

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Policy, Planning, and Sustainability Administration

MEMORANDUM

TO: Harriet Tregoning, Director
Office of Planning

FROM: Karina Ricks, Associate Director

DATE: April 21, 2011

SUBJECT: Large Tract Review No. 2011-03 - Curtis Chevrolet site (proposed Walmart) 5929 Georgia Avenue, N.W. Square 2986, Lot 38; Parcel 101/46

Background

The applicant along with Gorove/Slade, their traffic consultant for the proposed site, met with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) on December 1, 2010. At this meeting, DDOT provided a two-page outline summarizing agency requirements for execution of a thorough and complete transportation impact study (see attached). DDOT asked the applicant team to submit their initial evaluation and upon agreement of these parameters, move forward with detailed analysis. On December 9, 2010, Gorove Slade provided a preliminary traffic assessment and assumptions for DDOT review. In response, DDOT drafted and sent a memorandum on December 14, 2010 detailing desired revisions to the scope and content of work (see attached). After that date, the applicant team terminated all communication with DDOT and later email requests from DDOT for information have gone unanswered to date.

Regulatory Framework

DDOT has reviewed the case with special attention paid to sections 2300.2 and 2301.2 of the DC Municipal Regulations, which relate directly to transportation safety and function:

- DCMR 2300.2 states that the goals of the large tract development review process is (a) To minimize adverse environmental, traffic and neighborhood impacts; and (b) To avoid unnecessary public costs in terms of new services or facilities required of city agencies; and

- DCMR 2301.2 requires that “A site plan or plans including, in addition to the pertinent site condition and circulation information, consider the relationship of the proposed structure to public space, both developed and redeveloped.”

In order to demonstrate compliance with these regulatory goals, a comprehensive Traffic Impact Study is necessary. The DDOT Design and Engineering Manual Chapter 45, “Requirement for Traffic Impact Studies for Development Projects,” describes in detail the expectations and requirements for a traffic impact study. In an effort to streamline this 15-page chapter, the Policy, Planning, and Sustainability Administration provided a 2 page outline to the applicant team in order to facilitate the review process.

DDOT is committed to building and maintaining a sustainable urban transportation system that can accommodate continued growth and development within the District, which improves safety and mobility for all users, and maintains neighborhood livability. It is essential that any traffic impact study report clearly document the impacts and mitigations that will be executed in order to “minimize adverse traffic impacts” and “avoid unnecessary public costs,” as stated in the DCMR.

Large Tract Review Analysis

To date, Gorove/Slade has not addressed 7 of the 10 comments submitted by DDOT in our December 14, 2010 memorandum. All of the comments relate to their underlying assumptions for their mode split, trip distribution, and size of the proposed study area; these characteristics in particular are the building blocks for a meaningful transportation analysis. Until there is agreement pertaining to the underlying assumptions of the study and the following issues have been addressed, DDOT cannot accept the Traffic Impact Study as adequate. Specific concerns remain:

Study Approach

1. The vehicular study area is too small given the complexity of the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Missouri Avenue and potential trip generation for the site to accurately capture the impact the site will have on the local transportation network. DDOT requires inclusion of the following intersections:
 - a. Piney Branch & Georgia Avenue
 - b. 13th Street & Peabody Street
 - c. 13th Street & Colorado Avenue
 - d. 9th Street & Quackenbos Street
2. The method used to calculate the trip distribution and assignment is missing. The report states that equal amounts of traffic will reach the site via 13th Street and Georgia Avenue. DDOT requires specific travel demand model information to back up this assumption.
3. A thorough infrastructure assessment on the impact of heavy truck traffic generated by the site is missing from the study and should be included. This assessment would determine if intersection/roadway upgrades are needed to accommodate the movements of heavy trucks, in order to avoid the buckling of

the asphalt. Truck turning movements place pressure on the road surface, and the conditions at the loading entrance and the Missouri / Georgia Ave intersection should be evaluated. Further, detailed turning templates must be provided to ensure that truck maneuvers are feasible and safe.

4. A Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan to minimize the traffic impacts to the site is missing from the traffic impact study. DDOT requires a comprehensive TDM plan with firm commitments, which clearly tie back to trip generation and mode split assumptions to ensure the project meets the large tract review standards of minimizing traffic impacts.
5. At this time, DDOT does not believe the Land Use Code 813 is appropriate for this project to calculate the peak trips for this site as it does not show a strong enough relationship between the size of the development and the trips generated in an urban context. In particular, DDOT requested the traffic impact study to document trip generation numbers from relevant comparable urban projects, in order to determine the most accurate trip generation expected for the site.
6. The WMATA Ridership Survey may not be the appropriate reference for this location as the site is not near a rail station. DDOT would like further information about how the mode split was calculated.
7. The Census tract data details and reference information to ensure it is referencing the correct location are missing in order to support the analysis.

In addition to the above concerns regarding the study's underlying assumptions, the following components in the traffic impact study are either missing or require revision:

Roadway Capacity & Operations

1. The appendix referenced in the study report is missing, including key traffic data such as signal timings, signal warrant analyses, and Synchro files, and must be provided. For instance, the report concludes that signal timing changes can attain a LOS D at the Georgia Ave / Missouri Ave despite the addition of the Walmart development. DDOT needs supporting model to validate findings.
2. Queuing analysis on all intersection approaches and at all driveways during the peak hours should be conducted and included in the study report.
3. All recommendations for new signals need to be accompanied by a warrant analysis along with the electronic Synchro files for our internal review, and all signal timing adjustment recommendations need a supported analysis to be submitted.
4. The study report assumes 20 percent transit ridership, which equates to approximately 303,192 transit trips per year. There is existing Metrobus service that runs along Georgia Avenue NW, which is adjacent to the site. These bus lines are among the most utilized lines in the District as calculated by passengers per trip. In order to accommodate the increased ridership caused by this development, DDOT and WMATA will need to consider increased services. The developer needs to work with DDOT and WMATA to evaluate the full costs of increased ridership and find a solution for cost mitigation. The calculated

financial cost on the 70 and 71 lines is approximately \$2.21 per transit trip, and the cost on the 79 line is approximately \$2.50 per ride.

5. Although no final site plan has been approved, the Walter Reed campus has been a historical high traffic generator and the study report should document reasonable trip generation assumptions for the proposed site and include them in the background development and trip distribution forecast for the area.
6. The existing “walk” and flashing “do not walk” times at the signalized intersection of the study area presented on Table 3 are incorrect. All traffic analysis should be performed using the correct signal timing available from DDOT.

Neighborhood Traffic Circulation & Management

7. There are limited conclusions drawn about the anticipated impacts to residential streets adjacent to the development. While the report does include a “trip assignment” map showing where new trips will go, it does not identify actions to mitigate increased traffic on residential streets such as 8th Street, 9th Street, 13th Street / Piney Branch Road, Peabody Street, and Quackenbos Street. Possible improvements that should be explored include:
 - a. Install pavement markings and signage and introduce bicycle lanes on Piney Branch Road between Missouri Avenue and Georgia Avenue per DDOT design to calm traffic.
8. Based upon previous meetings with the applicant team, it is DDOT’s understanding that the applicant intends to install a Capital Bikeshare station at the front of the Walmart store. The inclusion of a Bikeshare station would generally promote bicycle travel in the neighborhood and is likely to replace some short vehicle trips to/from the site. DDOT recognizes this action as one important mitigation as part of a TDM plan, and commends the applicant for this proposal. DDOT staff is available to work with the applicant to determine the exact location of the station and resolve other necessary details.
9. As part of the TDM plan, the store should reach an agreement with DC Metro to have the ability to load cash and passes on SmarTrip cards, and sell the electronic transit fare media at a customer service desk onsite.

Area Safety Issues

10. While the study report did include a section reviewing intersection accident data, it did not explicitly identify safety issues that will emerge as a result of increased movements to and from the site, nor improvements to facilitate these movements. In particular, additional pedestrian traffic will seek access to Walmart from both the Recreation Center on Georgia Avenue and the school on 13th Street. Possible improvements that should be explored include:
 - a. Improve pedestrian refuges at the westbound and eastbound approaches to the Georgia Ave / Missouri Ave intersection;
 - b. Install raised median at Missouri Avenue junction with Colorado Avenue to limit unsafe turning movements;

- c. Close curb cut at the junction of Georgia Avenue and Rock Creek Ford Road;
 - d. Refurbish pavement markings and signage at Georgia Ave / Missouri Ave intersection.
11. The study should include a sight distance analysis for vehicles exiting the parking lot onto Peabody Street.
 12. The study should include a review of Accessible Pedestrian Signal needs at all pedestrian signals within the study area.

Recommendation

At this time, DDOT finds the traffic impact analysis insufficient and incomplete. As a result, DDOT cannot adequately evaluate the traffic impact of the proposed project. Without greater detail, modifications, and clarification of the assumptions used to analyze the traffic impacts to the site, DDOT cannot be confident that there are no adverse impacts related to the site on the local transportation network. DDOT does not believe that the applicant has met the requirements of the DCMR 2300.2.

DDOT requests that the applicant team address specifically and comprehensively the comments laid out in the December 14th memo and again here in this document. Further, DDOT requests that the Large Tract Review process be put on hold until all outstanding issues are resolved and a complete traffic impact analysis is submitted.