



Government of the District of Columbia Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B

By Electronic Mail

April 26, 2021

Everett Lott, Interim Director
District Department of Transportation

Christine V. Davis, Interim Director
District Department of Public Works

Sgt. James Schaeffer
Metropolitan Police Department, Motor Carrier Safety Unit

RE: Follow-Up Letter of Inquiry Regarding Commercial Vehicles on Residential Roads

Dear Interim Director Lott, Interim Director Davis, and Sergeant Schaeffer:

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 April 26, 2021, meeting voted with _ Yeas, _ Nays, and _ Abstentions to send this follow-up letter of inquiry regarding commercial vehicles on residential roads within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B’s boundaries.

On June 25, 2019, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B approved a [letter of inquiry](#) to your Departments addressing the use of heavy trucks on Aspen St, NW, and other residential streets within the Commission’s boundaries. The Commission noted “numerous complaints from residents within our Commission’s boundaries about the travel of heavy trucks on residential streets with posted signage limiting vehicles that have greater than 1 ¼ ton capacity.” In addition, the Commission requested responses to the following questions by July 15, 2019:

- a description of preferred routes for heavy trucks within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B’s boundaries;
- a list of projects and vehicles within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B’s boundaries that are permitted to deviate from the abovementioned preferred routes, and the routes for which they are permitted;

- information regarding steps taken by your agencies to prevent the improper travel of heavy trucks on residential streets;
- details regarding all available mechanisms to enforce limitations on the use of heavy trucks on residential streets, including cameras; and
- a description of penalties for improper travel of heavy trucks on residential streets and a list of citations issued over the previous year, both District-wide and within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B's boundaries.

The District Department of Transportation responded to Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B's June 25, 2109, letter on August 19, 2019. Rather than provide a list of permitted projects and trucks within the Commission's boundaries, the Department referred the Commission to the Transportation Online Permitting System (TOPS), a system that is difficult to navigate for the requested information. The Department referred to "No Thru Trucks Over 1 ¼ Ton Capacity" signs as its sole method to prevent the improper travel of commercial trucks on residential roads, despite the Commission noting the lack of effectiveness of these signs. In addition, the Department referred the Commission to the Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Carrier Safety Unit regarding mechanisms to enforce and penalties for violations related to commercial vehicles on residential roads. The Department's August 19, 2019 letter is attached.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B continues to receive numerous complaints regarding commercial vehicles – including heavy trucks, semi-tractor trailers, not-in-service city busses, and chartered and intercity busses – on residential roads, including Aspen Street, NW, Butternut Street, NW, among others. These commercial vehicles not only affect the quality of life for residents by shaking their homes and producing large quantities of diesel exhaust and noise pollution, they damage local road infrastructure and pose disproportionate safety hazards for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians for whom use of these neighborhood streets is theoretically prioritized (e.g., Butternut Street, NW, is a part of the District's [bicycle network](#)). See [Resolution 4B-20-0101](#), "Supporting Increased Funding and Expansion of the Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Carrier Unit" (Jan. 27, 2020). It is nearly impossible to document license plate numbers, check whether the commercial vehicle driving on a residential road is permitted to drive on that road, and then report that vehicle to the Metropolitan Police Department and/or the District Department of Transportation.

Put plainly, there is no meaningful way for Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B or residents to report and seek enforcement for commercial vehicles on residential roads and there are no mechanisms in place to slow or discourage commercial vehicle cut-through traffic.

To assist our residents, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B requests the following:

- a mechanism to better track projects and commercial vehicles that receive permits from the District Department of Transportation, such as a monthly report of permits granted, the project to which the commercial vehicle is connected, the length of time for which the permit is granted, and the relevant routes for which the commercial vehicle is permitted;

- details regarding the District Department of Transportation's criteria to approve commercial vehicle permits that allow deviation from [commercial vehicle routes and restrictions](#);
- details regarding any and all steps taken by your agencies to prevent the improper travel of commercial vehicles on residential streets (in addition to "No Thru Trucks Over 1 ¼ Ton Capacity" signs);
- a mechanism to better track enforcement of limitations on commercial vehicle parking by the District Department of Public Works, such as a monthly report of citations issued, both District-wide and within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B's boundaries;
- a mechanism to better track enforcement of limitations on commercial vehicle routes by Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Carrier Unit, such as a monthly report of citations issued, both District-wide and within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B's boundaries;
- consideration of an Oversize Commercial Vehicle camera unit to the extent that such a camera would be in addition to the two Oversize Commercial Vehicle camera units currently in operation and would not result in removing a camera unit from one of those already existing locations; and
- meaningful consideration of mechanisms to slow or discourage commercial vehicle cut-through traffic, reduce collisions, and protect pedestrians, including via the traffic safety assessment process and implementation of additional four-way stops, crosswalk protection and visibility, and other traffic calming interventions that would help reduce speed, noise, and road wear.

While Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has requested expansion of the Metropolitan Police Department's seven-member Motor Carrier Safety Unit to assure better enforcement, see [Resolution 4B-20-0101](#), "Supporting Increased Funding and Expansion of the Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Carrier Unit" (Jan. 27, 2020), the Commission requests a long-term shift in enforcement capabilities from the Motor Carrier Safety Unit to the District Department of Transportation in addition to an expansion of motor carrier enforcement.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B also notes the challenges with commercial vehicle parking along the 6500 block of Piney Branch Road, NW, (which includes an unprotected bike lane) and Underwood Street, NW, between Piney Branch Road, NW, and Georgia Avenue, NW. Commercial vehicles park on these residential streets, effectively taking advantage of lax enforcement for free truck storage space. These vehicles present serious safety concerns: they are wider than standard parking spaces and impede sight lines, as well as intrude into adjacent bike lanes. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and cars are unnecessarily placed in danger. In addition, these commercial vehicles encourage dumping. Commissioners and residents have submitted service requests for or cleaned up pieces of furniture, piles of trash, and urine-filled bottles.

These vehicles are prohibited from parking along Piney Branch Road, NW, under 18 DCMR 2405.5, as amended by the [Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2019](#), which prohibits trailers and any vehicle longer than twenty-two feet or wider than eight feet from parking "on any public thoroughfare alongside a bike lane." The Department appears to have

recently ticketed these commercial vehicles along Piney Branch Road, NW, on one occasion, but subsequent requests for enforcement have been closed because “no sign was posted.” Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B requests continued, regular ticketing, which may require additional educational efforts so that parking control officers understand that these vehicles are eligible for ticketing. While Underwood Street, NW, does not have an unprotected bike lane, the Commission requests limitations on commercial vehicle parking along this road, as well. A church and residences abut this street: allowing commercial vehicle parking, even across the street, is a loophole that the Department should correct. In addition, the District Department of Transportation previously committed to “No Commercial Parking” signs along these streets, and the Commission requests installation of those signs on both Piney Branch Road, NW, and Underwood Street, NW, to better prevent these vehicles from parking and to ensure enforcement. Our neighborhood is not – and should not be treated as – a truck stop.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B also voted with _ Yeas, _ Nays, and _ Abstentions to appoint the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B02, Erin Palmer, or any member of the Executive Committee in her absence, to be authorized to communicate this letter and represent the Commission in communications with your agencies regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02 Commissioner

cc: Councilmember Mary M. Cheh, Chair, Committee on Transportation & the Environment
Michael Porcello, Legislative & Committee Director, Committee on Transportation & the Environment

Councilmember Janeese Lewis George (Ward 4)

Sayra Molina, Program Analyst - Community Engagement, DC Department of Transportation

David C. Jones, ANC Liaison, DC Department of Transportation

Celeste Duffie, ANC Liaison, DC Department of Public Works

Evelyn Lopez, ANC Liaison, Metropolitan Police Department