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### **NCPC Comments on Draft Small Cell Infrastructure Guidelines**

*Commission Also Heard Presentations on 10th Street Promenade Improvements and the Long Bridge Project*

**Washington, DC**—At its [November 1 meeting](#), the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) authorized comments on draft [Small Cell Infrastructure Guidelines](#) submitted by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). DDOT is the lead agency and liaison with the cellular providers who want to install small cell infrastructure, a new lower-powered antenna technology, on poles along public right of ways. This will supplement the larger cellular network and enable increased data coverage for smaller geographic areas such as individual blocks, improving service for wireless customers.

DDOT is working with NCPC and other agencies, including the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the DC State Historic Preservation Office, and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, to develop guidelines for the placement of small cell infrastructure within Washington. While the installation of this infrastructure is necessary for innovation and to meet cellular demand, it will affect the aesthetic and functional aspects of the public realm. NCPC is focused on potential impacts in and around the monumental core, an area uniquely comprised of significant federal buildings, national parks and thoughtfully designed public spaces, historic light fixtures, landscaped building yards, important viewsheds, and lush trees.

The Commission found that the fundamental challenge is how to create small cell guidelines that allow for modern technology and innovation while preserving the defining characteristics of the nation's most important public realm and buildings. NCPC noted that the draft guidelines should be evaluated based on both urban design and network coverage, which are interrelated, and ultimately allow for network coverage in ways that minimize impacts to the public realm.

The Commission recommended that DDOT include language in the guidelines that strongly encourages hoteling (having infrastructure from several carriers on the same pole) and encourage strategies to reduce the visual impact and presence of small cell infrastructure in the streets, such as equipment undergrounding or rooftop installations. Commissioners also supported restricting placement of small cell infrastructure on the historic Washington Globe and Twin-20 light poles.

NCPC requested that DDOT work with the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and NCPC staff, along with the carriers, to develop a unified design for poles and related equipment. DDOT should also work with the carriers to provide additional information prior to the Commission's review of the final guidelines. This includes providing a composite map of all the desired infrastructure locations to better understand the need for facilities and the areas of highest demand within the study area; and consideration of a phased implementation approach with an initial lesser number of poles. The Commission also directed staff to develop a map for their consideration that would specify locations in the monumental core area where new standalone poles could be located with minimal impact.

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The Commission heard two information presentations. In the first, Michael Vergason from Michael Vergason Landscape Architects discussed [temporary streetscape improvements for 10<sup>th</sup> Street, SW](#) that would be installed in 2019 to coincide with the opening of the International Spy Museum. The improvements are intended to make an attractive pathway for pedestrians walking between the National Mall and the Southwest Waterfront. The project, funded by JBG Smith and the Spy Museum and implemented by the Southwest Business Improvement District, would be located in 10<sup>th</sup> Street's 39-foot-wide center.

The improvements have two components. The northern portion has steel planters with wooden seats. Each planter holds ginkgo trees for shade and colorful plantings underneath. The southern section uses plantings similar to the newly landscaped slopes of Banneker Park and moveable furniture. The temporary improvements will be in place while a long-term plan is developed.

In the second presentation, DDOT's Katherine Youngbluth discussed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) they are undertaking in coordination with the Federal Railroad Administration that examines how to increase rail capacity across the Potomac River. Currently the [Long Bridge](#), a two track steel trestle bridge constructed in 1904, carries both passenger and freight traffic. With railway traffic over the Potomac expected to increase 153 percent by 2040, another bridge is needed.

Options include adding a second bridge next to the existing bridge or replacing the existing bridge and adding an adjacent new bridge. Both alternatives would provide two, two-track bridges across the Potomac River. The study is also considering adding a pedestrian/bicycle bridge to improve connections between the Mount Vernon Trail and East Potomac Park. While the pedestrian/bicycle bridge is not a specific component of the project, it was included in the analysis as potential mitigation for impacts of a new bridge on National Park Service land. DDOT anticipates releasing its preferred alternative later this month and releasing the final document in the summer of 2020.

The Commission does not take action on information presentations.

This month's agenda also included one consent calendar item (no presentation given):

1. Comments on concept plans for a new comfort station at the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, Arlington Ridge Park, Arlington, Virginia. (8023)

The Executive Director approved three items, under authority delegated by the Commission.

1. Approval of preliminary and final site and building plans for replacement and relocation of the Friends of the National Zoo Trailer at the National Zoological Park, 3001 Connecticut Avenue, NE. (8022)
2. Approval of an amendment to the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation (PADC) Square Guidelines for Square 254, Parcel A for a Facade Renovation Project at National Place, 1331 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. (P8019)
3. Approval of a report to the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia about Map and Text Amendments for Square 487, Lot 17, WMATA Headquarters, 600 5th Street, NW. (ZC 18-05)

*The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central planning agency in Washington, DC and surrounding counties of Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.*

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