Resolution Regarding Lifting No Left Turn and Adding a Traffic Signal at the Intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Observatory Circle NW

On February 11, 2013, ANC3B passed a resolution in favor of lifting the no left turn restrictions during rush hours at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Observatory Circle NW.

Since then DDOT has determined that the intersection currently is unsafe, reporting an average of 20 collisions per year involving turns along Massachusetts Avenue between Observatory Circle/34th Street and 36th/Fulton Streets. DDOT counted 245 vehicles per hour making an illegal left turn onto Observatory Circle from Massachusetts Avenue during the PM rush.

DDOT’s assessment is that lifting the no left turn during rush hours can only be accomplished safely by the addition of a traffic signal to manage the flow of traffic at the intersection.

ANC3B supports lifting the no left turn restrictions at Observatory Circle during rush hours for the following reasons:

- With the current restrictions, left turns from westbound Massachusetts Avenue are prohibited during rush hours at any point between Sheridan Circle and Idaho Avenue, a distance of 2.5 miles, except for the sharply angled turn at Fulton/36th Street, making it impossible for outbound traffic in the mornings and evenings to get to Glover Park, Cathedral Heights, or southbound Wisconsin Avenue by any direct or legal route.

- The lack of any legal left turn in that area forces cars to either turn illegally or turn at the one unmarked left turn, at Fulton/36th streets and then cut through the residential neighborhood of Massachusetts Avenue Heights to get to Glover Park, Cathedral Heights or southbound Wisconsin Avenue. Increased traffic on the narrow residential streets is dangerous for pedestrians and parked cars.

- The no left turn restrictions until Idaho Avenue turn that section of Idaho into a high-speed high volume road during rush hours as outbound cars finally can turn left legally there and then loop back on Cathedral Avenue in order to get legally to Wisconsin Avenue or other streets to the south.

ANC3B supports the addition of a traffic signal at the intersection of Observatory Circle and Massachusetts Avenue for the following reasons:

- DDOT experts have determined that a traffic signal is required to safely control the flow of traffic at the intersection. We expect DDOT will time the lights so that traffic flows smoothly and queues at the signal do not cause undue problems.
• A signal will help slow traffic coming down the hill on inbound Massachusetts Avenue before it gets to the Observatory Circle intersection. Speeding traffic in this location is a perennial concern of nearby residents, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

While ANC3B does not believe traffic will greatly increase during rush hours on Observatory Circle when the no left turn restriction is lifted, because so many vehicles seem to be making left turns there illegally now, we would support traffic calming measures, if needed, particularly after the point where Observatory Circle turns into Calvert Street. Because of the poor sight distance, pedestrians using the crosswalk at 36th Street to Guy Mason Recreation Center are vulnerable to drivers who don’t see or respect the stop sign at the intersection of 36th and Calvert Streets.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that ANC3B urges DDOT to move forward with plans to lift the no left turn during both morning and evening rush hours and to add a traffic signal at the intersection of Observatory Circle and Massachusetts Avenue NW.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chairman of ANC3B and her designee are authorized to represent the Commission on this matter.

This resolution was approved by a vote of 4-0 at a duly noticed public meeting of ANC3B on May 11, 2017, at which a quorum was present (A quorum is 3 of the 5 sitting members.)

Jackie Blumenthal, Chairman  Ann Mladinov, Secretary