Washington Area Bicyclist Association

GETTING THERE BY BIKE

June 18, 2003

Ms. Carol Mitten,
Chair, DC Zoning Commission
441 4th St. NW, Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20001

RE: Proposed zoning changes required for development of the Georgetown University Boathouse

Dear Ms. Mitten,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), a nonprofit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia in 1972. WABA's mission is to create a healthier, more liveable region through bicycle advocacy. WABA membership exceeds 7,000 in the metropolitan Washington region, 1,600 of whom live in the District of Columbia.

WABA's interest in the proposed zoning changes needed to build the Georgetown University Boathouse is related to potential negative impacts the boathouse and vehicles servicing it might have on the adjacent Capitol Crescent Trail (CCT) and the users of that trail. We strongly urge the Commission to delay any final action on the rezoning request until issues associated with protecting the physical integrity of the trail and the safety of its users are satisfactorily resolved. We urge the Commission to require that the University submit specific plans and specs for the planned facility prior to approval of any rezoning application. Once the Commission is satisfied that the integrity and safety of the CCT will be maintained, the University must then be required to abide by the specific plans and specs as approved by the Commission. Furthermore, an enforcement mechanism with stiff fines for violations should be made a part of this rezoning action.

Section 507.2(b) of the Transportation Element of the Washington D.C. Comprehensive Plan establishes the policy of promoting the construction of a continuous pathway for bicycling along both the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. The CCT is a critical link in the development of a continuous pathway along the Potomac River. Furthermore, Section 509.1(d) and 509.2(h) of that same document also set out the policy of establishing a bicycle route system that provides safe, efficient, and convenient bicycle circulation in the City. The CCT has become a primary artery in Washington's emerging bicycle route system, carrying 100,000 thousand bicycle trips to and through the city annually.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 335

733 15th St NW Suite 1030 • Washington, DC 20005-2212 • phone 202-628-2500 • fax 202-628-4141 • e-mail: waba@waba.org • website: www.waba.org

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
EXHIBIT NO.335

Because the Zoning Commission must apply zoning requirements in a way that is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan, WABA requests that the Commission examine the Boathouse application within the context of the above mentioned sections of the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Doing so will ensure that the public policies articulated within those Sections are not breached either through construction or operation of the boathouse and its accompanying service road.

In particular, to ensure that the physical integrity of the existing Capitol Crescent Trail and the safety of the users of that trail are satisfactorily maintained – particularly in light of the narrowness of the right-of-way which will be used to access the Boathouse and the existence of the CCT within that right-of-way -- we urge the Commission to require the following specific trail and user-related criteria be met in approved engineering documents, including the plans and specs, before the Commission takes any action on the rezoning request:

1. The existing ten foot wide paved surface of the Capitol Crescent Trail and the existing two foot wide unpaved shoulders on either side of the trail must be maintained; (Please note, preliminary drawings provided by Georgetown University for joint use of the corridor show the loss of the side shoulder on the Canal side of the Capitol Crescent Trail and also show the trail up against a retaining wall. Placing the trail next to a retaining wall will effectively reduce the usable space on the paved trail since cyclists will have to remain a couple of feet away from the wall to avoid running in to it or, depending on its height, even catching their handle bars on it.)

2. A separation between the trail surfaces and the Boathouse service road must be clearly delineated and maintained and WABA further recommends that the University be required to build the Boathouse service road on its property rather than the Capitol Crescent Trail right-of-way once the service road reaches the east end of the University property. (Indeed, if it is necessary for the University to maintain a parking lot on the west end of the facility rather than the east end of the facility, WABA urges the Commission to require the construction of the road servicing that parking lot to be on the University's property rather than within the right-of-way of the adjacent trail. By doing so, potential conflicts along the Capitol Crescent Trail right-of-way would be reduced to 300 feet of right-of-way, rather than along 800 feet of right-of-way.)

3. Adequate parking for service vehicles coming to the Boathouse must be provided to insure that unregulated parking of service vehicles does not create a safety problem for bicyclists by encroaching on the trail surfaces or the trail sightlines;

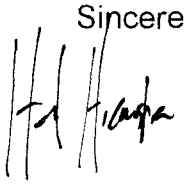
4. With exceptions for emergency vehicles, an operating schedule for the Boathouse service road should be required as a condition of any zoning variance and those hours of access should be limited to off-peak hours for trail use, which varies between weekdays and weekend days;

5. Limitations on the size and number of motorized vehicles that can access the Boathouse at any given time should be established and agreed to prior to the Commission's ruling on this request; and,

6. Only boathouse maintenance vehicles and boat trailers and vehicles pulling those trailers should be permitted temporary access to the Boathouse parking facilities. Catering vehicles and vehicles dropping off users of the Boathouse should not be permitted on the Boathouse service road at any time.

Again, given the significant infringements that could occur if the Boathouse service road and users of that road are not strictly controlled, WABA urges the Commission in the strongest possible terms to withhold any final determination on this zoning petition without binding assurances that the above criteria can and will be met by the University. We urge that approval be withheld until a thorough review of the plans and specs assure that the integrity and safety of the CCT will be maintained. We further urge the Commission to apply strict enforcement mechanisms to deter any violations.

Sincerely,



Hal Hiemstra
President
WABA