

Item 9 - Correspondence

From: [Scott Bonney](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Bethesda Two Way Lane Study
Date: Sunday, September 10, 2023 1:10:28 PM

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I have read the two-way lane study for downtown Bethesda to be discussed at your September 14, 2023 meeting, and suggest that an obvious option was overlooked.

I think the overall concept of traffic flow around downtown Bethesda should not be to speed traffic through the city, but to consider it as a means to a destination. Having two-way streets allows more options to navigate around the downtown, reducing congestion on any one road, without creating a fast moving bypass for folks seeking just to blow through downtown as fast as possible.

It does appear though that the conversion of all existing one-way streets back to two-way streets might cause unacceptable congestion at rush hours. But the consultant did not consider the idea of only converting Old Georgetown Road, Woodmont Avenue and the west portion of Montgomery Avenue back to two-way streets, but leave the much more heavily used East-West Highway and the portion of Montgomery Road east of Wisconsin as two-way streets. This would still allow the bulk of east-west rush hour traffic to access north and south Wisconsin Avenue, but eliminate the fast one-way loop through downtown.

The biggest problem with one way traffic is on Woodmont is how it makes driving, biking and walking from the very popular mixed-use neighborhoods of Bethesda Row and Woodmont Triangle very difficult. Woodmont clearly sees much less traffic according the Traffic Analysis. The much needed separated bike lane currently under construction connecting Bethesda Row and the Woodmont Triangle would be much easier and safer if it was on the east side of a two-way Woodmont for its entire length. Clearly Woodmont is a prime pedestrian and bike corridor between these two neighborhoods, and would greatly benefit from the traffic calming of reverting back to two-way traffic, as would the many retail shops that line both sides of the current one-way section. The entire west side of downtown would be thus reconnected along the two-way, tree lined, low speed, curving Woodmont Avenue, which is lined with shops, restaurants, cafes, hotels, multifamily residential buildings and offices. Let's leave Wisconsin Avenue, East-West Highway and the east portion of Montgomery Avenue do the heavy lifting of moving rush hour traffic, and make the west side of downtown slower, safer and a better place for businesses.

Maintaining one-way traffic on East-West Highway, and the eastern portion of Montgomery would still allow the primary traffic flow to and from the heavily traveled Wisconsin and the existing one-way eastbound Montgomery Avenue, and the westbound East-West Highway.

Lastly, the short sections of Old Georgetown Road and the west portion of Montgomery Road would greatly benefit from slower two-way traffic as well, especially the many existing and proposed retail shops that line both sides.

I don't believe that one-way streets need to be coupled into a full one-way loop to reduce congestion. I don't think the transition from one-way traffic and two-way traffic would be complicated or dangerous intersections to design, especially along Montgomery, which would still be only eastbound east of Wisconsin, with no head-on conflicts caused by the switch from two-way to one way.

On west bound East-West Highway, the intersection is not perpendicular and quite wide, so it would be quite easy to design a safe intersection that does not create a head on switch from the very wide one-way westbound East-West Highway to much narrower two way Old Georgetown Road, with an island and proper signalization at Wisconsin.

Removing the one-way loop on these three roads would allow drivers to use lay-by lanes to drop off passengers adjacent to the sidewalk, especially near the Clark Building, and at 2 and 3 Bethesda Metro Centers. Currently drop-offs at these four high-rises are very dangerous, caused by the one-way, counter-clockwise loop that do not allow curbside drop offs for all passengers. This is also true for the several restaurants that populate these building, clearly making these ground level spaces very hard to lease, without safe dropoffs, especially using Uber and Lyft.

I think this plan might be the best way to improve traffic circulation in downtown Bethesda, without overly impacting congestion. Bethesda Row, the CBD and the Woodmont Triangle, would be reconnected with two-way traffic, greatly reducing the need for northbound traffic on Woodmont Avenue to divert to Wisconsin or Arlington, just to go a few blocks.

Frankly this concept is so obvious, it seems odd to me that the Traffic Consultant did not consider it in their report. Of course this concept would not preclude the bike lanes that were proposed in their report which are still a great idea.

Thanks for taking the time to review my email, and please forward this email to all Planning Board members for their review before the meeting. Let's really consider how we can eliminate or at least mitigate this one-way race course through downtown Bethesda. Let's encourage folks to go TO Bethesda, and not just THRU Bethesda.

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