

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

To: Ted VanHouten
District Department of Transportation

From: Drew Ackermann
Daniel Solomon, AICP
Daniel B. VanPelt, P.E., PTOE

Date: June 17, 2021

Subject: 2020 UDC Van Ness Campus Plan – Response to DDOT Review Comments of Transportation Statement

Introduction

The Transportation Report for the University of the District of Columbia's (UDC) 2020-2029 Van Ness Campus Plan was submitted to the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) on March 22, 2021. DDOT reviewed and provided comments on the report in its Staff Report dated June 11, 2021. The Applicant is pleased to have received support from DDOT in the form of a no-objection recommendation with conditions, and offers the following relevant responses to DDOT's comments.

Recommendations

The Applicant offers the following responses to DDOT's recommendations and approval conditions:

1. *The Applicant will implement the TDM and Performance Monitoring Plans, for the life of the project. The plan will carry forward the TDM commitments from the previous 2011 Campus Plan with the modifications identified by DDOT (see end of report) and by the Applicant in their submitted materials. As part of these plans, the Applicant will continue the shuttle program and will submit detailed annual performance monitoring reports to DDOT that will include additional information such as parking utilization. Prior to approval by the Zoning Commission, DDOT requests the Applicant submit a clean document outlining the final TDM and Performance Monitoring Plans for DDOT to review and concur with to be included in the final Zoning Order. DDOT may have additional comments and edits at that time.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to submit annual performance monitoring reports to DDOT and to submit a clean document containing the final TDM and PMP prior to the final Zoning Order.

2. *If approved by DDOT during permitting, the Applicant will fund the construction of the proposed access modifications described above. If the Veazey Terrace NW closure is approved by DDOT, the Applicant will maintain bicycle and pedestrian access to the Campus in this location.*

Response: The Applicant will continue coordinating with DDOT on the design and funding of proposed access modifications. The Applicant will maintain bicycle and pedestrian access at Veazey Terrace NW if it is closed to vehicles.

3. *Each existing building to be renovated will install long-term bicycle parking and showers/lockers consistent with the amounts required in ZR16 Subtitle C 802.1, even if the renovations or building expansions would not typically trigger the bicycle parking requirement.*

Response: The Applicant agrees but proposes providing long-term bicycle parking and showers/lockers in a consolidated central location serving the entire campus. At each Further Processing for individual buildings, the Applicant will demonstrate that the required amount of long-term bicycle parking and showers/lockers is provided either in this consolidated location or in other locations on campus.

Continued Coordination

The Applicant offers the following responses to DDOT's comments regarding continued coordination:

4. *Any proposed public space improvements, including curb and gutter, street trees and landscaping, streetlights, sidewalks, and other features within the public rights of way, are expected to be designed and built to DDOT standards. Careful attention should be paid to pedestrian and bicycle connections along the site's perimeter and adjacent infrastructure.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to this condition.

5. *Coordinate with DDOT's Planning and Sustainability Division (PSD) on the ongoing Van Ness Commercial Corridor Project and the Connecticut Avenue NW Reversible Lane Safety and Operations Study.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to this condition.

6. *Coordinate with PSD on the proposed access modifications.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to this condition.

7. *Coordinate with PSD and goDCgo regarding the implementation of the TDM plan.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to this condition.

8. *Submit future performance monitoring reports to DDOT's TDM team for review and concurrence.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to this condition.

Transportation Analysis

The Applicant offers the following responses to DDOT's comments regarding transportation analysis.

Site Design

Loading

9. *Access to loading facilities via Veazey Terrace NW would be impacted by the Applicant's proposed changes to access points. The Applicant has provided truck turning diagrams that demonstrate that all existing loading activities will still be possible under the proposed changes. The Applicant will need to continue to coordinate with DDOT on proposed changes to access points and show impacts to loading activities as part of the public space permitting process.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to coordinate with DDOT on these proposed changes and to show impacts to loading facilities as part of the public space permitting process.

Vehicular Parking

10. *The Applicant currently provides parking for students, faculty, and staff in several locations, which results in a total of 837 parking spaces. The Applicant is proposing a supply of 836 parking spaces. This is due to reductions in surface parking spaces because of the access modifications, and a change in access to garage spaces from the Days Inn hotel to 4250 Connecticut Avenue, which the Applicant recently acquired. DDOT supports this reduction of on-site parking and the continued implementation of priced parking as methods for discouraging travel by personal vehicle and encouraging use of non-automotive modes of travel. The proposed 836 parking spaces should be established as a parking cap for the Van Ness Campus. In future Campus Plan updates, DDOT will work with the University to further reduce parking over time.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to establish the proposed 836 spaces as a parking cap.

Bicycle Parking

11. *The Applicant states that they will provide long-term bicycle parking spaces to new buildings as they are constructed. DDOT encourages the Applicant to retrofit long-term bicycle parking into existing buildings as they are renovated and land uses change. DDOT also encourages the Applicant to provide more short-term bicycle parking in many locations across campus. DDOT has heard a need from the community for more short-term bicycle parking adjacent to campus on Yuma Street NW.*

Response: The Applicant proposes providing long-term bicycle parking and showers/lockers in a consolidated central location serving the entire campus, but not necessarily in individual buildings. The Applicant will also continue coordinating with DDOT regarding locations for potential short-term bicycle parking in public space.

Streetscape and Public Realm

12. *The Applicant is proposing changes to four access points: Van Ness Street NW, Van Ness Street NW/International Drive NW, Veazey Terrace NW, and Windom Place NW. These changes will require further analysis and review during public space permitting.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to participate in further analysis and review during public space permitting.

Heritage and Special Trees

13. *Any proposed changes to street trees because of the Campus Plan or related new buildings requires coordination with UFD. The Applicant should reach out to the appropriate UFD arborist to discuss any potential impacts to trees due to this Campus Plan.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to coordinate with UFD on potential impacts to street trees.

Pedestrian Facilities

14. *The Applicant is proposing to make geometric changes to several campus entrances to improve pedestrian safety and multimodal access. DDOT is generally supportive of these efforts and will continue to work with the Applicant through permitting to refine the designs. The proposed closure of the Veazey Terrace NW entrance for vehicles should not preclude pedestrian and bicycle access in the future.*

The Applicant should work with DDOT during public space permitting to ensure that any new buildings or changes to access points have an updated streetscape with ADA compliant pedestrian facilities, subject to DDOT review and approval. The Applicant should also continue to work with DDOT through the TDM and performance monitoring programs over the plan's 10-year lifespan to look for new ways to improve pedestrian porosity across campus and connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods.

Response: The Applicant agrees to work and coordinate with DDOT as part of the public space permitting for the proposed improvements.

Mitigations

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Performance Monitoring

15. *The TDM plan should include dates. For example, UDC plans on participating in WMATA's UPass program but has not committed to a start date. Many of the other strategies have a start date.*

Response: The Applicant will provide dates in the final TDM plan as applicable.

16. *While it is appropriate that the Campus is not adding more parking spaces, the parking rates are severely below market rate for the Van Ness area. Students only pay \$75 per semester and teachers only pay \$375 for the year. UDC should*

increase existing parking rates. “Increasing rates to maintain parking occupancy at 80-90%” is not an adequate TDM strategy.

Response: While the Applicant understands the importance of reducing parking demand, the parking pricing strategy at UDC is informed by the unique circumstances of the University.

Many of the University’s students face economic hardships while attempting to obtain their postsecondary degrees. UDC students have difficult choices to make about where to spend their funds and how to meet financial challenges, which can include costs related to housing, childcare, food, monthly bills, and, of course, transportation. Lower parking rates for students help ease the burden of transportation costs, allowing them to focus on other spending priorities. Moreover, depending on where a student is traveling from, not having access to a low-cost parking facility can prove a barrier to students’ access to campus. Prohibitive parking rates may cause some students to opt out of higher educational activities rather than seek other transportation methods, ones that may not be feasible depending on their geographic location and the time involved in transit.

Regarding staff, while employees at District agencies typically receive an annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) that provides additional income to cover increasing costs, UDC employees do not receive an annual District-funded COLA. One of the ways the University addresses this lack of cost-of-living increase is by maintaining parking rates that are below market value at its campus sites. This minimizes additional transportation costs to employees.

The Applicant agrees to review and report rates annually as part of the agreed-to Performance Monitoring Plan (“PMP”) with DDOT and goDCgo.

- 17. UDC is pledging to promote pre-tax transportation benefits. UDC should provide the number of staff enrolled in pre-tax transportation benefits and pledge to reach a participation goal.*

Response: The Applicant will report and review this information annually as part of the agreed-to Performance Monitoring Plan (“PMP”) with DDOT and goDCgo.

- 18. UDC is planning to participate in the “\$20 bicycle commuting benefit” but this has been paused by the federal government until 2024. Instead, they should offer free Capital Bikeshare memberships to students.*

Response: The Applicant proposes offering Capital Bikeshare’s University Membership Program to students. This proposal will be included in the final TDM plan.

- 19. The Applicant should include a TDM coordinator to be a contact for DDOT and goDCgo.*

Response: The TDM coordinator will be Dr. LeVita Y. Bassett, UDC’s Director of Auxiliary Enterprises. This information will be provided in the final TDM plan.

- 20. The Applicant should commit to a non-SOV mode share. Since UDC is a public university, that should match the 75% non-SOV goal in the Move DC Mobility plan for employees. A goal should also be established for students.*

Response: The Applicant agrees to work towards improving long-term employee and student non-SOV mode share over the 10-year life of the Campus Plan. As part of the agreed-to PMP, UDC will annually report mode splits and work with DDOT and goDCgo to improve employee and student non-SOV mode share over the 10-year life of the Campus Plan.