

3 COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Community involvement in the development of transportation plans typically takes place after the study team has gathered basic data and formulated an initial set of transportation alternatives. However, for this study, this project began with a community walk-through, and included community input at each stage of the project. This process is described further in Volume 2.

During Phase I, the community was encouraged to identify and discuss problems, issues, and concerns about transportation in the Mount Pleasant area. Following an initial meeting to introduce the project, input was solicited during a community walk-through, advisory committee meetings, and two public meetings. Additional information was also obtained from a number of sources, including DDOT, previous studies, Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC), informal conversations and discussions with residents and business owners, and feedback directly to the project and to the Mount Pleasant Community discussion site.

Through this interaction, the study team identified specific deficiencies and problems, gained valuable insight with regard to longer-term issues, concerns, and priorities of various elements of the community. The team also received a number of recommendations and ideas for short and long-term alternatives for addressing current and future transportation-related issues. Since these do not represent the existing conditions, they are not reported in this document. However these items have been properly noted, and will be used as a resource as the team develops and evaluates potential recommendations and alternatives during the next phase of this study.

Involving the community much earlier in the process, offers some advantages. Early interaction with the Advisory Committee supported a problem-focused approach to data collection. Based on this input, initial data collection was expanded to ensure that the necessary field data were collected. This, in turn, helped the study team identify and analyze issues and problems of interest to the community that may have been overlooked in a more data-driven approach. Residents are an excellent source of information about how they actually use the transportation system, and are helpful in identifying problems and issues that may not be evident from engineering and planning studies.

Early and more frequent interaction with the advisory committee and the public provided the study team with valuable insight with regard to the issues and differing priorities within the Mount Pleasant Community. This information is reflected in the range of alternatives explored and presented to the community for discussion.

3.1 ISSUES, PROBLEMS, AND CONCERNS

Key highlights garnered from this process are summarized in Table 1- 2. A more extensive summary list of issues, ideas, and concerns documented through community involvement is provided in Appendix E.

A map of the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood was used during community outreach activities to graphically identify locations where specific existing or potential future problems and areas of concern identified by the community. Specific deficiencies and problems related to various elements of the transportation system were logged in and cross-matched with the inventories and



field surveys conducted through this study. The order in which topics are presented does not reflect their importance within the community.

Table 1- 2 Highlights from Community Input

Traffic Speeds	Traffic speeds were of concern to residents at a number of locations in the neighborhood. Residents feel that many vehicles are traveling at speeds that are not appropriate for the environment.
Pedestrian Safety	Residents do not feel safe crossing some of the more heavily traveled. Of particular concern was the need to improve pedestrian access to the Columbia Heights Metro station. Specific concerns include increasing pedestrian safety crossing 16 th Street, and their sense of personal security walking on streets with limited lighting.
Impact of New Development	The community expressed a wide range of concerns about how traffic generated by new development taking place in Columbia Heights may impact traffic conditions within Mount Pleasant, and what alternatives may be available for mitigating potential negative impacts on traffic volumes and speed. Transportation decisions may affect the viability of Mount Pleasant businesses, and provide opportunities or barriers to community interests in enhancing the “livability” and attractiveness of Mount Pleasant.
Traffic Circulation	The Community recognizes the challenges faced by urban neighborhoods in balancing the needs of residents and businesses within the community with the need to provide access into and through the community; particularly on roadways designated as principal and minor arterials, which are both residential streets which also support cross-town access for commuters, bus routes, and other traffic. The existing roadway network and circulation patterns have evolved over decades. While this legacy present some formidable challenges with respect to transportation; it is also an important factor that created and to some extent, sustains the urban neighborhood feel that residents value.
Neighborhood Identity	The community places a high priority on addressing problems and opportunities for improving the streetscape and appearance of Mount Pleasant, in a way that recognizes and celebrates the historic character of the community, and will help Mount Pleasant evolve and reach its full potential as a viable, vibrant, urban neighborhood.
Streetscape	Improving the streetscape, particularly in and around the Mount Pleasant Street business area is important to the community. Improved, attractive sidewalk surfaces, street lighting, trash receptacle, tree boxes, increased green space, and other elements are essential to creating a more attractive, comfortable environment. Public seating in parks and among Mount Pleasant Street would benefit businesses and encourage pedestrian activity.
Parking	Lack of adequate parking in neighborhoods and in the Mt. Pleasant business area were frequently cited as important issues. Specific problem areas identified included making more effective use of existing parking resources, seeking options for increasing the supply of parking for residents and to support the current and future needs of business owners, employees and patrons. Parking turn-over and enforcement, particularly for short-term and metered parking were cited as concerns by residents and business owners.

Multi-Modal Transportation	The community identified the need to support and encourage decreased dependence on motor vehicles, and move towards an approach to transportation that balances the needs of all elements of the community and all modes of travel.
School Areas	Maintaining the safety of school children, while maintaining mobility in and around schools is also an issue. Traffic congestion associated with picking up and dropping off students in the morning and evening.
Parks and Public Spaces	Additional public spaces are needed in Mount Pleasant. Existing parks are too small to support a community the size of Mount Pleasant. Parks, (including Lamont Park and Harvard Park) are poorly maintained and need repair. Problems include the condition, design and availability of seating in the park, lighting in and near the park, increased green space in the park, lack of bicycle paths, and improvements that would increase the health and appearance of trees and other landscaping features. By virtue of its location, Lamont Park is a key element in efforts to improve the streetscape and appearance of the community. Possible expanded functions to enrich community life include outdoor movies, farmers markets, festivals, and allowing commercial uses, such as vendors serving coffee or selling magazines and flowers at key times of the day. Public restrooms should also be considered.
Delivery and Service Vehicle Access	Delivery and service vehicle access along Mount Pleasant Street is a high-priority concern for business owners and residents. Delivery trucks and service vehicles (like trash trucks) contribute to traffic snarls and safety issues along that street. A shortage of metered (short term) parking is an on-going problem for patrons and employees of businesses.