

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## **NCPC and Downtown BID Convene K Street Urban Design Charrette**

**Washington, DC** – The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Downtown Business Improvement District (DBID) will convene a three-day charrette with transportation and urban design experts to examine possible design solutions for K Street from 11th Street to 21st Street in Northwest Washington. This important east-west thoroughfare, one of the District’s major streets, suffers from serious traffic congestion and a lack of amenities that befit its role as a transit corridor and a location for many of Washington’s best known businesses, restaurants, and shops.

The three-day event will include informational briefings, walking and driving tours, and interviews with various K Street stakeholders. Panelists will have a full day to develop concepts, which will then be presented to NCPC, DBID, District agencies, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and other interested stakeholders on Friday morning.

Building upon a recent District Department of Transportation (DDOT) study that examined the possibility of creating bus-only lanes on K Street between 11th and 21st Streets, NW, NCPC and the Downtown BID developed the charrette with four goals in mind:

1. Assess potential transportation alternatives from an urban design perspective.
2. Strengthen K Street’s design image to better reflect its stature and importance to the city.
3. Identify public amenities and other features that would benefit the corridor’s workers, transit customers, residents, and visitors.
4. Propose an urban design concept that incorporates a transitway into the existing road and creates a more pedestrian and business-friendly environment.

“The proposed reconstruction of K Street to incorporate a transitway presents a significant urban design opportunity,” said NCPC Executive Director, Patricia Gallagher. “Although K Street is recognized as the heart of Washington’s business district, it lacks the strong urban design presence that is appropriate for the power center of the nation’s capital.”

“K Street is one of the most prominent streets in Washington,” said Cy Paumeir, an urban design adviser with DBID. “This charrette will enable us to hear from urban design experts and local stakeholders as we try to develop a common vision for the future of this street.”

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To present attendees and panel members with a broad overview, the Wednesday morning charrette briefing will include various presentations. They include the following:

- K Street Project Vision – Dan Tangherlini, Director, DDOT
- Regional Transit Perspective – Edward Thomas, Assistant General Manager, WMATA
- District Planning Perspective – Toni Griffin, Deputy Director of Revitalization Planning, DCOP
- Current/Future K Street Development – Gerry Widdicombe, Director of Economic Development, DBID
- K Street Transitway Study – Abi Lerner, Consultant & Project Manager, DMJM + Harris
- K Street Urban Design - Cy Paumier, Urban Designer, DBID

K Street, along with Massachusetts Avenue east of Mount Vernon Square, provides a major east-west connection from Georgetown to Union Station. However, in this corridor there is no continuous transit service that connects these two destinations with downtown and the city's new Convention Center. The numerous connections, bus routes, and stops can be confusing to those not accustomed to using them.

“The District of Columbia has one of the largest central business districts in the nation, yet there is no single, high performance transit link to serve the workers, shoppers, convention attendees, and other visitors who travel this central core,” said District Department of Transportation Director Dan Tangherlini. “The city's goal is to put in place a system of transit, roadway, and infrastructure enhancements that would improve the transit situation and pedestrian mobility, and promote a great street.”

The main transit improvements recommended in a proposed K Street transitway study jointly conducted by DDOT and WMATA include:

1. Construction of a dedicated busway on K Street between Washington Circle and Mount Vernon Square;
2. Provision of exclusive curbside bus lanes on Massachusetts Avenue between H Street and Union Station; and
3. The new Downtown Circulator, a low-cost, hop-on/hop-off transit system first proposed in NCPC's 1997 Legacy Plan, which is now in the development phase.

The design teams participating in this week's K Street charrette will release their findings during a “report out” presentation to be held on Friday, July 23, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at NCPC's Washington offices at 401 9th Street, NW, North Lobby, Suite, 500. The recommendations will be then be considered by the District Department of Transportation during their K Street redesign planning.

*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 projects and memorials, oversees long-range planning for future development, and monitors capital investment by federal agencies.*