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Testimony

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I am writing regarding the proposed changes to the zoning regulations governing parking.

I have adapted much of my testimony from reports in the local media (highlighted). However one thought that is mine is that without a serious improvement of the local public transit system, particularly buses, cutting parking won't do a thing except strand residents and businesses. Therefore, I urge you to seriously work in tandem with WMATA.

There is a craze lately for slashing parking. Proponents use the latest catch phrases like "walkable neighborhoods" and "optimal mobility." I urge you to use moderation when considering adapting some of their suggested changes, many of which, however, are good.

For neighborhoods, three factors are important: compact neighborhoods with short walking distances; wide, convenient, and well maintained sidewalks; and things that are worth walking to. If these factors are in place, plenty of people will walk, and the presence of people on the sidewalks will make neighborhoods safe and attractive for walking. The number of cars in urban neighborhoods has almost nothing to do with whether they are walkable.

Local government has two roles in creating walkable neighborhoods: maintaining sidewalks and locating government services — schools, libraries, parks — conveniently so that people can walk to them. Ironically, this administration, which claims it wants to encourage walkable neighborhoods, is engaged in closing smaller schools and libraries that serve as residential neighborhood hubs, and concentrating these services in larger regional schools and libraries that serve several neighborhoods — thus reducing the attractiveness of walking in the city's residential neighborhoods.

Please keep in mind that most people want to be able to drive. They don't want to stay only within their home neighborhoods all the time. They want to move among urban neighborhoods and between the city and the suburbs. They have friends whom they want to visit and whom they want to visit them. They have places to go both near and far, and they value the convenience and independence that cars give them.

When people don't take public transportation as much as planners want, because busses and subways are too inconvenient, too expensive, and too time-consuming, urban planners respond by trying to make car travel as expensive, difficult, time-consuming, and inconvenient as public transportation. Instead, they should be increasing public transportation routes and options, reducing fares, and making public transportation travel times shorter.

Highlighted parts from themail

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO.

08-06-2

EXHIBIT NO.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 08-06-2
EXHIBIT NO. 63