



Government of the District of Columbia Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B

By Electronic Mail

October 26, 2020

Jeff Marootian, Director
DC Department of Transportation

RE: Requesting Additional Traffic Safety Improvements on Butternut Street, NW

Dear Director Marootian:

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, at a duly noticed public meeting, with a quorum being the “majority of the total number of commissioner positions currently filled in Commission 4B,” at its October 26, 2020, meeting voted with ___ Yeas, ___ Nays, and ___ Abstentions to send this letter to the Director of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) requesting additional traffic safety improvements on Butternut Street, NW, between Blair Road, NW, and Georgia Avenue, NW. While we understand Butternut Street, NW, is a “collector” street, we request meaningful consideration of all available traffic calming measures to ensure the safety of all road users.

On January 3, 2020, a resident submitted a Traffic Safety Assessment questionnaire to DDOT for Butternut Street, NW, between Blair Road, NW, and Piney Branch Road, NW. As noted in the relevant questionnaire, the affected area raises numerous safety concerns within a residential area, including speeding and aggressive driving, particularly from vehicles using Butternut Street as a thoroughfare from Blair Road, NW, to Piney Branch Road, NW, Georgia Avenue, NW, and 16th Street, NW. The questionnaire also noted cars regularly run stop signs along Butternut Street, NW.

Commissioner Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02, submitted a letter in support, noting the affected area is residential with significant pedestrian and bicycle traffic, including children and seniors, who are more vulnerable to traffic injuries and fatalities. There is an unprotected bike lane along one side of the street and sharrows along the other. Takoma Education Campus, several additional schools, several day cares, the Takoma Metro, and the Takoma playground and Aquatic Center are in close proximity, and many residents walk or bike to these facilities. The affected area also includes several bus stops at 4th Street, NW, 5th Street, NW, and Piney Branch Road, NW.

DDOT acknowledged the questionnaire on January 21st, 2020, and assigned the request service number 20-00029144.

On March 13, 2020, the applicant received the following service request comment update: “This section of Butternut St NW is classified as a COLLECTOR; Hence, roadway not eligible for speed humps. Shop orders are being created on 3/13/2020 requesting the installation of speed limit signs for both directions; the installation of Supplemental Stops at 4th St; and the installation of pedestrian pylons and pedestrian warning signs at the 6th St intersection. There [are] no issues with line of sight at the 4th and 5th St intersection for the Stop signs. Also, there are Stop Ahead signs for both directions informing drivers of the Stop signs at 4th and 5th St. If drivers are running the Stop signs, then this is an enforcement issue.”

On June 20, 2020, a resident submitted a Traffic Safety Assessment questionnaire to DDOT for the intersection of Butternut Street, NW, and 8th Street, NW. As noted in the relevant questionnaire, cars regularly run the stop signs at that intersection. Commissioner Evan Yeats, ANC 4B01, submitted a letter in support, expressing the hope that DDOT would use the results of the study to improve the safety of all road users in the area, especially pedestrians. A DDOT representative indicated they would process the request on June 23, 2020, and assigned the request service number 20-00217023.

On October 20, 2020, Commissioner Yeats received the following service request comment update: “[A] shop order was created requesting the installation of two 25mph signs to be install[ed] for eastbound traffic along Butternut St, west of 8th St; and to install two Supplemental Stop signs (i.e. on back of existing Stop signs in order to further inform drivers that said intersection (8th St and Butternut St) is an all-way Stop controlled. If drivers continue to not make a complete[] stop prior to proceeding, then it would be an enforcement issue where MPD needs to be contacted.”

We understand that Butternut Street, NW, is a “collector” street and is therefore not eligible for speed humps, but we believe additional traffic calming measures are both feasible and necessary to ensure the safety of all road users, including the following:

- Despite the comment above related to request number 20-00029144 that there are no line of sight issues as related to stop signs along Butternut Street, NW, improved placement and visibility of stop signs along Butternut Street, NW, is possible (including supplemental stop signs), particularly at Butternut Street, NW, and 5th Street, NW. (Commissioner Palmer and Commissioner Yeats previously provided input regarding line of sight issues as related to stop signs at Butternut Street, NW, and 4th Street, NW, as part of feedback regarding the intersection improvement project at 4th Street, NW, Blair Road, NW, and Cedar Street, NW.)
- While the pedestrian pylons and warning signs at Butternut Street, NW, and 6th Street, NW are an improvement, there are similar line of sight issues as related to the warning signs at this intersection. In addition, four-way stop signs would be an important traffic

calming and safety measure and would slow cars that speed through that stretch of Butternut Street, NW. Similar crosswalk treatments and other pedestrian protections and visual cues for drivers to watch for pedestrians could be applied at other cross streets along Butternut Street, NW.

- While it appears that DDOT has installed 25 miles per hour speed limit signs for both directions, as referenced in the comments above, additional and more prominently placed speed limit signs along Butternut Street, NW, would better signal the speed limit along the street. In addition, it is unclear from the comments if Butternut Street, NW, is eligible for the citywide efforts to lower speed limits to 20 miles per hour and if DDOT will prioritize signage for these lower speed limits based on resident complaints.
- The existing speed limit signs and stop signs have not stopped speeding and reckless driving along Butternut Street, NW. Signage is the bare minimum of what DDOT can offer in terms of traffic calming, and we request serious consideration of other traffic calming measures that will physically slow speeding cars, including medians, plantings, barriers for the existing bike lane (and creation of a bike lane in place of the sharrows on the other side of the street), and narrowing of lane widths to encourage slower speeds.
- Physical traffic calming measures are preferable to enforcement, as traffic calming better ensures vehicles do not reach speeds where they can damage property or harm road users. In addition, while the above comments mention speeding along the street is “an enforcement issue,” there is no indication of how enforcement might be improved, including through the possible placement of speed, stop sign, or yield to pedestrian enforcement cameras.
- Consideration of additional educational efforts related to behavioral change would assist in traffic calming along roads that are not eligible for speed humps.

DDOT has committed to making our city’s streets safer, including by addressing Vision Zero traffic-related safety issues throughout the city, in part through the Traffic Safety Assessment process. When the street at issue is a “collector” street, the traffic calming options are limited, even though the street might greatly benefit from traffic calming measures, including those that physically slow speeding cars. At times, it seems that DDOT is only willing to do the bare minimum regarding traffic safety on these roads and only acts meaningfully to protect pedestrians and cyclists when an individual is killed or seriously injured due to cars speeding and driving recklessly.

We would appreciate details regarding all available traffic calming options, DDOT’s assessment of every option, any data collected, and information regarding any DDOT informational or educational campaigns regarding traffic safety citywide. Thank you for your attention to our concerns and for addressing traffic safety issues and working to ensure our neighborhood streets are safe for all road users.

The Commission also voted with ___ Yeas, ___ Nays, and ___ Abstentions to appoint the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B02, Erin Palmer, and the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B01, Evan Yeats, or any member of the Executive Committee in their absence, to be authorized to communicate this letter and represent Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B in communication with your agency regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02 Commissioner
Evan Yeats, ANC 4B01 Commissioner

cc: Mary M. Cheh, Chair, Committee on Transportation & the Environment
Sayra Molina, Program Analyst - Community Engagement, DC Dep't of Transportation
Anovia Daniels, Community Engagement Manager, DC Dep't of Transportation

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