

MEDIA RELEASE



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Task Force Releases Report on Security Design in the Nation's Capital Recommends Limited Use of Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, DC – An Interagency Security Task Force, formed by the National Capital Planning Commission, recommended today that Pennsylvania Avenue remain closed to normal city traffic, but be opened to a Circulator—a new transit system being planned for the downtown area—that would permit a limited use of Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House.

The Task Force concluded that legitimate security concerns justify the closure of Pennsylvania Avenue to normal vehicular traffic, but went on to say that controlled and secure vehicles, such as a Circulator, would help restore a vital cross-town transportation link and once more offer visitors and residents the experience of riding in front of the White House.

The recommendation was just one of a number of proposals the Task Force presented today to members of the National Capital Planning Commission which voted in favor of forwarding the recommendations to the Administration and to Congress. The proposals are included in the Task Force's report, *Designing for Security in the Nation's Capital*.

The Task Force looked closely at a full range of planning issues and security needs for the Nation's Capital since it was formed in March. After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the need intensified for a comprehensive urban design plan that provides adequate security while at the same time preserving the historic beauty of the Nation's Capital.

“The Nation's Capital was designed to reflect the spirit and accessibility of America, but today Washington looks like we are a nation in fear,” said Security Task Force Chairman Richard Friedman. “Washington's streets and public spaces have become an unsightly jumble of fences and barriers, a situation we must address if we wish to remain as an open and democratic society.”

The Task Force also concluded that additional east-west transportation capacity will be required to support the city's continued growth and vitality on a long-term basis. In order to address this need, the Task Force recommended serious consideration of a tunnel within the Pennsylvania Avenue or the E Street corridor, combined with a Circulator and a wide application of traffic management improvements.

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The recommendations offered in the report are the result of widespread cooperation between federal and District governments, including the Department of Justice, the Mayor's office, the U.S. Secret Service, the Department of Transportation, the Commission of Fine Arts, the Architect of the Capitol, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. NCPC also engaged the participation of the Federal City Council and the services of nationally recognized security, transportation, and urban design consultants.

"We all share a common goal in our desire to implement appropriate precautions and safety measures while at the same time preserving Washington's historic urban design and streetscape," said NCPC Chairman John V. Cogbill, III. "The National Capital Planning Commission has a unique statutory role in planning for the Nation's Capital, including the White House. We are up to the challenge of designing a comprehensive urban design framework that will set a benchmark for security design throughout the Nation's Capital and one which could be a model for other capital cities around the world."

"The task force recommendations recognize the importance of openness in a democratic society. I have always supported the reopening of Pennsylvania Avenue," said DC Mayor Anthony Williams. "The report recommends partial reopening at this time, and consideration of full reopening in the future. It also urges that federal funding be available to make immediate transportation improvements to our downtown."

The Security Task Force first convened on March 23, 2001 and met more than a dozen times to examine a wide range of security and design issues. The Task Force reached consensus on a number of key proposals, which are intended to dramatically improve the streetscape environment of the Monumental Core and provide a model for successfully integrated streetscape and security design.

Task Force proposals include implementing transportation improvements; design and construction of a landscaped, civic space along the Pennsylvania Avenue right-of-way in front of the White House; and preparation of an integrated Urban Design and Security Plan for Washington's entire Monumental Core, which will identify permanent security and streetscape improvements to be constructed over the next three to five years. The report identifies four high priority projects for the first phase of planning and development. They include Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, the Washington Monument, Pennsylvania Avenue between 3rd and 15th Streets and the Department of Justice Building in the Federal Triangle (see attached sheet for summary of key proposals).

The Task Force also recommends the reopening of E Street, which was closed after the September 11, 2001 attack, as soon as possible and urges that in the future, street closures not be relied upon as a primary security measure.

Task Force members also addressed the many temporary measures installed throughout the Monumental Core that are now surrounding national monuments, public buildings and major avenues with little regard for the appearance of Washington's historic landmarks. The National Capital Planning Commission has become increasingly concerned about the hodge-podge of solutions that have no aesthetic continuity or integrity as each federal agency responds to its own individual security needs. The report provides some initial guidelines for the design of security measures, including gatehouses, terraces, walls, raised planting beds, trees and planters, walls and fencing, posts and bollards.

“We must find creative ways to ensure that our public places are safe and accessible, while preserving the magnificent legacy of Washington's historic L'Enfant and McMillan Plans,” said Friedman. We need to develop ways to ensure security but maintain Washington as one of the most admired capital cities in the world.”

The Task Force called for NCPC to prepare an integrated Urban Design and Security Plan for Washington's entire Monumental Core and identify permanent security and streetscape improvements to be developed over the next three to five years. The plan would be coordinated with City officials and with appropriate governmental agencies.

The National Capital Planning Commission is the federal government's central planning agency in the District of Columbia and surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region. It also reviews the design of federal construction projects, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.

In addition to Chairman Richard Friedman, other members serving on the Task Force are Commission Chairman John V. Cogbill, III; Interior Secretary Gale Norton, General Services Administrator Stephen A. Perry, District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams, and District of Columbia Council Chairman Linda Cropp.

There are twelve members on the full NCPC Commission. In addition to those Task Force members listed above, the Commission includes presidential appointee Robert A. Gaines; mayoral appointees Dr. Patricia Elwood and Arrington Dixon; and ex-officio members Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld; Senate Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Joseph Lieberman; and House Government Reform Committee Chairman Dan Burton.

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