



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)
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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.

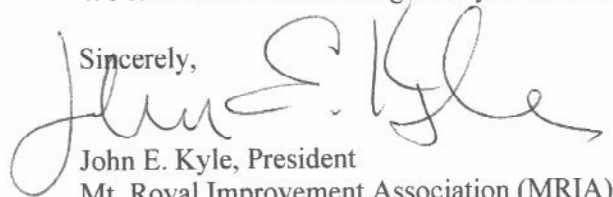
5. We are concerned about the proposal to remove the nine trees in front of the Lyric. Increasing the tree canopy in Baltimore has been a major City initiative and one that our neighborhood heartily endorses. It seems that removing these trees is incompatible with the City plan. We suggest the proposal 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,



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