

APPENDIX D

Stakeholder Interview Notes



Date/Time: June 8, 2012, 10:00am

Interviewee: Stephanie Brown, ACVA

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

Stakeholder Comments

- Given concerns about the process and outcome of the Motor Coach Task Force, there is a need for the *Union Street Corridor Study* to be fact-based and driven by data rather than opinion. Special effort should be made to ensure that everyone's perspective is heard, including local businesses.
- Local businesses rely on customers delivered by motor coaches. If the same number of customers arrived in single occupancy vehicles the impact on the surrounding area would likely be more significant.
- The highest impact of motor coaches is in a relatively short period of time in the year.
- When engaging local businesses, it will be important to create an environment and venue where they are comfortable discussing their needs. A public meeting is likely not where this type of discussion can occur.
- ACVA sponsors "shop talks" that may be a venue to reach businesses. Previous topics have included trolleys, tourism, marketing forums, and the "ABC's of Alexandria." They are generally casual conversations with local businesses and require only 2-3 three weeks' notice to arrange.
- There are not "huge problems" along Union Street today. It is a hub of activity so it is busy and there is traffic but it's generally not a significant issue. Parking is available; the issue is generally that people don't know where it is.
- Valet services along Union Street were suggested as a way to "market and brand" the area and distinguish it from other shopping and restaurant destinations. Insurance and staffing would need to be figured out. An option for this would for the city to license a company to provide valet parking, create 2-3 locations, and then charge around \$8 for valet services, which would utilize nearby parking garages on contract. This is done in other cities and it would cost more than parking on the street.
- The Potomac Riverboat Company is diligent about managing motor coaches.
- Some of the biggest issues in the area are pedestrians crossing the street mid-block and bikes not stopping at stop signs. A police presence at King Street and Union Street helps to improve conditions.
- The Old Town Parking Study Work Group is reconvening and the July meeting is scheduled for July 17.
- Parking is available in the area, people just don't know about it. People are not aware of the garages and they are not aware of the costs. Colonial Garages need to provide better cost information "out front." There is a plan to install lighted signs at the garage entrances but the cost information is the responsibility of the garages. This information will also be consolidated on the website, including costs and hours of operation.



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STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

- There is a concern about an imbalance of influence in planning processes. The study team will need a broad base of opinions. A small group of people may oppose all recommendations and they may impose their views to the economic detriment and sustainability of the city.
- Another concern is when citizens have input with the City Council concurrently with a study process. There is a need for the facts to be generated first and then for an education process to occur before politicians are forced to respond to citizen concerns. The Council needs to be reinforced and supported by facts and data in this process.
- Car/stroller and bike/car interactions have been observed, although there was skepticism expressed as to the role of government in controlling these interactions. There are issues “here and there” but it does not appear to be a significant concern.
- The full implication of changes needs to be understood before they are made to ensure that the proposed solutions are “proportionate to the issues at hand.”
- The Motor Coach Task Force generated a 65 page report, which is available on the website.
- There is a concern that influence is biased toward residents, at times to the detriment of businesses.
- There are not significant impacts of transit in the area. It does take cars off King Street. There is a TMPS survey available. An estimate has been made that the trolleys take around 100,000 cars off the road.
- National Harbor is bringing more people to Old Town. There are trolleys and water taxis available but they are not big enough to cause significant traffic concerns. The water taxis have a capacity of around 99 people and they are 20 minute intervals, so this does not create unmanageable influxes of pedestrians for example. There are estimates that visitor spending is up 10.8% because of National Harbor.
- Market Square has four motor coaches serving around 200 people.
- The Potomac Riverboat Company has various cruise opportunities. The biggest volumes of people are for pizza cruises with 300/400 students, which may mean 4-5 motor coaches at one time. The student focused cruises are seasonal though and only occur in March, April, May, and June. At these times there may be cruises 5 days/week. The rest of the year they are less frequent, and are primarily corporate functions.
- Colonial Tours can serve around 1,000 students; however, they provide police officers to enforce rules.
- It is important to recognize that citizens disagree with each other and that certain resident perspectives should not be taken to represent all citizens. It is also important to avoid a dynamic where it is the city versus residents.



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STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

- Loading and unloading is more of an issue than other things. The challenge is that “you can’t change the location of back doors.” There are issues with staff availability. FedEx and UPS trucks are the biggest annoyance for traffic in the area, more so than loading and unloading of local businesses.
- Cars crowding intersections is an issue.
- In the process, it is important to not start with an open brainstorming “fact free” discussion. A foundation of facts and information should be established to provide context for all discussions. It is also important to distinguish between the perspective and expectations of different roles. For instance, some perspectives are the opinions of citizens regarding quality of life issues. The staff role should be as experts with the knowledge base and expertise.

Follow-Up Opportunities

- The Old Town Business and Professional Association and ACVA can assist with engaging local businesses.
- Stephanie Brown will be leaving her position soon, but Loraine Lloyd and Mary Morris will be available to assist throughout the duration of our project.



Date/Time: June 14, 2012, 10:00am
Interviewee: Robert (Jay) Test, Union Street Public House

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

Stakeholder Comments

- The Union Street Public House is a family-owned business. Mr. Test is an attorney and has been in the area since the late 1960's.
- There used to be many bars in the area, but there were parking and noise issues so there was "push back." In the 1990's there were restrictions on the number of restaurants that could be located south of Washington Street. A restaurant collection tax was instituted, which is a 9% tax that is provided to the city. Since that time there has been a tension between the desire and need for tax receipts and resident opinions. There have been increasing numbers of residents and businesses but no parallel increases in roads or parking.
- The impact of parking on business needs to be considered.
- Traffic, parking and, specifically, the cost of parking impacts local businesses.
- Parking convenience is a critical issue, as customers can choose to go elsewhere. For example, at Shirlington, customers can pay by the hour as opposed to paying a flat fee for garage parking.
- There are many competing needs in the area including parking, traffic, deliveries, police, and trash pickup and there is not sufficient infrastructure to support all of these needs.
- Parking is a major concern as in other areas in the DC Metro area. On-street and garage parking offer different positive and negative impacts. The parking study noted that in some areas parking is at capacity while the garages are unoccupied. The parking work group is reconvening to further implement the recommendations in the previous report.
- Parking on one side of the street only for residents should be considered on some streets.
- Garages don't serve all restaurant customers in part because of the fee structure. A major concern is the \$7-8 flat fee rather than a pay-per-hour option.
- There is a concern about taking for granted that people will always want to visit Old Town, given that many other locations in the region are now competing for visitors and customers.
- Bicyclists that do not stop at stop signs are a significant concern.
- Parking is manageable at certain times of the day/week but not others. It is the most challenging from Thursday to Sunday.
- There are conflicts between different modes, for example bikes and cars. The biggest issues are at intersections.
- Sidewalk congestion is an issue, as are mid-block crossings. The main areas of concern are King Street, from Union to Fairfax.
- Cars speeding are not a major issue because of the congestion; bikes create more of a safety concern.



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Interviewee: Robert (Jay) Test, Union Street Public House

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

- There is a need for more enforcement, for example at King Street/Union Street. The police do not get out of their cars. There is a need for people directing traffic on a regular basis.
- Many of the businesses have access to an alley. Regarding deliveries, beer trucks deliver on Friday mornings. The bigger trucks come between 9:30-10am. The vendors are generally "in and out" by 10am.
- Motor coaches typically arrive around lunch. They generally do not create major issues.
- Big events in the area that have significant traffic impacts include the Red Cross Festival, arts events in September, and the Waterfront Festival.
- Cars travel slowly given the congestion in the area. Addressing mid-block crossings and improving pedestrian crossings could help.
- There is a need for businesses to be compatible with each other. For example, businesses that attract people early in the week should be identified, given current demands on traffic and parking in Old Town later in the week (from Thursday to Sunday).
- Buses do not help alleviate issues a great deal. The trolley to/from Metro is good. Adding a hotel will be difficult, especially given limitations in parking, deliveries, and the ability to accommodate larger events.
- Thursday to Sunday is the biggest issue. Monday through Thursday is manageable and there are fewer issues.
- The issue with the parking garages is not wayfinding, as people know where they are. The issue is the cost of the garages and the fact that you have to pay a flat fee as opposed to an hourly rate.
- The city owns one garage in Old Town.

Follow-Up Opportunities

- The members of the OTBPA communicate on a regular basis and a follow-up discussion can be arranged if desired.

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June 19, 2010

Daniel W Goodman
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Re: Union Street Study

Dear Dan,

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the information you are gathering for the Union Street study. My comments reflect my view and bias, but hopefully they will benefit your work.

There are some points that I wanted to cover on reflection. Again, my perceptions.

I would think that a study of Union Street at King would have to include such secondary elements as the effect that the Torpedo Factory has on the traffic, pedestrian and otherwise. You may have seen the oft quoted statistic that 400,000 visitors tour the Torpedo Factory annually. By my count it is open 360 days a year, from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm daily (later on Thursday). Three full motor coaches an hour, every hour, every day, would have to pull up in front of the Torpedo Factory to meet that projection. If that were the case, the traffic issues, both from the busses and the pedestrians, would be worse than they are.

My suspicion is that the Torpedo Factory attracts visitors in significant numbers seasonally, but in nowhere near the numbers quoted, and you will need to determine the ebb and flow of the facility demand to have a report that completely addresses the Union Street corridor.

National Harbor plays a role in the Union Street/Lower King street activities. I don't have a source for the number of visitors who leave National Harbor for Old Town, especially during the warm weather months, but based on our business I would think it is significant. This number may change dramatically if the casino contemplated for National Harbor comes to fruition.

Finally, I did not want to get into a debate on the phone with the City representative over parking. The City staff continues to see Old Town as an attraction that will draw visitors (see the Torpedo Factory projections) regardless of impediments such as weather and lack of parking and access. Old Town is not Tysons II.

Dan Goodman
June 18, 2012
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The new parking meter system was designed to allow visitors to more easily pay the increased parking fees by using credit cards, as they do in Arlington. The staff discussion was not about whether raising the rates in Old Town was a sound move in a recession, it was how to accommodate the visitor who would be paying the increased fee. Visitors found the new system annoying and cumbersome.

The City staff determined that encouraging visitors to use the frequently open garages in the area could be accomplished by the higher hourly meter fees, which could not extend beyond 2 hours, and by tagging the overtime visitor with a \$40 ticket. The \$40 penalty, on top of the annoying meter system and the increased rates, worked to encourage visitors to shop and dine elsewhere. And nowhere was this effect more noticeable than on lower King Street and Union Street.

In short, the one option the City staff did not consider was the one visitors frequently exercised, they did not come to lower Old Town.

And in an amazing reconsideration and revision of the City position on parking in lower Old Town, staff now cites the often vacant parking garages as evidence that the waterfront could accommodate new restaurants and boutique hotels. I think the garages are empty because their flat rate method does not work for the short term, single purpose visitor.

You do not have an enviable task. The Union Street/King Street intersection goes from vacant to immovable, depending on season, month, day and time. You also have many on staff and otherwise that rely on information, statistics, etc., that belie the reality of the intersection and what happens in real time. I trust a large part of your study will involve your presence at the intersection.

I am happy to contribute further if I can be of help,

Best regards,

Robert J Test



Date/Time: June 14, 2012, 11:00am
Interviewee: Lieutenant Juan Torres, Police Department

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

Stakeholder Comments

- Significant intersections in the study are King Street/Union Street and King Street/Lee Street. These intersections get blocked at times. Issues include driver impatience and bikes not stopping at the stop signs. The volumes of pedestrians, bikes traveling north on Union Street, and tour buses were also noted.
- There have been fewer complaints about bikes this year. A public education and enforcement campaign was undertaken recently and this may have had a positive impact. The campaign lasted for 2-3 weeks. Police stopped bikes and also utilized message boards for educational purposes, and eventually ticketed bicyclists.
- The police have extra officers stationed in the study area Friday and Saturday from 4pm to 3am. These officers are in identified “hot spot” areas.
- Traffic volumes and congestion are a concern.
- Monday through Friday is busy after 3pm and Saturday and Sunday are generally busy all day.
- The Police Department has 4-5 officers trained to serve on bike patrol for all of Old Town; more are expected in the future. The training includes 40 hours of class time, obstacle courses and maneuvering exercises and ultimately 15-20 miles of riding a day. The officers are also well versed in bike-related traffic laws and legal issues.
- The Police Department has around 3 years of crash data and can provide all incident reports.
- General education is needed for certain issues, for example about bikes stopping at stop signs and pedestrians stopping before they cross intersections. Cars “inching” into the intersection are a concern; however, the volume of pedestrians makes this, at times, unavoidable. Speeding is often minimized by the volume of pedestrians in the area.
- It was noted that it is the law for pedestrians to stop at the intersection before crossing.
- A car door being opened into a bicyclist has not been observed.
- April and May is spring break, and this is the time when there are the greatest concerns about pedestrians jaywalking between parked cars. The Police do not generally give tickets for pedestrians crossing mid-block.
- Regarding loading and unloading of trucks, there has been one complaint this year. There are generally more complaints about tour buses. Issues include loading/unloading in undesignated areas, blocking streets, and parking illegally.
- The study area has changed significantly over the years. It is busier and there are more people, in part because of National Harbor and the introduction of the boardwalk.
- Alcohol arrests are up, but this is likely because the Police are being more proactive about it. There is an alcohol crime connection, generally having to do with drinking in public.



Date/Time: June 14, 2012, 11:00am
Interviewee: Lieutenant Juan Torres, Police Department

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

- Tour bus issues include idling and illegally dropping off and picking up passengers. Most drivers know where the legal spots are, which include the 300 block of King Street, Market Square, and King Street/Washington Street. There are loading/unloading signs at these locations.
- At the 100 block of North Union Street (across from the Torpedo Factory), there are concerns about car/pedestrian interactions at the entrance to the parking garage and cars backing up onto Union Street.
- Signs and message boards are very helpful in educating and informing the public.
- There is a special events unit, with more officers providing increased traffic management as well as a greater presence at intersections and other locations.

Follow-Up Opportunities

- There is an officer that is trained in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPED), who is available to assist our study upon request.



Date/Time: August 7, 2012, 1:00pm
Interviewee: Charlotte Hall, Potomac Riverboat Company

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

Stakeholder Comments

- There is a need for local businesses to take responsibility and to become more actively involved in the traffic that they generate.
- Allowing motor coach parking under the Wilson Bridge (near Jones Point Park) should be reconsidered. While security concerns have been expressed, they may not be insurmountable and this parking location offers important benefits. Other locations such as the Masonic Temple, Del Ray, and on the West End may be available but because of their location are less viable.
- Enabling vehicles to turn around within Thompsons Alley should be considered, in part because this would take traffic and congestions off of Union Street.
- City vehicles should not be allowed to park on the unit block of King Street. These vehicles are generally not conducting business that requires them to be parked in this location.
- Several companies operate motor coaches in the study area but the others are not as actively involved in managing their traffic.
- The police have certified citizens to manage traffic.
- Long term parking for motor coaches is not as much of a problem as short term parking.
- The heaviest volumes of motor coaches are experienced from mid-March to mid-June; within these times Monday-Thursday are the busiest.
- A traffic signal at King and Union is not encouraged.
- Commuter bikers create the most serious safety concerns given their speed.
- Eliminating parking and allowing for delivery trucks and two lanes of traffic should be considered.
- Enforcing existing laws (and giving tickets) is critical.
- Replacing the existing plastic traffic diverter at the unit block of King Street with planters should be considered.
- Improvements on the Strand were discussed.
- A communal mechanism that enables businesses to pool resources to deal with traffic managements should be considered. A Business Improvement District concept has been discussed in the past; however, it was controversial and was not ultimately accepted.
- Parking enforcement officers may be able to assume some traffic management responsibilities.
- All modes of transportation need to be treated equally, for example if tickets are being given to drivers they should also be given to bicyclists.
- Using Washington Street instead of Royal should be considered as an alternative bicycle route to Union Street.



Date/Time: August 7, 2012, 3:00pm
Interviewee: Old Town Civic Association

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

Stakeholder Comments

- There is a need for more active traffic management in the study area.
- There is a desire for more opportunities for citizen input, for example more extensive outreach with HOA's and neighborhood groups. A second public meeting was suggested. It was noted that the Waterfront Commission doesn't necessarily represent citizens.
- Motorcycles parking and idling near outdoor dining was noted as a concern. There is a need to regulate this activity, for example by only allowing on street motorcycle parking away from outdoor dining. Behavior and parking placement are both concerns regarding motorcycles.
- The full historic urban grid should be considered as part of the study (Washington to waterfront).
- It is a constrained environment, for example you can't widen streets and the houses cannot be torn down.
- The intersection of Union and King is uncontrolled, and the fact that there is no one directing traffic can contribute to conflicts.
- There are a lot of different modes of transportation on Union Street but the pedestrian mode is the most important.
- Tour buses should not be in the historic district.
- Bikes don't belong on Union Street; proposed bike share locations were discussed.
- U-turns on Union Street create congestion and potential conflicts. Specifically, the Cameron Mews community was noted as a location where u-turns happen frequently.
- Pedestrian bottlenecks and parked trucks are an issue.
- There is a need for more traffic calming.
- Pedestrians in the street (mid block crossings) create a dangerous condition. This is primarily an issue within the urban core. This contributes to driver frustration.
- Beer delivery trucks are a major issue of concern. They should be forced to complete their deliveries earlier in the morning. Idling engines and trucks making sharp turns are also an issue.
- The crossing at Windmill Hill Park needs to be improved.
- UPS and FedEx trucks create a significant nuisance; there is question as to whether they have permission to park where they do. There is also concern about practice of pulling carts over tree wells and flowers.
- Loading and unloading of tour buses is a significant concern.
- The City's process for contacting, licensing, and coordinating with bus companies was discussed.
- The Police Department needs to do more traffic management and parking enforcement.
- Traffic congestion is a concern, for example traffic jams occur as a result of vehicles turning into and out of the Torpedo Factory parking garage.



Date/Time: August 7, 2012, 3:00pm
Interviewee: Old Town Civic Association

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW NOTES

- Visibility is a problem at the parking garages in the study area.
- The bike count methodology was discussed, it was noted that given the time of the counts, the team may be over-counting bikes and under-counting cars.
- There are major events near Union Street, for example the Irish Festival.
- A potential traffic signal at King and Union was discussed.
- All modes should be treated the same, so pedestrian tickets should be considered.
- The size of vehicles in Old Town should be regulated and enforced.
- OTCA has around 315 households and 500+ members.
- Old Town is the 3rd oldest historic district in the country.
- The City's restaurant related policies were discussed.
- There is a need to balance the needs of residents, businesses, and restaurants.
- There needs to be a more active police presence in the study area.
- The idea of a BID was discussed but it was noted that it has not been a successful idea in the past.
- There is a need for this study to provide a baseline that can be used to evaluate development proposals.

Follow-Up Opportunities

- OTCA has a newsletter, which can be used to public the public meeting.