

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

S. Wood

NCPC File No. 0348



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN: HIGHWAY TRUST FUND FISCAL YEARS 2009-2014

Submitted by the Mayor of the District of Columbia

August 28, 2008

Abstract

The Commission is providing comments to the Mayor and Council of the District of Columbia on the Highway Trust Fund component of the District's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) for Fiscal Years (FY) 2009-2014. The Commission's federal-interest recommendations note that the overall program supports federal interests; and many projects require further coordination with NCPC and other federal agencies.

Commission Action Requested

Approval of comments to the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8723 (b).

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Commends the inclusion of many projects that support federal interests such as:

- Contributing to the image of the nation's capital.
- Improving the efficiency, safety, and reliability of the transportation system.
- Promoting improved air quality for the region.
- Respecting and enhancing the historic character of the nation's capital, including streets and streetscapes.

Requests that the District of Columbia further coordinate projects as appropriate with the Commission and with federal agencies whose property or operations may be affected, pursuant to Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. § 8722 (b) (1) and/or § 8722 (e)), along

with regional agencies, as follows:

- In general, many projects and studies will require coordination with the Federal Highway Administration, the National Park Service, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, as well as review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) should coordinate with these agencies to determine additional requirements.
- The following transportation-related general areas and topics are of special interest to the Commission, and should be coordinated with NCPC on an ongoing basis:
 - The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative area, and particularly the South Capitol Street Corridor.
 - The Monumental Core.
 - Signage systems, particularly those that affect major gateways to the District of Columbia and the Monumental Core.
 - The Streetcar Initiative.
- The following specific projects should be coordinated with the Commission and other federal agencies, as noted:

Agencies, with abbreviations and relevant facilities:

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - National Arboretum
 Department of the Air Force (DAF) - Bolling Air Force Base
 Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) - Florida/NY Avenue headquarters
 Architect of the Capitol (AOC) - Capitol Grounds, including power plant
 Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) - facility at North Capitol Street
 Department of the Army (DOA) -- Corps of Engineers (rivers and reservoirs);
 Fort McNair
 Department of Energy (DOE) - L'Enfant Plaza headquarters
 General Services Administration (GSA) -- Southeast Federal Center, St. Elizabeths
 Hospital, and other facilities
 Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (KC)
 National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)
 National Gallery of Art (NGA) -- Mall museums, sculpture garden
 National Park Service (NPS) -- various parks throughout DC
 Department of the Navy (DON) -- Washington Navy Yard, Anacostia Annex,
 Potomac Annex
 U.S. Postal Service (USPS) -- headquarters (L'Enfant Plaza)
 U.S. Secret Service (USSS) -- White House vicinity
 Smithsonian Institution (SI) -- various Mall museums, National Zoo
 Department of State (DOS) -- headquarters
 Department of Transportation (DOT) – Southeast Fed Center headquarters

<u>Page #</u>	<u>Project site/name</u>	<u>Coordinating Agency</u>
83, 89,90,111	South Capitol Street improvements/studies	AOC, NCPC, NPS
87	Maine Ave. Water St. Access Traffic Imprv	NCPC
265	Riverwalk projects	USDA, DOA, GSA, NCPC, NPS, DON
82,109, 110	Whitehurst Freeway and lower K St.	NCPC, NPS
169	Rehab L'Enfant Promenade	DOE, NCPC, NPS, USPS
120	Theodore Roosevelt Bridge project	DOA, KC, NCPC, NPS , DON
189	Streetscape Improvements	NCPC
190	Reconstruction of Columbus Circle	NCPC
194	Historic Streets and Alleys	NCPC
224	GIS Underground Utility Mapping	NCPC, NPS
227	Kennedy Center, Concept Study	NCPC, NPS
236	Historic Heritage Trail	NCPC
254	Federal Road Resurfacing	NCPC,NPS

- The following specific projects should be coordinated with other federal agencies, as noted:

<u>Page #</u>	<u>Project site/name</u>	<u>Coordinating Agency</u>
66	Oxon Run Park Trail Improvements	NPS, NCPC
67	Rock Creek Park Trail Improvements	NPS, NCPC
101	New York and Florida Ave. Intersection	ATF, NPS, NCPC
128	I-295 Bridge Over S. Capitol Street	DOA, NCPC
159, 160	Military Rd. / upper 16th St. NW projects	NPS
193,244	18th St. NW reconstruction, P to S Sts.	NPS
198	Klinge Rd. near Connecticut Ave. projects	NPS
197, 198	Benning Rd. NE reconstruction	NPS

Notes the requirement for Commission review of several categories of projects, including:

- Acquisition or disposition of land or buildings by the DC government (40 U.S.C. § 8722 (b) (1) and § 8734 (a)).
- Land and building development projects by the DC government, including master plans, that affect the exterior of a structure or its grounds (40 U.S.C. §8722 (b) (1) and § 8722(e)).

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The District of Columbia's Highway Trust Fund (HTF) program is a part of the Capital Improvements Program that was prepared as part of the Mayor's FY 2009 Proposed Budget and Financial Plan (FYs 2009-2014). The Budget and Financial Plan is sent to the Council of the District of Columbia for review and adoption, and then to Congress for review and enactment through federal legislation. The Commission's review is pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8723 (b), which specifies that "...each year, the Mayor of the District of Columbia shall submit to the Commission a copy of the multiyear capital improvements plan for the District of Columbia.... The Commission has 30 days in which to comment on the plan but may not change or disapprove of the plan."

The HTF program includes transportation projects that are funded through a cost-sharing arrangement with the federal government, under a program administered by the Federal Highway Administration. The HTF program also includes projects funded through the District's Local Maintenance Trust Fund, which is funded through local fees and taxes. The HTF program includes capital expenses anticipated for the next six budget years, including near-term expenses for FY 2009 that are part of the currently proposed FY 2009 budget. The six-year HTF budget includes \$1.1 billion in expenditures. For reference purposes, the HTF also reports budget allocations from prior years for ongoing projects. The HTF includes a wide range of transportation projects, such as planning studies, maintenance and repair, beautification, safety improvements, new construction, training and education programs, signage, mapping, databases, support facilities, signals and operations, and emergency funds

The HTF projects are administered through the D.C. Department of Transportation (DDOT). The HTF program notes that DDOT "is responsible for the implementation of all capital improvements to streets, highways, and bridges (except those under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service ... and the Architect of the Capitol)."

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Most of the projects contained in the District's proposed HTF program are rehabilitation projects or projects to address deficiencies in, or improve the safety of, existing infrastructure; to improve the aesthetics, safety, convenience, and efficiency of the transportation system; or to undertake studies for major long-range transportation improvements. Maintenance and rehabilitation projects may have few impacts on the federal establishment, provided that the planning, construction process, and detailed designs are coordinated with federal agencies that are responsible for nearby properties. As described below, many projects will serve to promote a variety of federal interests; and a large number of projects will require coordination with the Commission and the appropriate federal department or agency, to prevent or minimize any adverse impact on federal property, access of federal employees and the public to federal facilities, or other operational needs of the federal government.

Many of the HTF projects will promote broad federal interests:

- Image of the nation's capital.

A large portion of the HTF projects involve prominent locations, where the proposed improvements -- in addition to their transportation benefits -- will also enhance the overall image of the nation's capital.

Examples include improvements to major gateways -- such as New York Avenue NE, 16th Street NW, Pennsylvania Avenue SE, and the 14th Street Bridge -- as well as improvements in the vicinity of the Monumental Core. Additional enhancements to the capital's image include the investment in signage, streetscape elements, and the maintenance and planting of street trees.

- Efficiency, safety, and reliability of the transportation system.

The successful operation of the federal government is dependent on the success of the transportation system, for the movement of employees and visitors, and for emergency needs. The full range of HTF projects, ranging from bridge repairs to signal timing to workforce training, are critical to achieving this federal interest.

- Air quality.

Many projects support the reduction of transportation-related air pollution, such as by promoting bicycle and pedestrian amenities, supporting transit, and reducing congestion. These efforts are important at both the local and regional levels for improving the air quality of the nation's capital.

- Historic districts.

Several projects relate to historic districts that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The continued investment in these areas, with design that is appropriate to the historic settings, helps to preserve and promote their recognized federal significance. In all streetscape work in historic districts, and in the immediate vicinity of individual historic properties, appropriate standards for design and review should be followed.

Many projects in the HTF relate to areas of special federal planning interest and specific federal properties and operations. These include:

- The Anacostia Waterfront Initiative area, and particularly the South Capitol Street corridor.

The Commission has been cooperating with the DC government in the planning of this area, and projects in this vicinity should be coordinated with the Commission to assure the continued success of these planning efforts. Examples include studies of the South Capitol Street corridor and future replacement of the Douglass Bridge, and a study of other Anacostia River crossings. Several federal agencies control property that may be affected by projects in this area, including DOAF, DOA, GSA, NPS, and DON.

- Transit Development, including the Anacostia light rail demonstration project (DDOT).

NCPC supports the expansion throughout DC of transportation options that will benefit residents, workers, and visitors. However, NCPC is concerned with the visual impacts of the proposed streetcar technology, which operates on overhead wires. Washington, and particularly the part of the District in the L'Enfant City, is built on a plan of open space and views and vistas. These urban design elements are supported by longstanding laws prohibiting overhead wires, including electricity and trolley wires, in the L'Enfant City and in Georgetown. The Anacostia Demonstration Project is outside of the L'Enfant City and Georgetown, and NCPC has not objected to it. However, future streetcar corridors may be planned in areas where open vistas are protected by prohibitions against overhead wires. District of Columbia Street Car projects must be submitted for review to NCPC, and NCPC encourages the District to coordinate as well with other federal agencies managing land that may be affected by these projects, including GSA, NPS, and DOD. NCPC also encourages the District to conduct system-wide planning and public outreach that identifies corridor locations and technology options.
- Projects involving signage.

The Commission has joined with other agencies in an effort to coordinate the many types of signage in the city, including signage for traffic, pedestrian wayfinding, identification of buildings and installations, and special national and regional attractions (such as memorials, stadiums, and the Convention Center). Signage proposed as part of the HTF should be coordinated with the Commission to assure the continued success of this multi-agency effort.
- Projects affecting federal workplaces or other federal operations.

Many projects are in the immediate vicinity of federal facilities that are in active use. Examples include the National Arboretum; the Armed Forces Retirement Home; military facilities such as Bolling Air Force Base and the Washington Navy Yard; various reservoirs operated by the Army Corps of Engineers, as well as rivers; the U.S. Capitol grounds; the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; Smithsonian museums; the Veterans Hospital; and headquarters for the U.S. Postal Service and the Departments of Energy and State. Additionally, some federal property is planned for future development that will generate transportation needs that should be taken into account in current planning, such as the Department of Homeland Security campus at Saint Elizabeths, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

Improvements to the transportation system will benefit these federal operations in the long run. However, DDOT should coordinate with the appropriate agencies and NCPC to ensure that any construction work maintains adequate access (for vehicles, transit, and pedestrians), and avoids damage to federal property; that streetscape and landscape work is coordinated with the design plans of the federal installations; and

that transportation planning takes into account the near- and long-term needs of the federal installations.

- Projects affecting federal parkland.

NPS controls many park areas throughout the District of Columbia, ranging from large areas such as Rock Creek Park to circles and small triangular parks. Many of these are in the immediate vicinity of proposed HTF projects and studies, and have the potential to affect parkland, either inadvertently or through necessary access for construction and staging. These projects should be coordinated with NPS to assure that parkland is appropriately protected during construction and, where feasible, enhanced as a result of these projects. Signage-related projects should also be coordinated with NPS, which provides several types of signage in many parts of the District of Columbia. NCPC, in coordination with the District Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Planning, and the National Park Service, has initiated a study of parks and open spaces in the District. Early findings from this study identify the importance of improving the quality of existing parkland and facilities, and identify the need to address park demands created by growth.

- Projects around the Monumental Core

NCPC, in coordination with the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, has initiated the Framework Plan, a study that aims to ease the demand for space on the Mall, while enhancing urban spaces throughout the city. This plan has identified road, bridge, transit, trail and public space improvements. Continued coordination between the District, NCPC, USCFA and other stakeholders to advance these concepts is encouraged.

The Commission reviews the Highway Trust Fund Program as part of the CIP process and appreciates receiving this at the earliest opportunity. The Commission encourages the District in efforts to further coordinate the content of the District's two capital improvements program documents and their release dates.

The Commission's review authority may be applicable to some components of the HTF projects, and DDOT should submit these projects to the Commission at the appropriate stage of detailed siting and design work. NCPC's authority for DC government projects covers: acquisition or disposition of land or buildings; land and building development projects (including master plans, such as neighborhood and corridor studies); and alterations affecting parks or the exterior of buildings or their grounds. DDOT should consult with Commission staff to determine the submission requirements for particular projects.

PROJECT CONFORMANCE

National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act is not applicable to this submission, due to the Commission's advisory role in providing comments, and the general nature of the HTF proposals.

National Historic Preservation Act

The National Historic Preservation Act is not applicable to this submission, due to the Commission's advisory role in providing comments, and the general nature of the HTF proposals.