

Campus Plan Task Force Meeting Notes
June 22, 2010
Mary Graydon Center – Rooms 3 & 4

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions
2. East Campus Updates
 - a. Pedestrian and Vehicular Transportation Analysis
 - b. Further Description/Discussion of Buffer Area
3. Issues Discussion
4. Other Business

The Power Point presentation was distributed to meeting attendees and posted on the AU Campus Plan Web page at www.american.edu/finance/fas/campus-plan.cfm

Robert B. Schiesel, Project Manager for Gorove/Slade Associates, Inc., AU's transportation/traffic consultant for the new Campus Plan, reviewed the transportation study goals, including the traffic impact from AU's development of the East Campus and an anticipated increase in pedestrian traffic across Nebraska Avenue.

Key Points from presentation

The Pedestrian Trip Generation rate was modeled on the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation, 8th Edition for the closest land use available. The number of pedestrian trips from the East Campus to the Main Campus, across Nebraska Avenue, was calculated by assuming one pedestrian crossing per vehicular trip.

Pedestrian trips were split across the crossings at New Mexico Avenue (75%) and Ward Circle (25%)

The proposed streetscape design of the East Campus will force pedestrians to utilize the Ward Circle and New Mexico Avenue intersections and will prevent mid-block crossings.

Vehicular demand will change with 903 parking spaces removed from the East Campus and 500 new parking spaces constructed, resulting in a net decrease of 403 spaces.

The intersection of Nebraska Avenue & New Mexico Avenue operates under acceptable conditions.

A proposed right-turn arrow from Ward Circle to Nebraska Avenue would separate a large volume of turning vehicles from pedestrians crossing the street.

Large volumes of pedestrians do not negatively impact intersection operation as pedestrians will cross in large groups during the "Walk" phase.

At some times, right-turn traffic from Ward Circle to Nebraska Avenue will experience an increase in delay due to retiming of the intersection to include a right-turn arrow. However, this change will significantly improve conditions during the afternoon peak hour, as well as provide separation of vehicles and pedestrians.

Development of AU's East Campus will not create negative impacts to vehicle traffic in the surrounding area. This is due to existing and proposed signal timings at existing intersections.

Asked whether there would be more jaywalking across Nebraska Avenue from the East Campus, Mr. Schiesel said it is important to make sure that pedestrians can't cross and that they have enough room to wait on the corners.

Questions were raised about the impact of traffic from the East Campus and a proposed new driveway for the East Campus on Massachusetts Avenue that would be about 200-300 feet from the entrance to Westover. Several Westover residents raised concerns of the impact of a new driveway on their ability to exit and make left-hand turns, and that a new driveway might also back up traffic on Massachusetts Avenue. Suggestions were made for AU to coordinate with the Department of Homeland Security which has a driveway nearby on the other side of Massachusetts Avenue. DHS is also planning changes for its property.

Neighbors encouraged AU to work with DDOT on these issues so that the Campus Plan does not negatively impact the flow of traffic at Ward Circle. Neighbors felt more study needs to be done on this area by AU and the city.

Asked about the role of the Office of Planning in traffic studies, Steve Mordfin from OP said that their office relies on DDOT for traffic studies. "They are the experts on transportation," he said, adding that OP looks at comments from the public.

Neighbors also said the current time for pedestrians to cross at the lights at New Mexico Avenue is very short. Mr. Schiesel said the timing is something that can be looked at with DDOT. He said the key is to balance the amount of time you need to cycle through the three phases at the intersection.

Asked when the text of this portion of the report would be available, attorney Paul Tummonds said we hoped to have information available before the next Campus Plan meeting on July 27, and that this meeting will focus on traffic around the East Campus.

Neighbors also asked about the number of trucks that would be using the Nebraska Avenue entrance to the East Campus to service the residence halls. Jorge Abud said that in addition to the four new residence halls, there are plans for a small retail food outlet.

Neighbors also asked whether there would be traffic impacts on local streets including Rockwood Parkway and 45th.

Further Description/Discussion of East Campus Buffer Area

Sam Condit, Executive VP Managing Principal, McKissack & McKissack

Mr. Condit said that the majority of the existing buffer that AU has created between the Nebraska parking lot and the back of the Westover development is quite remarkable in how it shields the houses from the lot. The buffer zone creates a separation that ranges in places from 40-60 feet separation and contains 44 fir trees in various sizes and ages and a number of holly trees. Mr. Condit stressed AU's willingness to work with the Westover community to create a denser buffer to maintain a 200 foot view corridor from Westover.

Mr. Condit also said that in this opinion, there is no institution in the city that does anything close to that this institution does with its landscaping and gardens..

A Westover resident expressed concern that even with a buffer, the residents whose homes back on to the parking lot would still be able to see the new residence halls. Another Task Force member said that given that there will be buildings on the site, the proposed width of the new buffer is not insignificant.

Jorge Abud also said that services for the residence halls on the new East Campus would be underground and that all of AU's underground garages are ventilated. A Ft. Gaines resident who lives adjacent the Katzen Arts Center that has an underground garage, added that neighbors there have not heard the fan except for one time when there was a problem with the fan. Another Ft. Gaines neighbor added that there are methods to construct buildings that address these issues and that neighbors do have an opportunity to address these more minute details during further processing.

Asked why AU was still considering housing on the eight acre parcel that is now the Nebraska parking lot, Jorge Abud stated again that the amount of housing that is being proposed for the next decade will not fit West of Nebraska Avenue.

Other Issues:

Paul Tummonds stressed the university's interest in moving ahead with a facilitator for Campus Plan Task Force meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

The next Campus Plan Task Force meeting will be Tuesday, July 27, 2010 at 7 p.m.