

WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

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Testimony by
Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities to
the Washington Area Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) regarding:

Hearing No. 169, Docket No. R05-2

Proposed Parking Reduction, Relocation
and Garage Construction

In Support of Proposed Parking Reduction at the Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station

July 26, 2005

My name is Cheryl Cort and I am the Executive Director of the Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities -- or WRN. WRN is a non-profit organization that advocates transportation investments, land use policies, and neighborhood designs that enhance existing communities and the environment of the Washington, D.C. region.

WRN has worked extensively with community members around the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station. We have conducted workshops, walking audits and developed a set of recommendations to make the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station more accessible to the community that it serves. We have also supported the detailed analysis conducted by D.C. Office of Planning which demonstrated that many more Metro riders could be served by improving walk, bicycle and bus access to the Metrorail station at the same cost of replacing the 387 commuter parking spaces.

Support Commuter Parking Reduction; Invest in Improved Walk, Bicycle and Bus Access

We strongly support the proposed reduction in commuter parking. This proposal makes sense for several reasons.

- *Since Metro commuter parking mostly serves out-of-state Metro riders, D.C. residents should not be required to pay for this costly form of transit access.* Most commuter parking at this station is used by out-of-state park and riders. According to two weekday license plate surveys conducted by my organization, 60 percent of vehicles parked in the Metro lot were from out-of-state. Since replacement parking will be paid with D.C. funds in the form of tax increment financing (TIF), commuter parking is a subsidy from D.C. taxpayers to mostly out-of-state-drivers.
- *Full replacement of commuter parking, as a major investment for rider access at the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station, is no longer justified.* The large amount of surface parking at Rhode Island Avenue Metro station might have been justified when it was the terminus in 1976, but today many other Metro stations along the Red and Green lines can better serve

the park and ride functions. The station should be treated as an urban station like the adjacent station of Brookland, which offers no long term parking, but enjoys substantially higher ridership. The Rhode Island Avenue Metro station serves an urban neighborhood where many households do not drive or own cars. The proposed development project would generate approximately 1279 transit trips a day through new residential and retail uses. This is a substantial increase over the ridership from the existing 340 all day parking spaces, generating about 360 riders.¹

- *Alternative modes of access – walk, bicycle and bus – would serve more people, improve Metro’s bottom line, and better serve the surrounding neighborhood.* This is a much fairer approach to serving the needs of all community residents and transit riders, as 40 to nearly 60 percent of the families in the surrounding neighborhoods do not have access to a car (see Table 1). More investment should be directed to creating a safe and inviting station area environment with housing and shops, good walking connections to surrounding neighborhoods, and improved bicycle facilities and access, and bus service. In addition to this being more equitable, this approach will also provide the most benefits to improve safety, and support economic revitalization.

Parking is an extremely costly and inefficient way to provide Metro access. At \$15,000 - \$20,000 per space for construction costs alone, we appreciate that the D.C. government has carefully evaluated the costs and benefits of investing in replacing all the commuter parking which would amount to \$8 million. A 45 percent reduction in commuter parking will save over \$2 million. We would like to see this cost savings invested in access to Metro that would increase ridership, revenues and enhance the surrounding community. First and foremost, \$2 million is needed to improve walking access to Metro. We recommend that funds be devoted to improving the pedestrian environment along Rhode Island Avenue, particularly between 4th St., NE and the Metro station (see attached streetscape recommendations). Also, funding for a safe pedestrian crossing from the Metropolitan Branch Trail and the Metro station across the railroad tracks is needed.

Quality of the Bus Passenger Waiting Area

We also want to make a comment regarding the bus passenger waiting area. We are concerned that the quality of the waiting experience for bus passengers is the lowest priority of the developer of the joint development site, and not a sufficient priority of WMATA. We ask that the placement of bus passenger waiting facilities under the garage be reconsidered as exhaust from buses, potential for obstructed site lines and obscured visibility and increased hiding places could make the bus waiting experience less pleasant and potentially more dangerous. Increased amenities and conveniences should at the least be provided to bus passengers. We suggest a small retail kiosk such as the one at the Friendship Heights bus terminal, and real time/next bus information displays for each bus route and other amenities to make the bus waiting experience more pleasant and safe.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

¹ Rhode Island Avenue Parking Analysis, January 2003 Draft, USEPA & DCOP, prepared by Nelson/Nygaard Consulting.

Table 1 – Household Access to a Vehicle

Census Tract	Boundaries	Households with no access to a vehicle
87.02	Rhode Island Ave. to NY Ave., 2 nd St, NE to rail road tracks	52.6%
92.04	Edgewood Terrace to Rhode Island Avenue	57.8%
93.02	18 th Place, NE, Reed St., Franklin to Rhode Island Ave.	39.0%
91.02	Home Depot site to New York Avenue	47.6%

Source: 2000 Census – Table DP-4 Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics: 2000