



SECTION 5 OF THE VILLAGE OF CHEVY CHASE

December 11, 2023

Mr. Seifu Kerse, Area Engineer
Traffic Engineering Studies Section
Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations
Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Dear Mr. Kerse:

We write to thank you and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) for holding the public hearing on December 6 regarding the proposed Leland Street Access Restriction. We appreciate your time and the County's consideration of the issue.

As you are aware, almost all of the hearing attendees and the testimony provided were in opposition to the proposal, and the vast majority of the online comments (84%) also opposed the proposal. Similarly, Section 5 would like to reiterate our strong opposition to the proposal. We do not believe the restriction will be effective in easing the traffic congestion in this area, and we do not believe it is the best solution to the problem of commuter traffic. We also continue to be concerned that MCDOT would consider closing part of a municipal street (approximately one third of the homes on this portion of Leland Street and Leland Court fall within Section 5 boundaries) without the consent of the municipality. This is an alarming and significant departure from past policy.

Section 5 would like to again outline our specific concerns regarding the proposed restriction with updated information gained from the public hearing:

- First, as we have stated before, the restriction, at best, serves only an extremely limited portion of Leland Street. Without a similar restriction at Woodbine Street, there is nothing to stop commuters (nor navigation apps like Waze that will guide them to circumvent the restriction) from making the westbound turn on Woodbine from Brookville Road, the right turn on Glendale Road, and proceeding with the left back on to Leland. This does not solve the traffic problem for the west end of Leland Street near Connecticut Avenue.

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- Second, any one restriction to Leland will affect all the neighboring streets, and all the neighboring streets are substantially less equipped to handle additional traffic. These streets are all narrow – much narrower than Leland – and are essentially one lane due to street parking on the south side. Most homes on Woodbine and Williams also share driveways, which means that street parking is a necessity. The reality is that the physical layout of these streets is not suitable for a large volume of cars.
- Third, as the County has stated, there is no local traffic exception for turn restrictions. As a result, the turn restriction would apply to everyone, including Chevy Chase residents. Neighboring streets not only will need to absorb additional commuter traffic, but they also will receive all of this area’s residential traffic because Leland Street will no longer be a viable option for residents trying to access their homes.
- Fourth, although Section 5 (and potentially Section 3 and the Village of Chevy Chase) could theoretically choose to restrict turns from Brookville to other municipal streets, that approach would not make sense for our residents, Rollingwood residents, Section 3 residents, Village of Martin’s Additions residents, and Village of Chevy Chase residents. Everyone living between Brookville and Connecticut would be unable to use Brookville to access their homes during the mornings. They would instead have to use the already overcrowded Connecticut Avenue. And those who live east of Brookville would be unable to access Connecticut Avenue except by using East West Highway or Western Avenue.
- Fifth and most importantly, this turn restriction does not address the main reason for the issue: the persistent backup at the light at East West Highway going west toward Connecticut during the morning rush hours. MCDOT’s slide show at the hearing noted the intersection and light at East West and Connecticut currently have a grade of “E.” On MCDOT’s “A to F” scale, an “E” indicates that this particular intersection receives the second-worst grade possible and consistently presents a “moderate to excessive delay” for daily traffic. Respectfully, the County’s own data has repeatedly identified the root problem; we ask that the State Highway Association (SHA) and MCDOT not ignore these findings, and instead work on improving this intersection. If delays at this intersection were reduced, commuters would no longer find it necessary to use—and apps will no longer direct drivers to—Leland Street.

Section 5 is not advocating that MCDOT and SHA walk away from this hearing and do nothing. We agree that Leland and surrounding streets see too much cut-through traffic. Instead, we ask the various entities to address the problem in a comprehensive way. For example, a comprehensive solution could include additional speed humps on Leland Street, regular policing for speed and stop sign violations, more lanes at East West, changes to the light timing at East West, possible left turn restrictions to Connecticut during certain hours, or other traffic calming options. We urge SHA and MCDOT to focus on the whole problem and engage all the affected municipalities and associations in the discussion for answers.

Finally, we continue to stress to our County, State, and local leaders that there are real-world consequences when decisions are made to close other available commuter roads and lanes such as areas of Beach Drive and Connecticut Avenue both in Maryland and in the District of Columbia. Traffic studies that claim a limited local impact do not take into consideration the full scope of the issue. Many different entities (SHA, MCDOT, the National Park Service, and the District's Department of Transportation) are making isolated decisions that combine to create massive problems. Consultation across these groups should be mandatory. The SHA arterial roads in the Chevy Chase area are already overwhelmed. This, coupled with the increased development along the Connecticut Avenue corridor (multiple and continuing Chevy Chase Lake developments, the upcoming Corso Chevy Chase complex at the former 4-H Center, and possible plans to create a multi-floor residential building as part of a renovation to the Chevy Chase Library site) have contributed to ongoing and lengthy daily traffic congestion for commuters and residents alike. Responsible growth and development must include adequate plans for the long-term impact on roadways and infrastructure and proceed in a comprehensive manner to address traffic issues.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Section 5 of the Village of Chevy Chase Town Council

Gregory S. Chernack, Chair

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