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August 05, 2016

Acting Director Frank Murphy
Baltimore City Department of Transportation (DOT)
417 E Fayette St, 5th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21202
VIA EMAIL TO: Frank.Murphy@BaltimoreCity.gov

Acting Director Murphy,

I am writing you today regarding two significant concerns: 1) the Midtown / Mount Royal Streetscaping Project; and 2) the adequacy of and execution of DOT's policies for community engagement and outreach.

Midtown / Mount Royal Streetscaping Project

This project needs to be put on hold so that all stakeholders may meet with DOT to have their concerns heard and addressed by DOT. On August 1, 2016, DOT held a public meeting to discuss the Midtown / Mount Royal Streetscaping Project. During this meeting, the DOT Community Liaison and Traffic Engineer along with a consultant presented proposed designs that were explained to be at 100% design, at a cost of "\$5M – 10M". At best, it was a tense exchange with community leadership, residents from the Mount Royal Improvement Association (MRIA), Mount Vernon Belvedere Association (MVBA), Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), University of Baltimore (UB), Bikemore, and I.

The following bullets identify some of the problems:

1. **February 20, 2014 - DOT Presentation** - DOT held its last public meeting on this project (prior to the above referenced meeting on August 1, 2016). It is simply unacceptable to go over 27 months in between public meetings on an infrastructure project such as this. DOT and the consultant attributed this to waiting on State Highway Administration (SHA) approvals.
2. **May 6, 2014 - Letter From MRIA to DOT** – in response to the aforementioned public meeting, the Mount Royal Improvement Association (MRIA) wrote to the DOT Director expressing five major concerns and eight minor suggestions. [Attached]
3. **June 17, 2015 – DOT Response to MRIA Letter** - DOT responded, in which I would characterize the response as "mildly brushing aside the community's concerns and providing little to no analysis why these concerns are not being addressed". [Attached]
4. **Sidewalks on 1400 – 1500 blocks of Mt Royal Terrace** - Among other commitments made in the June 17, 2015 letter, the Director committed to having DOT Alleys and Footways Section replace the sidewalk of the 1400 and 1500 block of Mt Royal Terrace in FY2016. Besides not being

addressed for over a decade after having been brought to DOT's attention on several occasions, that work remains uncompleted. In addition, DOT has yet to send a letter outlining this proposal, as committed to in the June 17, 2015 letter. [Attached]

5. I-83 exit on to Mt Royal Ave / St Paul St – The proposed design has safety issues, specifically with the use of a beacon at I-83 exit on to Mt Royal Ave / St Paul St. This traffic control is inadequate and jeopardizes the safety of cyclists on this corridor, which is counterproductive to the goals of building the cycletrack in the first place.
6. Cycle Infrastructure Connectivity to North Ave - It may be unrealistic to make changes to the Midtown / Mount Royal Streetscaping Project based on the recently-awarded North Ave TIGER Grant. Nevertheless, DOT's planning and related materials for this Streetscaping Project should actively acknowledge this upcoming project and its commitment to cycle infrastructure connectivity. Planning documents and outreach materials should emphasize a commitment to eliminating any gap in safe and appropriate cycle infrastructure between North Ave and Lafayette Ave.

Adequacy of and Execution of DOT's Policies for Community Engagement and Outreach

The Midtown / Mount Royal Streetscaping Project feels like a repeat of the MLK / Howard issues we experienced in Summer 2015. The above issues reflect a greater underlying issue, the adequacy of and execution of DOT's policies for community engagement and outreach.

1. Briefing in Advance of Public Meeting - Upon request, DOT refused to provide me with a copy of the briefing in advance of the August 1, 2016 meeting. The justification I received was: "We do not provide printed materials before we go out to the entire community to let them know what we have been working on." This response to a City Councilmember perfectly articulates the greater underlying issue. DOT had multiple opportunities over the last 27 months to further engage with the above stakeholders, and the only evidence of that is a letter which all but dismisses resident's concerns 13 months after the fact.
2. Postcard Mailings - For the second time in three months, postcards mailed by DOT were either received on the day of the public meeting by impacted residents, or by in large, not at all: for the August 1, 2016 meeting; and for the May 5, 2016 meeting on the Lawrence Street Corridor Study. DOT's inability to have postcards sent out in a timely fashion impacts its ability to engage with the community in a meaningful way. I have talked to DOT about this issue on several occasions to no avail.
3. Online Calendar of Events – DOT's website has a link to Events, which is accessible via the navigation on the left side bar (<http://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/events/list?category=2226>), however, this list is not populated. Instead, a user must navigate to the following link to view upcoming public meetings (<http://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/events/>).
4. Online Community Updates – DOT's website has a link to Community Updates, which is accessible via the navigation on the left side bar (<http://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/community-updates>), however, this page only contains contact information for the 5 DOT community liaisons. It would be far more useful to the public

were these presentations to be made publicly available, on this page, in advance of public meetings.

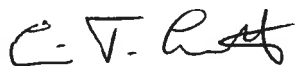
Requests

Please respond, in writing, to the following requests by no later than COB, Wednesday, August 10, 2016:

1. This project must be paused, until such a time those stakeholders may meet, provide comments on the plan, analyze such comments together in real time, and have red line changes made, as appropriate.
2. Please provide an electronic copy of the presentation provided to the community on August 1, 2016.
3. Please provide an electronic copy of the sign-in sheet from the August 1, 2016 meeting.
4. Please provide all DOT policies related to community engagement and outreach.
5. I am requesting a meeting with DOT Senior Leadership to discuss community engagement and outreach policies and ways in which we can not only strengthen them, but also ensure that they are adhered to.
6. Repair the Calendar of Events link, as discussed above.
7. Update the Community Updates page to include presentations presented to the public, in advance of public meetings.

If you have questions or require further clarification on my concerns or requests, you may reach me directly at eric.costello@baltimorecity.gov and 443-813-1457. I look forward to receiving a response in writing, via email, by no later than COB, Wednesday, August 10, 2016, and look forward to continuing our work together to service Baltimore City's transportation needs.

Sincerely,



Eric T. Costello
Baltimore City Council, 11th District

CC:

The Honorable Bernard C. "Jack" Young, City Council President
Kaliopé Parthemos, Chief of Staff for Mayor
Connor Scott, Deputy Mayor for Operations
Andy Smullian, Deputy Mayor for Government Operations
Patrick Fleming, Director of Legislative Affairs for DOT

BCC:

Liz Cornish, Executive Director of Bikemore
Dan Gilbert, Manager of Construction Services for MICA
Anita Harewood, Vice President of Government and Community Relations for UB
Steve Howard, Past President of MRIA

John Kyle, Past President of MRIA
Brian Levy, President of MVBA
Michael Marcus, President of MRIA
Mike Molla, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives for MICA
Michelle Richter, Vice President of MVBA
Neb Sertsu, Vice President of Facilities Management and Capital Planning for University of Baltimore
Jed Weeks, Policy Director of Bikemore

Attachments:

MAY 6, 2014 - LETTER FROM MRIA TO DOT

JUNE 17, 2015 – DOT RESPONSE TO MRIA LETTER



**MOUNT ROYAL
IMPROVEMENT
ASSOCIATION**

May 6, 2014

William M. Johnson (*WilliamM.Johnson@baltimorecity.gov*)
Director, Baltimore City Department of Transportation
417 E. Fayette Street, 5th Floor (*fax: 410-547-1036*)
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Mr. Johnson:

We thank you for your Department's hosting a public information meeting on 2/20/14 regarding the Midtown Streetscape. The Mount Royal Improvement Association (MRIA) – representing the Bolton Hill neighborhood – welcomes streetscape improvements and desires our neighborhood and our City to be as pedestrian and bicycle friendly as possible.

Nevertheless we have five major concerns about this project, as well as eight minor suggestions. This letter was approved by the MRIA Board of Directors at its April Board meeting which was open to the public.

MAJOR CONCERNS:

1. The two-way cycletrack needs to connect with the existing cycletrack on Guilford Avenue. This would make for safe bicycle travel all the way from Bolton Hill to Downtown. The 2 1/2 block gap in the protected path between Charles and Guilford across the heavily used exit of I-83 creates a major safety hazard and a significant weakness in the plan. If the connection is not feasible, then we recommend that the two-way cycletrack be eliminated entirely and replaced with painted bicycle lanes.
2. Safety measures for both bicyclists and pedestrians need to be enhanced where cars exit the Jones Falls Expressway onto St. Paul St. and Mt Royal Avenue. Cars coming off an interstate have a tendency to speed and ignore pedestrians, posing a major hazard.
3. The proposed plan comes to an abrupt and awkward end northbound at Lafayette Ave. There are several options, and we would like to work with the City to alleviate this situation.
4. Although the proposed sidewalks along the west side of 1400 and 1500 Mt Royal Avenue are most welcome, the bulk of the pedestrian traffic is carried by the damaged sidewalks along Mt Royal Terrace in the same blocks. Fixing these sidewalks should be included in the project. Our neighborhood association and individual neighbors have been advocating for the replacement of these sidewalks for years. It seems logical to include the replacement in this project, rather than only addressing sidewalks on the other side of the street and allowing these to continue to languish and to be a constant danger to pedestrians.

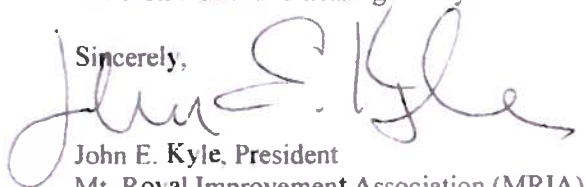
5. We are concerned about the proposal to remove the nine trees in front of the Lyric. Increasing the tree canopy in Baltimore has been a major City initiative and one that our neighborhood heartily endorses. It seems that removing these trees is incompatible with the City plan. We suggest the proposal be modified to re-locate those trees as close as possible to the existing trees, potentially on the Lyric property.

Minor suggestions:

1. Because this proposal eliminates some parking along Mt. Royal Avenue, we suggest that parking along the East side of Mt. Royal Avenue from Lafayette to McMechen become pay-to-park. This would increase parking turnover.
2. There is a significant jaywalking problem with University of Baltimore students crossing Mt. Royal Avenue midblock between Maryland Avenue and Charles St. Although we are generally opposed to fences, we suggest the City consider a physical barrier on that block, to force pedestrians to cross at the lights.
3. We suggest that the crossing signals have a leading pedestrian interval at as many intersections as possible, especially at Maryland Ave, Charles St, and St. Paul St.
4. Since the City is proposing to add new conduit, we suggest the City consider adding fiber optic concurrently with the new conduit installation.
5. We suggest reflective paint or other visibility enhancements at all "bump-outs".
6. We suggest that the City improve the timing of two closely spaced signals at Cathedral St. & the Station Building Drive and Cathedral St & Mt Royal Ave.
7. We suggest that the City make this plan congruent with the separately proposed cycle track improvements along Maryland Avenue.
8. The proposed plan calls for the removal of two Zipcar spaces at the Mt Royal light rail stop. We urge the replacement of these Zipcar spaces as close as possible to the removed ones.

We look forward to hearing from you about these matters.

Sincerely,



John E. Kyle, President
Mt. Royal Improvement Association (MRIA)
P.O. Box 19958
Baltimore, MD 21211
pres@boltonhill.org

Cc: Councilman William Cole William.Cole@baltimorecity.gov
Steve Howard, Vice-President, MRIA stevehoward.howard@gmail.com
Lok Shrestha Lok.Shrestha@baltimorecity.gov
Nikia Mack Nikia.Mack@baltimorecity.gov
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Caitlin Doolin Caitlin.Doolin@baltimorecity.gov

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

WILLIAM JOHNSON, Director
417 E. Fayette Street, 5th floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

June 17, 2015

John E. Kyle
President
Mt. Royal Improvement Association (MRIA)
P.O. Box 19958
Baltimore, Maryland 21211

Dear Mr. Kyle:

The Department of Transportation has reviewed the comments supplied by MRIA concerning the Midtown Streetscape Project. Please accept our apology for not providing a response in a more timely manner. A summary of the comments and the Department of Transportation's response are contained in the attached document.

Please note that the requested improvements to the footways on the West side of Mt. Royal Avenue cannot be incorporated into the project, a proposal to address them in a separate project will be forwarded to you under separate cover.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 410 396-6802.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Frank Murphy'.

Frank J. Murphy
Senior Advisor

Attachment

cc: William M. Johnson
Veronica McBeth
Bimal Devkota
Satinder Kang
Michael Camper
Lok Shrestha

**Midtown Streetscape/Traffic Improvements
CONTRACT NO. TR11306**

The following is a point-by-point response to Mt Royal Improvements Association Major and Minor concerns

Page	Comment	Response
	MAJOR CONCERNS:	
1	The two-way cycletrack needs to connect with the existing cycletrack on Guilford Avenue. This would make for safe bicycle travel all the way from Bolton Hill to Downtown. The 2 1/2 block gap in the protected path between Charles and Guilford across the heavily used exit of I-83 creates a major safety hazard and a significant weakness in the plan. If the connection is not feasible, then we recommend that the two-way cycletrack be eliminated entirely and replaced with painted bicycle lanes.	The cycletrack transitions to a 10' wide shared-use path and connects to the Jones Falls Trail. Note that currently the Jones Falls Trail is a 10' wide shared-use path from St. Paul to Guilford. In addition, there will be a cycle track installed along Maryland Avenue/Cathedral Street which the Mt. Royal cycle track will connect with. This will provide Bolton Hill residents an alternate route to downtown.
2	Safety measures for both bicyclists and pedestrians need to be enhanced where cars exit the Jones Falls Expressway onto St. Paul St. and Mt Royal Avenue. Cars coming off an interstate have a tendency to speed and ignore pedestrians, posing a major hazard.	Safety enhancements at the JFX off ramps include new warning signs, ADA pedestrian ramps, and shorter crosswalk distances which will be at the narrowest points for pedestrian safety. In addition, we will be adding flashing beacons at the Mt. Royal exit. The flexible posts will be eliminated at the Saint Paul exit and we are adding a concrete channelization island.
3	The proposed plan comes to an abrupt and awkward end northbound at Lafayette Ave. There are several options, and we would like to work with the City to alleviate this situation.	Sharrow markings will be provided from Lafayette to the end of the project at McMechen.
4	Although the proposed sidewalks along the west side of 1400 and 1500 Mt Royal Avenue are most welcome, the bulk of the pedestrian traffic is carried by the damaged sidewalks along Mt Royal Terrace in the same blocks. Fixing these sidewalks should be included in the project. Our neighborhood association and individual neighbors have been advocating for the replacement of these sidewalks for years. It seems logical to include the replacement in this project, rather than only addressing sidewalks on the other side of the street and allowing these to continue to languish and to be a constant danger to pedestrians.	This project is a federally funded project. Mt. Royal Terrace is not a federal route. Therefore, the walkway improvements on Mt. Royal Terrace cannot be incorporated into this project because they are not federal-aid eligible. The DOT Alleys and Footways Section has agreed to replace the sidewalk with exposed aggregate concrete in a separate project in the next fiscal year. A letter will be sent to MRIA under separate cover outlining the proposal.
5	We are concerned about the proposal to remove the nine trees in front of the Lyric. Increasing the tree canopy in Baltimore has been a major City initiative and one that our neighborhood heartily endorses. It seems that removing these trees is incompatible with the City plan. We suggest the proposal be modified to re-locate those trees as close as possible to the existing trees, potentially on the Lyric property.	The trees have been removed to accommodate the cycletrack. There is limited space in front of the Lyric for crowds prior to events. Trees will be replanted in accordance with current City policy for tree replacement within the project and at other locations in the City. There will be no net loss of trees.
	Minor suggestions:	
1	Because this proposal eliminates some parking along Mt. Royal Avenue, we suggest that parking along the East side of Mt. Royal Avenue from Lafayette to McMechen become pay-to-park. This would increase parking turnover.	The Parking Authority recommends installing metered parking on both sides of Mt. Royal Avenue between Lanvale and McMechen Streets.
2	There is a significant jaywalking problem with University of Baltimore students crossing Mt. Royal Avenue midblock between Maryland Avenue and Charles St. Although we are generally opposed to fences, we suggest the City consider a physical barrier on that block, to force pedestrians to cross at the lights.	There is existing median and landscaping to discourage mid-block crossing. A fence is not part of this project but the Department of Transportation would be happy to meet with MRIA to discuss issues and options.

**Midtown Streetscape/Traffic Improvements
CONTRACT NO. TR11306**

The following is a point by point response to Mt Royal Improvements Association Major and Minor concerns

Page	Comment	Response
3	We suggest that the crossing signals have a leading pedestrian interval at as many intersections as possible, especially at Maryland Ave, Charles St, and St. Paul St.	Signal timing changes will be adjusted during the construction of the project. There is currently a leading pedestrian interval (LPI) at Charles Street that will remain. The Traffic Division does not anticipate adding an LPI at Maryland Avenue or St Paul St because LPI's are generally used at locations with high turning vehicle volumes.
4	Since the City is proposing to add new conduit, we suggest the City consider adding fiber optic concurrently with the new conduit installation.	The conduit installed under this project is for use during Artscape. There is an existing conduit system in Mt. Royal Avenue, which may be utilized for fiber optic.
5	We suggest reflective paint or other visibility enhancements at all "bump-outs".	DOT-Traffic does not recommend such treatment on the proposed bump-outs and it is not typical practice for bump out construction. Such treatment is typically reserved for cases where visibility of an object is an issue.
6	We suggest that the City improve the timing of two closely spaced signals at Cathedral St. & the Station Building Drive and Cathedral St & Mt Royal Ave.	Signal timing changes will be adjusted during the construction of the project. The Traffic Division can look into improving the timing at these signals as part of that effort.
7	We suggest that the City make this plan congruent with the separately proposed cycle track improvements along Maryland Avenue.	The City's plans for both of these projects will be coordinated.
8	The proposed plan calls for the removal of two Zipcar spaces at the Mt Royal light rail stop. We urge the replacement of these Zipcar spaces as close as possible to the removed ones.	DOT will coordinate with Zipcar for replacement of the removed spaces.