

HILLCREST COMMUNITY CIVIC ASSOCIATION

"Working Together for a Better Community"

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Comments on 11th Street Bridge Project FY09 Budget for the District Department of Transportation, COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Public Hearing, April 18, 2008

Kathy Chamberlain, 2nd Vice President, Hillcrest Community Civic Association

The Hillcrest Community Civic Association supports the reconstruction of the 11th St Bridge, as proposed by DDOT (preferred alternative), with the caveat that the ramp connecting east Washington to the freeway bridge be retained. Below is the resolution that was passed without controversy by the HCCA on April 5th, 2008.

Whereas, the Hillcrest Community Civic Association (HCCA) desires to see improvements to the thoroughfares and roads in the District of Columbia and in particular, the bridge and street systems along the Anacostia River;
Whereas, the traffic congestion on Sousa Bridge and Pennsylvania Avenue has long been a burden borne mostly by DC residents on the east side of the river and desires to see a lessening of the traffic load on Sousa Bridge and Pennsylvania Avenue;
Whereas, HCCA is concerned about the connection of neighborhoods east and west of the Anacostia and believes that the local bridge system should be pedestrian and bicycle friendly and should accommodate streetcars in the future;
Whereas, an improved interchange at the 11th Street bridge is essential to the economic well being and growth of East Washington;
Whereas, the connection between neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River and the SE-SW freeway is important for easy access to downtown and Virginia;
BE IT RESOLVED that the Hillcrest Community Civic Association does hereby go on record supporting the new 11th Street Bridge Project Preferred Alternative, **but retaining the ramp/connection from east Washington neighborhoods to the freeway bridge**, primarily because it is estimated to make it easier for those living on the east side of the river to cross the Anacostia river.

The project has three major parts which are designed to:

- Provide new ramps east of the Anacostia River to re-route traffic from the SE freeway across the 11th Street bridge to connect Anacostia in both directions;
 - Separate freeway traffic from other traffic including separating pedestrian, bicycle traffic onto a separate bridge, along with a possible future trolley line and local lanes so that local traffic to and from Anacostia, including Anacostia Park, don't have to get on the freeway in order to get across the river; and
 - Create a new interchange at 11th & M Street that will facilitate traffic to move to and from Virginia and reduce traffic congestion on East Capital Street and Benning Road bridges and increase cars crossing the Anacostia.
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We believe the bridge reconstruction will ease the congestion on our bridges and roads, and the “local” 11th St bridge will provide a connection between neighborhoods east and west of the Anacostia River. The local bridge also will be pedestrian and bicycle friendly, and could accommodate streetcars in the future. Finally, as is pointed out in the EIS, the freeway bridge would provide an evacuation route eastbound from the city. We are pleased that DDOT is planning for the future, and that they recognize the need to preserve neighborhood connectivity instead of focusing entirely on the commuters that travel through our city.

Some opponents of the preferred alternative are calling for only a freeway link to be added to the current 11th St bridge, with no separate local bridge. They argue that the local bridge will increase traffic through east-of-the-river and Capitol Hill neighborhoods by creating new routes for commuters. They also say the proposed configuration will block DC residents on the east side of the 11th St bridge from connecting easily to the Southeast freeway.

The Barney Circle interchange was the correct way to link 295 with 395. Had that project come to pass, we would have the existing Sousa Bridge plus the freeway bridge, the Sousa bridge being the local bridge. The preferred alternative is similar, a local bridge and a freeway bridge. We should expedite commuters, but not at the expense of connecting our neighborhoods.

Regarding traffic flow, the AM and PM rush hours should be considered separately because they present different problems.

During the AM rush hour, not all commuters from the east who access the 11th Street bridge via the Anacostia and Fairlawn neighborhoods are from the suburbs. Some are from DC neighborhoods east of Fairlawn, including Hillcrest, Penn-Branch, Fort Davis, Woodmont Crossings, Marbury Plaza and so on. They access the 11th St Bridge using Good Hope Rd to the 13th St ramp, commuting to downtown, and to Virginia and to Montgomery County. Maryland commuters from PG county east of DC do the same thing. They have no other choice given that Pennsylvania Ave and the Sousa bridge are almost always clogged. The removal of the 13th St ramp to the freeway bridge will greatly inconvenience some, and may actually create more traffic in the Fairlawn and Anacostia neighborhoods because its absence will block local commuter traffic from using the freeway bridge. We ask that DDOT carefully study the implications of removing this ramp. If the ramp must be removed, then measures should be taken to facilitate an easy east-to-west commute over the local 11th St bridge, and an easy connection to the southeast freeway on the west side of the bridge. Will these connections invite even more traffic? As always there are trade-offs. But residents in east Washington DC should not suffer more difficult commutes to town due to the new bridge.

The biggest benefit of the proposed configuration will be seen during the PM rush hour, or during an emergency evacuation, with the majority of traffic leaving the center of the city. Currently the Sousa Bridge (Pennsylvania Ave) bears the brunt of commuters desiring to go north on 295. With the new 11th St Bridge and a more attractive route with all the necessary ramps, the load on the Sousa Bridge load will be lessened, and DC residents living near Pennsylvania Ave on the east side will see some relief.

The HCCA supports the preferred alternative because it provides the long-awaited and needed freeway links which will enable quicker commutes through the city while also preserving and enhancing the local connection between the east and west sides of the Anacostia river.