

Now is the Time: The Whitehurst Should Come Down ***Traffic would move faster and more efficiently***

Georgetown now enjoys a rare opportunity to improve its waterfront, facilitate access to it, and alleviate the maddening daily traffic jams clogging M Street.

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has been evaluating replacement of the Whitehurst land bridge with a ramp connecting the existing part of the bridge west of the centerline of Key Bridge with a ramp joining K Street at 34th. To the east, K would become a five or six lane boulevard. (Additional options include a ramp from Key Bridge to connect to K at 33rd, enhancing the intersection of 27th and K to improve access to and from Georgetown and downtown, and building a tunnel under K from 33rd to either 29th or Washington Circle.)

Phase I of the study is almost complete. DDOT's consultants, DMJM Harris, used 17 evaluation criteria identified by local citizens to evaluate 22 jointly developed alternatives to the Whitehurst. *Of the 22, 15 scored higher than the current "no build" option (= doing nothing) required by law as a basis for comparison.*

The consultants subjected the top four alternatives to a series of traffic simulation analyses using the Federal Highway Administration software model to determine potential impacts on peak hour traffic for the year 2030. **Depending on the alternative selected, drivers would save almost a quarter of an hour and the worst of the few increases would be a mere 3 minutes.** For example, on one alternative, travel time for 7 of the 8 trips measured would decrease an average of almost 5 minutes (to a maximum of 12 minutes) with one increase of less than 2 minutes.

Phase I of the study will end this year. Phase II will comprise 18 months of further analysis including an assessment of the environmental impact of the four alternatives, a recommended alternative, and detailed costing.

The Whitehurst was built at the end of WWII as a land bridge across Georgetown's industrial waterfront. Today, the waterfront is a major destination. Replacing it with an avenue is a win-win scenario which would improve access to the waterfront's park, many garages and attractions, and improve traffic flow 24/7. DDOT's important study makes the arguments for preserving the Whitehurst look increasingly tenuous.

- Ray Kukulski