



CATHERINE E. PUGH
Mayor
250 City Hall, 100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

May 31, 2017

Dear Potomac Street Neighbors,

The City of Baltimore is providing this letter and attachments to keep you informed about the upcoming changes to the Potomac Street Cycle Track before they begin. As you may be aware, there has been significant community feedback regarding the Potomac Street Cycle Track, which was designed and approved prior to the current Administration.

Mayor Pugh is committed to making Baltimore a bicycle and pedestrian-friendly multi-modal City, while at the same time ensuring that changes made to our roadways do not have serious negative safety and emergency response implications. In keeping with these joint goals, the Department of Transportation (DOT) was directed to re-evaluate the cycle track, which they have done. The current bike lane installation on Potomac Street provides for a fire apparatus access road that is less than is called for by the Baltimore City Fire Code.

Representatives from DOT and the Mayor's Office met with bicycle advocates, Councilman Cohen, a representative of the Canton Community Association, and representatives of the Fire Department on May 25th to discuss this circumstance and a compromise was suggested. At the end of the meeting, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), a national bicycle advocacy organization, suggested we look at some other specific provisions in Baltimore's Fire Code before implementing the potential compromise. After fully considering these other Code provisions that allow potential modification to the strict requirements of the Code, including consideration of the length of the blocks of Potomac, the size of the various intersections between Eastern Avenue and Boston Street, and the parking limitations at these intersections, there was still insufficient basis to support the current Potomac Street bike lane configuration. There are exceptions to standards that can be considered; however, those exceptions are contingent on fire safety being preserved. Thus, the compromise discussed with the biking stakeholders at our meeting on May 25th, and approved by Fire Chief Ford will be implemented. This compromise takes into consideration the concerns of the bicycle community, the residents of Potomac Street, the greater Canton community, and fire and emergency response safety. The following modifications will be made:

Eastern to Fait (See Attachment 1)

- This section of road is too narrow for a curbside Cycle Track. Instead, parking will be allowed back against the curb and a two-way buffered and painted bike lane will be installed. Traffic calming measures will also be installed.

Fait to Boston (See Attachment 2)

- These blocks are wider than the first three, so we will retain a two-way protected bike lane against the curb. The bike lanes will be narrowed to 7 feet with a 1-foot crosshatch buffer. This will allow the necessary width for emergency vehicles. The bike lane will transition after Fait into this two-way protected bike lane. Traffic calming and painted buffers adjacent to the far parking lane will help to slow traffic and make it safer for all users of the road.

The Fire Department has reviewed this plan and is satisfied. NACTO also recognized the special conditions constraining this project, and that the proposed compromise provides a functional design that is acceptable. DOT intends to monitor the cycling and traffic movements on Potomac Street to detect any problem areas.

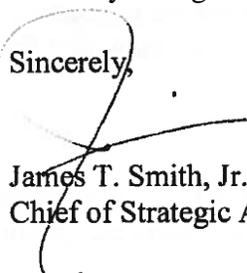
DOT will begin the modifications with removal of the flex posts. Weather permitting, removal of the existing striping hopefully will be completed in the next two weeks. Striping and painting for the new configuration will begin immediately thereafter and is expected to take two weeks to complete.

Residents between Eastern and Fait should begin parking against the curb immediately upon removal of the flex posts. Residents between Fait and Boston should park against the construction barrels that will temporarily designate the buffer between the new bike lanes and the new parking lane as soon as all flex posts have been removed. Clear and visible temporary signs will be installed showing where to park until the modifications are fully implemented.

DOT also has developed a plan to address disabled parking. This new approach will provide disabled parking spots adjacent to the protected bike lanes that will be painted blue with the disabled indicator. Additionally, the blue paint will continue across the bicycle lanes in stripes to indicate to cyclists that a disabled person may be crossing the lane. Finally, adjustments will be made to the curb to allow for an ADA-compliant ramp to be installed.

The communications and coordination regarding this project left much to be desired. Had there been better communication internally and in the community, this situation could have been avoided. These communication issues will be addressed in the future. We regret any inconvenience that this may have caused and appreciate your patience while we make the necessary changes along Potomac Street.

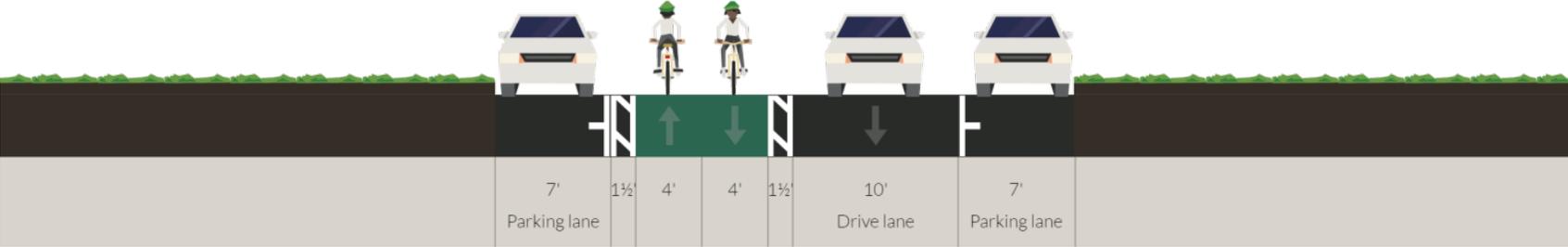
Sincerely,


James T. Smith, Jr.
Chief of Strategic Alliances

Attachments

Eastern to Fait

Attachment 1



Fait to Boston

