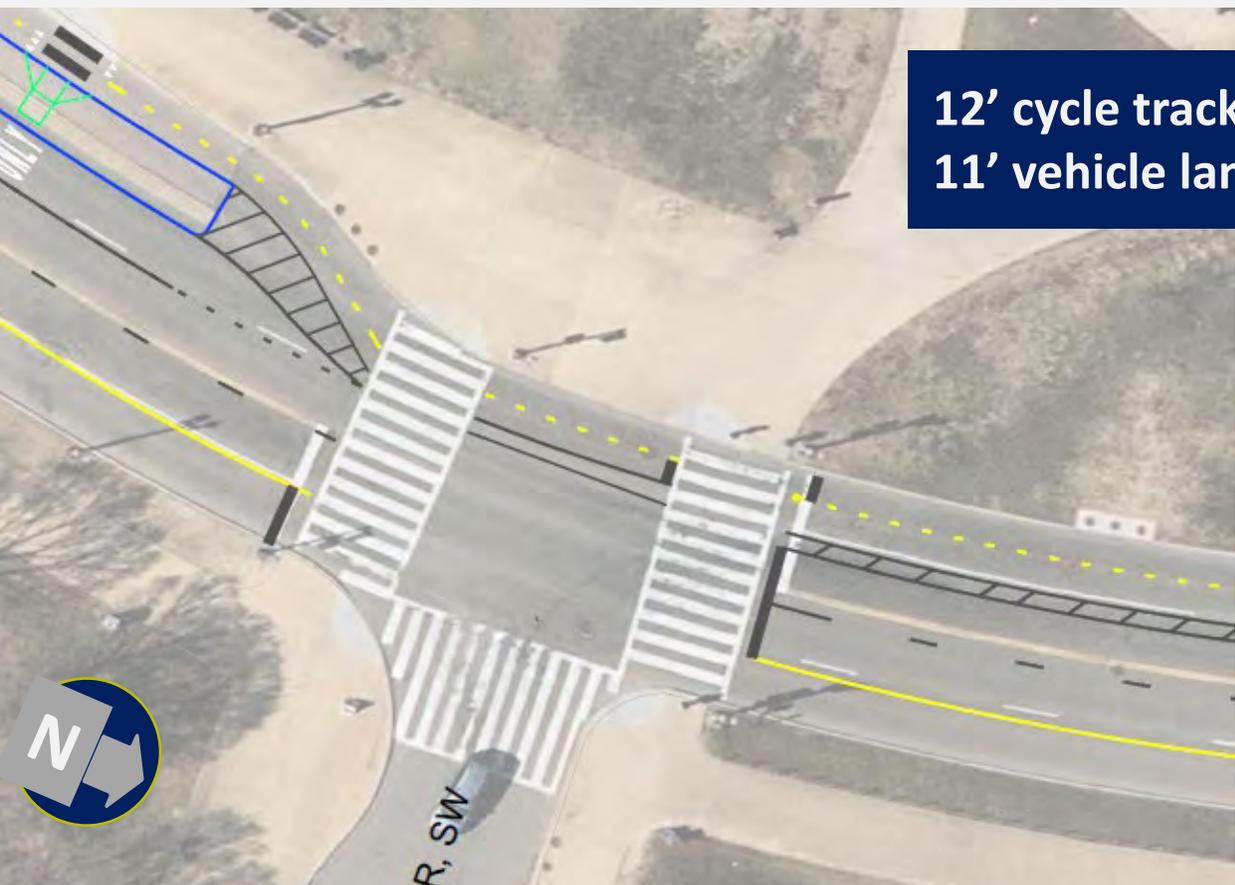
Right turn on green arrow only  
to avoid conflict with bicycles  
and pedestrians.



Left turn on green arrow  
only to avoid conflict with  
bicycles and pedestrians

	AM	PM
Existing LOS	E	D
Proposed LOS	F	F

# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Segment 3 Madison Drive, NW

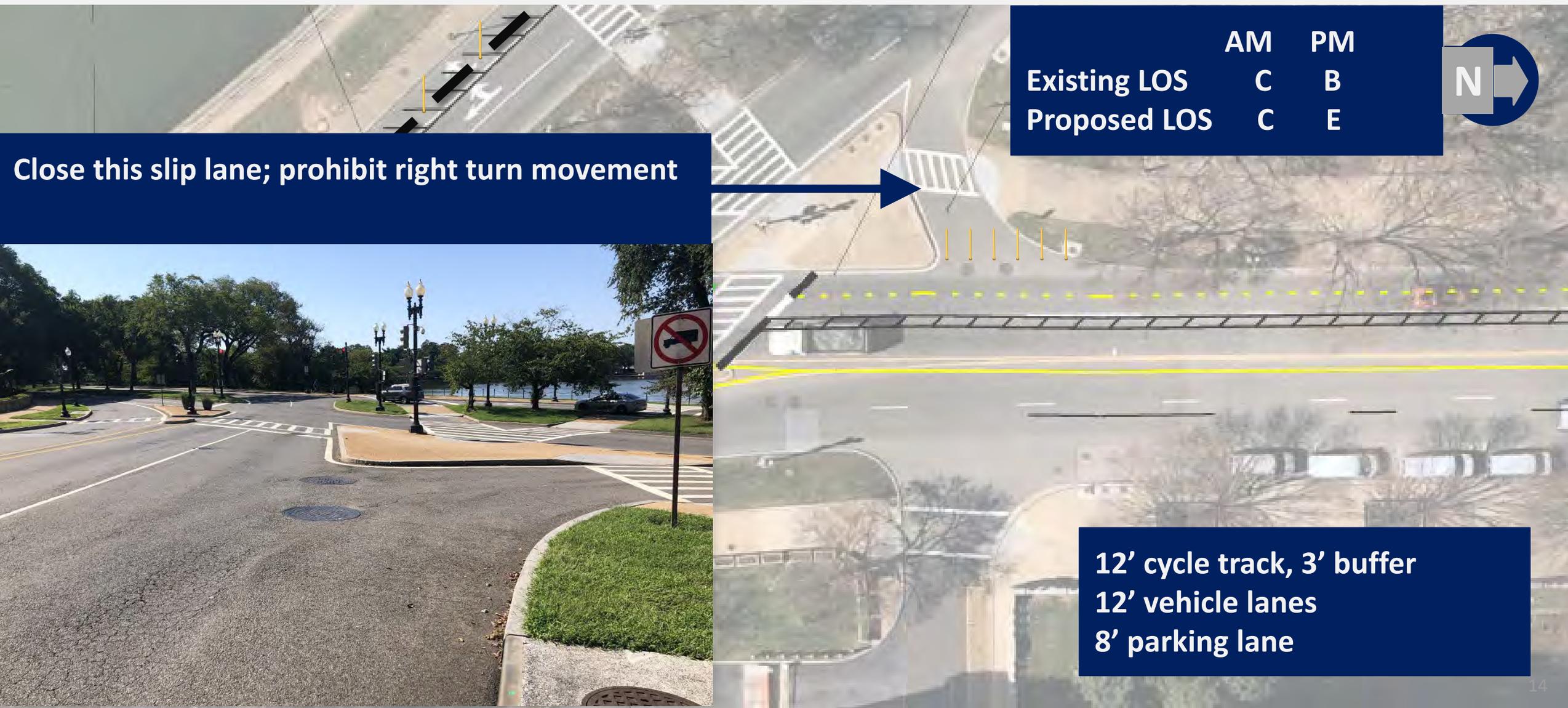


	AM	PM
Existing LOS	B	A
Proposed LOS	B	A

- Extended AM traffic signal timing from 55 to 110 seconds
- Pedestrian only movement added

	AM	PM
Existing LOS	A	A
Proposed LOS	E	D

# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Segment 4 Maine Avenue



	AM	PM
Existing LOS	C	B
Proposed LOS	C	E



**Close this slip lane; prohibit right turn movement**

**12' cycle track, 3' buffer  
12' vehicle lanes  
8' parking lane**

# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Segment 4 Maine Avenue

Cycle track passes in front of island and takes the curb lane

	AM	PM
Existing LOS	C	B
Proposed LOS	C	E



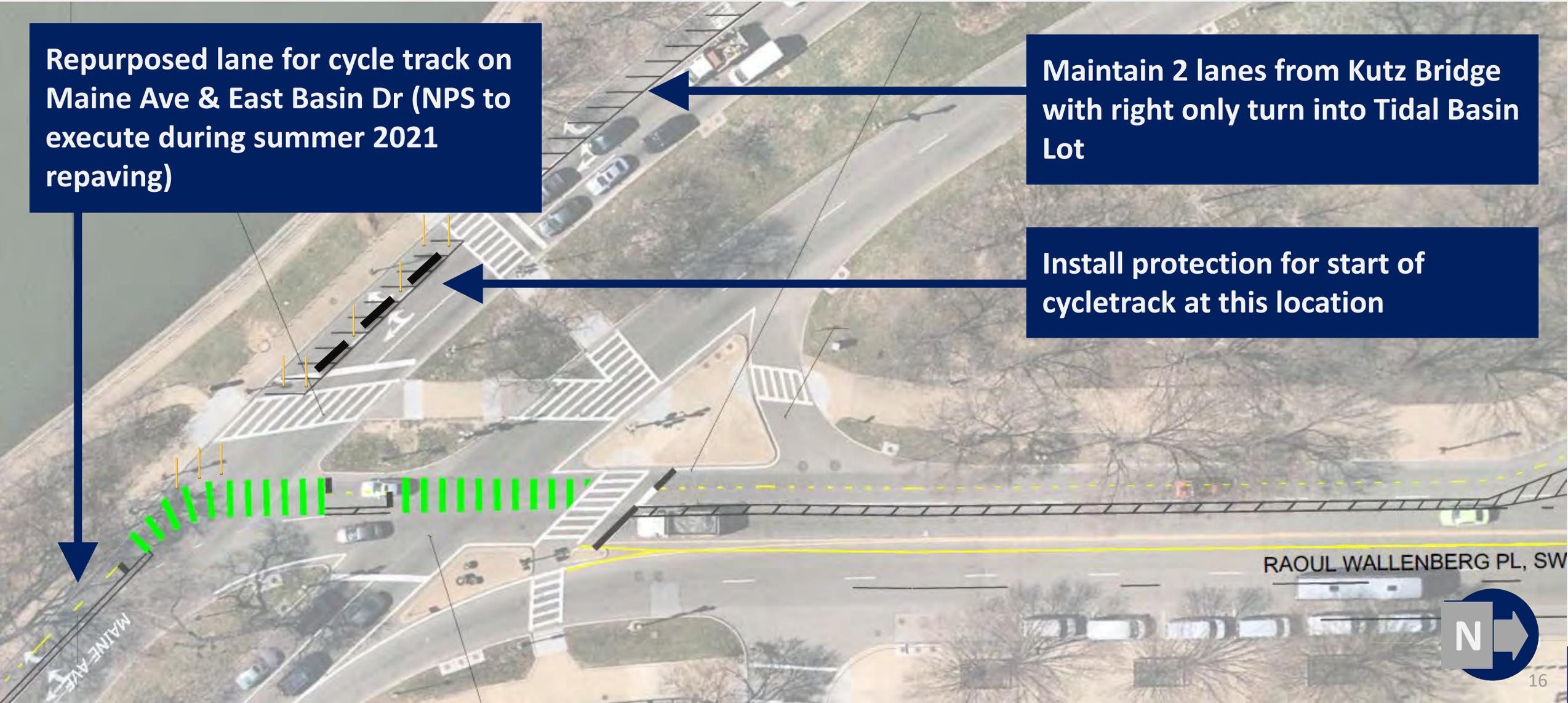
12' cycle track, 3' buffer  
12' vehicle lanes  
8' parking lane

# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Segment 4 Maine Avenue

Repurposed lane for cycle track on Maine Ave & East Basin Dr (NPS to execute during summer 2021 repaving)

Maintain 2 lanes from Kutz Bridge with right only turn into Tidal Basin Lot

Install protection for start of cycletrack at this location



RAOUL WALLENBERG PL, SW

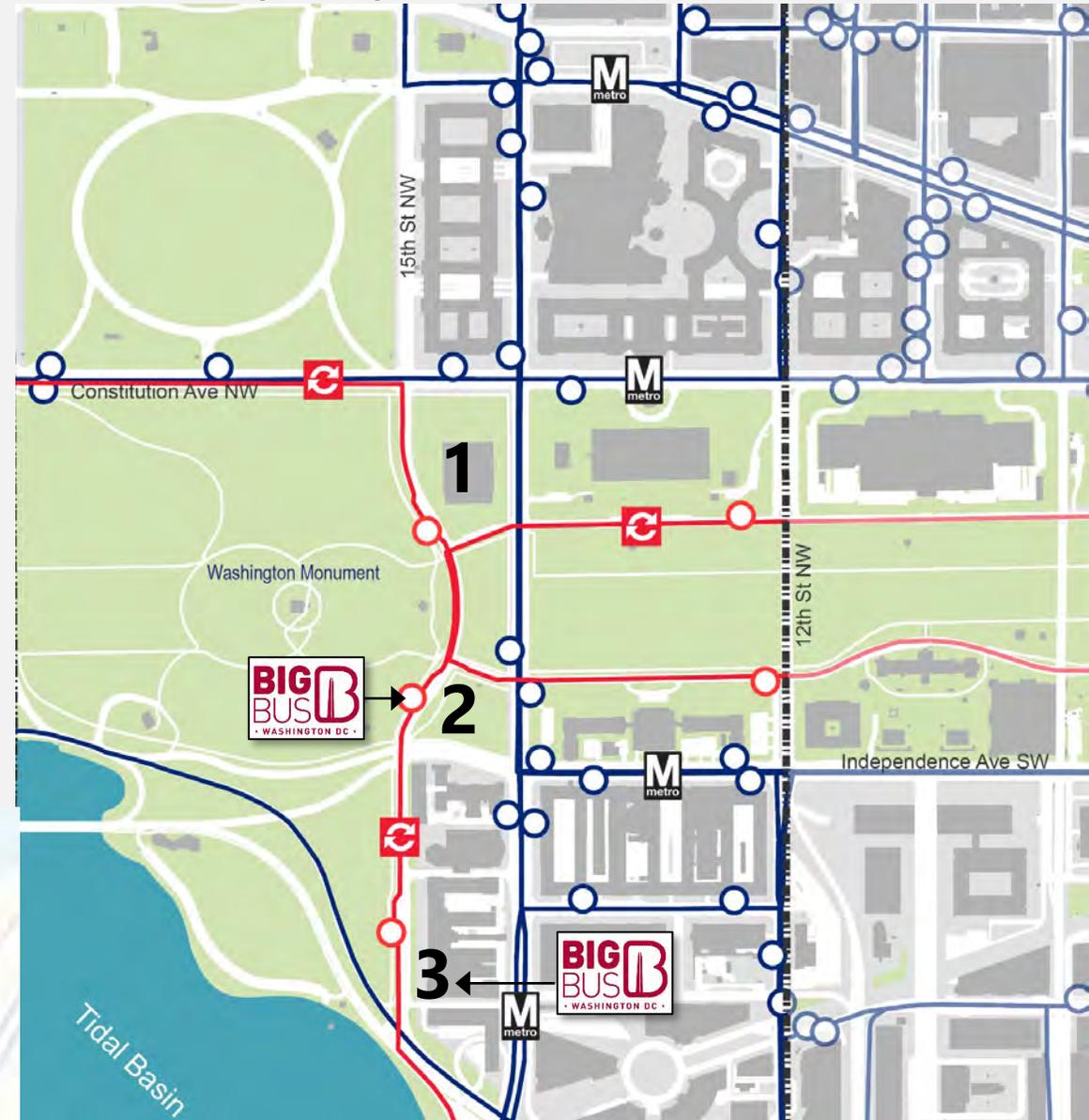


# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Bus Lay-bys

- Three bus lay-bys are located along the National Mall on the west side of 15th Street
- All lay-bys are serviced by the DC Circulator 'National Mall' Route.
- BigBus sightseeing company uses lay-by #2 & #3

## Bus Stops and Routes

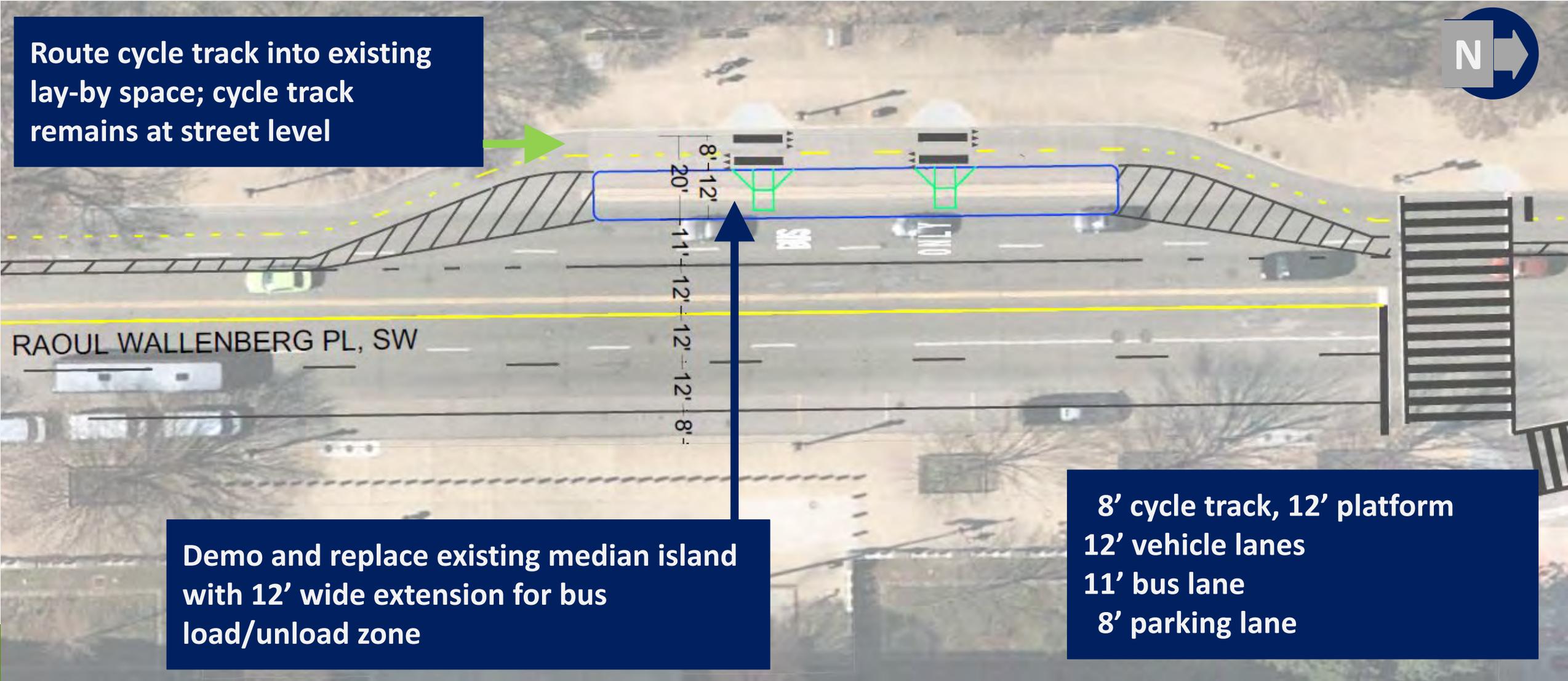
-  Circulator Routes
-  Metrobus Routes
-  Circulator Stops
-  Metrobus Stops



# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Bus Lay-bys Design

## SEPARATE MODES AT BUS LAY-BYS

Route cycle track into existing lay-by space; cycle track remains at street level



Demo and replace existing median island with 12' wide extension for bus load/unload zone

8' cycle track, 12' platform  
12' vehicle lanes  
11' bus lane  
8' parking lane

# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Maintenance

- DDOT will maintain concrete vertical separation
- DDOT will provide snow clearance
- NPS will develop alternative snow storage solution



# 15<sup>th</sup> Street Safety Improvements – Proposed Rendering

