

Hearing Date: Tuesday December 15, 2020

Item 4- Portions of Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road Abandonment No. AB-773

Testimony of Cynthia Green, resident of Westward Avenue

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify. My name is Cynthia Green. I am president of the Springfield Civic Association and I'm a resident of the 5500 block of Westbard Avenue. I can tell you first hand why Westbard Avenue needs to be realigned, requiring the abandonment of parts of Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road, which the Springfield community supports.

There are 25 families living on the 5500 block, including 11 children and several elderly people. I've lived on this block for 36 years and as my neighbors and I can tell you, in the last 10 years we've seen a remarkable increase in the volume of traffic. Why? GPS.

There are a limited number of routes drivers can use to get from the Beltway exit at River Road to downtown D.C. via Massachusetts Avenue and its reverse. These are: Goldsboro Road, Little Falls Parkway, and Western Avenue. Thanks to traffic and mapping apps, drivers found a fourth route, Westbard Avenue.

Years ago we had three speed bumps placed on our block and the county put a "No right turn [from 7 a.m. - 9 a.m.](#)" sign from eastbound River Road. Later, "No thru trucks over 7,000 lbs, GVW" signs were added at both ends of the block. Last year the signs were updated to "No thru trucks over 10,000 lbs GVW" – the new standard weight – and MCDOT added a "No left turn at River Road" sign on the northbound side of the block at Ridgefield Road, and a "No left turn" sign at River Road to discourage drivers from making a left turn onto westbound River Road. This change was needed because it is dangerous for vehicles to cross the traffic on both sides of River Road to go northbound. In addition, MCDOT placed a concrete triangle, which curves to the right, to force drivers to turn onto eastbound River Road, instead of turning left to go northbound. That hasn't significantly discouraged drivers as statistics below will show you.

In the fall of 2017, MCDOT did a traffic study of our block with a follow-up last January 2020, after the no left turn signs and triangle were installed. A summary of those counts is below:

5500 Block of Westbard Ave.	Average Daily Vehicle Count		Totals for Week		% Reduction from 2017-2020
	2017	2020	2017	2020	
Northbound (towards River Road and the beltway)	728	636	5,098	4,450	1.4%
Southbound (towards Mass. Ave.)	908	742	6,354	5,195	1.26%

On its face the reduction in the total number of vehicles looks positive. Traffic volume decreased by 1,700 vehicles per week. Underlying this slight decrease, however, is a disturbing increase of multiple-axle trucks.

Westbard Ave.	Average Daily Trucks		Total Trucks per Week		% Increase 2017-2020
	2017	2020	2017	2020	
Northbound	7	30	46	211	1.24%
Southbound	13	17	89	120	4.87%

More than 330 trips are made by trucks — not pick-up trucks — but tractor trailers with multiple axles. While they can't speed down the street because of the speed bumps, they are noisy, disruptive and a danger to our quality of life. Besides these trucks traveling down our block, there are on average five buses per day that rumble through. Some are school buses, which are neither picking up nor dropping off children on our street, but just driving through, and others are private buses, which use our block as a convenient shortcut, avoiding the narrow, sharp right-hand turn at River Road and Ridgefield Road which has been described in other testimony. I want to stress that the MCDOT traffic engineers have done everything possible to reduce cut-through traffic on our residential street. We appreciate their efforts.

From a personal standpoint, living on such a busy street creates a general sense of anxiety and the need to be alert at all times. When I am raking leaves in front of my house, I have to pay attention to the traffic coming by. Before I cross the street to greet a neighbor, I have to look carefully both ways to see if traffic is coming. I am awakened in the middle of the night by a tractor trailer crashing down on the three speedbumps.

My neighbors and I cope with noise (vehicles honk over every one of our three speedbumps), dust and fumes, trash tossed onto the street, and theft of county traffic signs as well as homeowner's signs. When I put a "Drive like your kids live here" sign in front of my house, it was stolen in less than 24 hours. Some vehicles coming from River Road onto our street are going too fast to turn the corner, causing crashes and near misses. We all have to be on constant alert to make sure children do not go onto the road.

Given our traffic woes, my neighbors and I support the abandonment of sections of Westbard Avenue and Ridgefield Road to prepare for the realignment of Westbard Avenue and some peaceful nights' rest.