



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

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May 17, 2016

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Chairman Anthony Hood
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210-S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: Letter in Support of Case No. 15-16

Dear Chairman Hood and Members of the Commission:

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the mission to improve bicycling in the Washington region. We represent over 2,000 members and 21,000 supporters in the District of Columbia. This letter provides WABA's comments on the PUD proposed for the Rhode Island Avenue Shopping Center.

WABA championed the development of the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) beginning in the early 1990s. We published the initial trail concept plan in 1999. The MBT is a proposed 8.5 mile trail from Union Station, DC to Silver Spring, MD which, when completed, will create a significant transportation and recreation corridor in Northeast DC. WABA is actively engaged in a number of initiatives to increase overall usage and address safety issues on the MBT. For example, WABA manages the District Department of Transportation's Trail Ranger program, an initiative to encourage trail usage through community outreach, trail user engagement and regular maintenance of the trail itself. We are also investigating relocating our operations to an office space directly adjacent to the Met Branch Trail as a growing organization deeply invested in the trail's success.

We support trail oriented development projects along the Met Branch Trail that provide market-rate and significant affordable housing, office space and community serving retail. The MBT is now served by a number of successful development projects in Brookland and NoMa, creating a series of activity points along the trail. Encouraging residents to live, work and play in trail-oriented developments will help achieve greater city goals. Residents and visitors will be more likely to use bikes for work and non-work trips leading to a decrease in single-occupancy vehicle usage, increased support of local businesses and improved health outcomes.

This project includes a number of bike-friendly elements such as amble short- and long-term bike parking for residents and guests. The project will provide a protected bike lane from the 4th St NE bike lanes to the trail. It should be noted the phasing plan for this project begins at the trail and develops towards 4th Street NE. This phasing prioritizes the trail first and making it less isolated. Incorporating a public park next to it will help activate the trail

too. The open space in the project will allow for activities and events in the community that currently are not possible, such as outdoor movie nights and community rides. More activity on and near the trail will increase usage and help improve the overall community safety.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this program. I hope the Commission will approve this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory M. Billing", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Gregory M. Billing
Executive Director
Washington Area Bicyclist Association