GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Policy and Planning Administration

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Jerrily R. Kress, FAIA
Director
Office of Zoning

**FROM:** Kenneth Laden, Associate Director
Transportation Planning and Policy Administration

**DATE:** April 14, 2003

**SUBJECT:** BZA Application No. 16970- Special Exception Approval for The Continuation of a Child Development Center Located at 3209 Highland Place, NW, Lot 30, Square 2072. Supplemental report.

In a Memorandum dated February 5, 2003, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) submitted its testimony to the Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) regarding the above referenced case. At that time, DDOT did not support the application due to five transportation safety concerns. These concerns included:

- Traffic and pedestrian safety at the intersection of 34th and Newark Streets
- Unsafe traffic patterns when westbound thru-traffic is forced to use the eastbound thru-lane to avoid the school's 'carpool' line.
- Illegal parking on Highland Place, including blocking of neighbors' driveways and double parking of vehicles in the drop-off and pick-up 'carpool' line.
- Cars making illegal U-turns and ignoring stop signs
- Traffic congestion during peak drop-off and pick-up periods

BZA Case No. 16970 Exhibit No. 136

DDOT's original testimony recommended that the *NCRC Transportation Management Plan* (TMP) must be modified to safely accommodate the existing enrollment level, and proposed future expansion, in compliance with current traffic and safety regulations and guidelines. Since February 5, 2003, DDOT has met with both NCRC and supporters of the application, as well as with opponents of the application numerous times. Following these community meetings and further internal analysis, DDOT developed three options that could help to make existing traffic conditions on Highland Place NW safer. DDOT acknowledges that none of these options will provide a complete solution, and we would

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16970
EXHIBIT NO.136

also like to indicate that none of these options have the full support of the applicant and opponents. However, DDOT does believe that these options can have a positive influence on the existing transportation safety conditions. The four options DDOT examined include:

- **Option I: Do Nothing**
  Under this option, the existing situation would remain as is. DDOT finds that residents and NCRC generated traffic are aware of the traffic issues involving Highland Place and that this understanding of the situation naturally encourages people to drive more safely and with caution. Additionally, there has been no history of any accidents taking place on this street. It would then be up to the residents of Highland Place, NCRC parents and NCRC staff to work together to make the situation as safe as possible.

  The benefit of this option is that neither the neighborhood residents nor the school will be asked to make any sacrifices above and beyond what sacrifices are being made now in terms of dealing with a frustrating and unsafe traffic situation. The obvious shortcoming of this option is that we believe existing conditions on Highland Place, NW are unsafe and anticipating no future accidents is perhaps wishful thinking.

- **Option II: Adjust NCRC's Traffic Generation**
  Under this option, the school would be required to reduce the traffic on Highland Place by either decreasing its overall enrollment, reducing overall vehicle trips, or accepting a larger percentage neighborhood students who would presumably then be able to walk to school, while decreasing the percentage of out-of-neighborhood students.

  DDOT's main interest here is to reduce the number of vehicle trips and thereby reduce exposure to unsafe driving conditions. The fact that the NCRC is essentially a pre-school limits some transportation options such as carpooling, transit, or shuttle bus solutions to reduce traffic volumes. DDOT has no authority over the enrollment of students at a school, and therefore leaves it to the BZA to determine if this is a proper solution.

- **Option III: Regulatory Solution**
  A regulatory solution has been proposed by the NCRC in their revised Transportation Management Plan, and would include:

  - Staggered drop-off and pick-up operations that will utilize the north curb as a drop off lane from 8 am – 5 pm during the weekday or during peak AM and PM time periods;
  - Monitoring drop-off and pick-up operations on Highland place by two uniformed persons or off-duty police officers from 8:15- 9:15 each morning classes are held;
  - Community liaison process;

- Addressing faculty and staff parking by NCRC by providing staff a financial incentive to use public transportation through participation in the Metrocheck program; and
- Limit of 3 special events in any 12-month period held only on Monday-Saturday when school is not in session.

DDOT could provide the school additional curb space in front of the school for loading and unloading operations by eliminating a residential permit-parking zone adjacent to the school and utilizing an existing no parking restriction in front of the school during school operating hours for student drop-off and pick-up.

The benefit of a regulatory solution is that it could be implemented quickly and, if run properly, positive results would presumably be felt in a short period of time. The downside of such a regulatory solution is that it would depend on constant monitoring to ensure people were abiding by the new regulations.

- **Option IV: Engineering Solution**
  A possible engineering solution would be to redesignate Highland Place, NW from Newark Street to 33rd Place as a one-way westbound road. Creating a one-way westbound road would allow for the north side curb to retain its existing residential permit parking, provide a queuing lane in what is now the westbound travel lane, and the existing eastbound lane would become the through lane.

  The benefit of such an engineering solution is that it would create a safe traffic condition because it would eliminate the competing interests for use of the existing eastbound lane.

  The disadvantage of the engineering solution is that it places the burden solely on the residents of Highland Place, NW and would require some traffic safety modifications to 33rd Place NW, which would now be receiving all of the traffic exiting from Highland Place. As previously stated, none of these options provide an ideal transportation solution.

The Department, at this time, is strongly considering implementing Option #4 as the most direct means of addressing the existing transportation safety concerns on Highland Place, making Highland Place a one-way street, westbound from Newark Street to 33rd Place, NW. This solution would eliminate our concern about westbound traffic having to cross over into the eastbound travel lanes to bypass the NCRC line of queued vehicles. Cars would no longer be making illegal U-turns on Highland Place, and traffic congestion would be reduced along Highland Place. This recommendation does not address our concerns regarding the narrow sidewalks on Highland Place, however, one-way traffic on this road would reduce the potential vehicular/pedestrian conflicts on the roadway. This option does not address problems with parents blocking driveways, running stop signs and parking illegally. However, these are traffic enforcement issues that cannot be easily addressed with additional regulatory or traffic engineering solutions. The Department

will address our transportation safety concerns at 34th Street and Newark Street as a separate transportation safety improvement.

If this option is implemented, the Department will coordinate with NCRC, the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission and residents who live near the school to implement specific traffic safety recommendations for Newark Street, Highland Place, 33rd Place and Ordway Street to improve transportation safety in the community. Additionally, DDOT will follow the DC Administrative Rulemaking Process for One-Way Street designations.

The Department will begin preparing design plans for the reconstruction of Ordway Street adjacent to the school, this summer. The Department will coordinate this design project with NCRC, the ANC and neighbors through the summer and fall of 2003.

With respect to the proposed application before the BZA, it is our understanding from the applicant that the new construction would result in an additional 10 students attending the school. It is also our understanding that there would be 10 additional faculty or staff associated with the proposed expansion of the school.

If NCRC limits new students and staffing to the numbers listed above, and the Department implements Option #4, as outlined above, we do not anticipate that the resulting increase in traffic would significantly worsen traffic conditions in the neighborhood.