

ATTACHMENT 2

PRELIMINARY STAFF COMMENTS ON PROPOSED SOUTH SILVER SPRING PEDESTRIAN PATHWAY SYSTEM (5/6/03)

Phase I (Blair Mill Links): This phase looks very promising. Proposed pathway I-C will be approved by the Planning Board as part of the future Silver Spring Gateway project. *Staff recommends that it be designed as a mixed-street that aligns directly with proposed pathway II-B in Phase II.*

Phase II (East-West Links): Pedestrians should be guided to cross East-West Highway only where they can do so safely. Signalized intersections with marked crosswalks would provide pedestrians with the best measure of safety.

Per Maryland Vehicle Law, a legal crosswalk is not automatically established at the intersection of an alley with a public street. Legal crosswalks are automatically established at the intersection of two public streets however, including tee intersections, whether the crosswalks are marked or unmarked.

Some of the existing alleys already have public entrances to businesses. The legal conversion of these alleys would legitimize their status as mixed-use public streets and support the proposed increase in commercial use of these streets.

The designation of these public streets would, in one example, establish additional crosswalks in the more than 1,000-foot distance between the existing Georgia Avenue and Newell Street intersections on East West Highway. Pedestrians are generally unwilling to walk more than 150 feet out of their way to go to a crosswalk. Although it is illegal to cross between two signalized intersections, this already occurs in the above segment because of the long detours required. With increased foot traffic generated by new business, these mid-block crossings would be expected to increase without the establishment of new crosswalks.

Whether these crosswalks would be marked or unmarked would be at SHA's discretion. The design and signage of these mixed-use streets could encourage more use however, which in turn would help the intersection to meet the MUTCD warrants for a traffic signal. Marked crosswalks are

typically provided at signalized intersections, particularly in commercial areas.

If marked crosswalks at intersections with a full traffic signal cannot be provided, additional pedestrian crossing opportunities should be established. Mid-block crosswalks could be marked and their safety could be improved by using flashing inset crosswalk lights or overhead flashing lights. As an alternative to a full traffic signal, a half-signal could be used, with the minor street being stop sign-controlled and the major street being controlled by a flashing signal that would turn to red when activated by a pedestrian.

A signalized crossing with a crosswalk could occur on East-West Highway at II-A and/or II-B. Both II-A and II-B must overcome grade changes and each would impact an existing business. (II-A would impact the parking area for Thrifty Car Rental and possibly the building itself, while II-B would require removal of a portion of the NTB Tires building.) A signal at the mid-block crossing for II-A would be located near the signal at East-West Highway/Georgia Avenue; if SHA permits a signal at II-A, the timing of the two signals would need to be coordinated.

Staff recommends that the two proposed crossings between Kennett Street and East-West Highway be constructed as public mixed streets that are signalized at their intersections with East-West Highway. In addition to justifying crosswalks, implementing public mixed streets rather than purely pedestrian alleys would enhance safety in that drivers would provide additional passive surveillance, particularly during times when pedestrian volumes are low.

The intersection of II-B and East-West Highway should be directly aligned with proposed pathway I-C in Phase I. If SHA is only willing to permit one signalized intersection, it should be IIB since it can be constructed as a mixed street continuing directly across East-West Highway as I-C.

Phase III (Kennett Links): Staff is not convinced that there is significant demand for these links or that they can be designed in a way that ensures safety. The neighborhood south of Eastern Avenue in the District of Columbia consists mostly of single family detached dwelling units. We do not expect large volumes of pedestrians who seek to cut through (or around)

the garage to get to Kennett Street or East-West Highway. Those who seek to do so will probably perceive the sidewalks along Newell Street or 13th Street as safer routes. The proposed links through this block are somewhat circuitous due to existing structures (e.g., Garage 9) and would have poor sight distances in places, impacting real or perceived security. Improved connections to the garage might be desirable if proposed housing projects on this block proceed. However, overall demand for a through-block connection is probably weak even with the proposed projects in South Silver Spring.

Proposed path III-A would be located along the southern entrance to Garage 9. This entrance has been closed for some time; however, development in South Silver Spring might provide justification for reopening this entrance to the garage. The sidewalk along the vehicular entrance to the garage is narrow, blocked by light poles, and does not meet ADA requirements. It could be improved and made more appealing.

Path III-B was made more difficult by the decision to install an emergency generator next to Garage 9 to serve the garage and the Discovery Creative and Technology Center. This structure will further reduce sight distances where the proposed path runs between the generator and the garage.

Path III-C dead-ends at its western terminus; it hits the back of a self-storage warehouse, actually at a higher grade than the warehouse unless the warehouse owner is successful in his efforts to add another floor.

Later Phases: This area has not been analyzed by DHCA to the same extent as Phases I-III. The proposed segments are discussed descriptively since they are not labeled in the County's brochure.

The proposed north-south connection between the two brick buildings on Eastern Avenue (i.e., the Williams/Wilste buildings at 7915 Eastern Avenue, in between 13th Street and King Street) is extremely narrow and uninviting. The lighting required to make this area safe after dark would likely disturb the future residents of these buildings. There is more room behind these two buildings to accommodate the proposed east-west connection; however, there is also a significant grade change. With careful design, this connection could also provide a small public use space for the residents.

After the proposed east-west connection crosses King Street, it traverses privately owned vacant property before connecting to an existing alley. This alley is a U-shaped vehicular alley connecting to Eastern Avenue at two points. If the demand exists, it could be converted to a mixed street providing both vehicular access and pedestrian connectivity to the interior of the block, similar to the paths in Phase 1.

The proposed connection between the alley and Georgia Avenue (south of the Citgo gas station) is narrow and it brings pedestrians out to an unsignalized intersection at Georgia Avenue/Jesup Blair Drive. Staff believes that we should encourage crossings between the pedestrian pathway and Jesup Blair Park only if improvements are made to the intersection, such as a full traffic signal, a marked crosswalk with a median refuge island or a pedestrian-activated flashing crosswalk.

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