

**Saturday, January 12, 2008 – 10am to 2pm**

**National Mall Plan – Public Meeting Notes  
Old Post Office Tower**

**Meeting Topic – Recreation, Events and Circulation**

Notes of public comment were recorded on flip charts, either by participants or staff

**Participant Notes on Recreation:**

- Bark chip trail (preferred) for runners and pedestrians for entire Mall length
- (Need) Mandatory bike parking at large Mall events provided by the organizers
- More bike parking
- More access for field sports – ultimate Frisbee (WAFC)
- (Use) Partnerships with non-profit groups to improve/maintain fields
- If you get rid of the gravel pathways and decide to pave it, please include a natural surface trail (dirt, bark, whatever) along with the other alternative

**Participant notes on Events:**

- Don't like snow fence – find something less restrictive. What demands (security) screening? Like the freedom to walk around.
- Continue running races and training runs on the Mall and around it.

**Circulation**

- Retrofit bike lanes on Pennsylvania Avenue, Constitution Avenue and Independence Avenue. (Resurface Constitution Avenue **NOW!**)
- Create or more continuous shared use paths for bicycle **transportation** from 14<sup>th</sup> to Lincoln Memorial
- Conduct analysis of the impact of the preferred alternative of the Visitor Transportation Study in the Mall plan, specifically alt C.
- NPS' preferred alternative from the Visitor Transportation Study, regardless of its "draft" status, needs to be overlaid on top of each of the Mall alternatives to determine possible problems/benefits that will occur when NPS goes to implementation. Transportation stops need to be co-located with restrooms, lighting, improved sidewalks, etc.
- Locate bike parking at all restrooms and food locations
- Pedestrian improvements (widening, repaving, etc) for sidewalks are crucial for access and enjoyment of the national parks – particularly in the Tidal Basin,

Jefferson Memorial and FDR memorial areas. Lack of adequate sidewalks lead pedestrians to create their own paths through high traffic areas resulting in vegetation death, muddy areas and unsightly mess. This is also a safety concern for handicapped, elderly and especially young visitors to these areas.

- Separate bike trails and lanes, especially in the Tidal Basin, West Potomac Park, Jefferson Memorial and FDR are necessary for safety, accessibility and congestion concerns. The increased motor vehicle traffic during the National Cherry Blossom Festival, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, etc. render this area unsafe for bike traffic to share roads, and bikes add to traffic congestion and confusion when roads are so crowded. Separate lanes for bikes would address all of those problems.

### **Staff notes on Flip Charts from public comment**

- Gravel surfaces unacceptable – grass is in bad shape – reflecting pool disgusting
- Install bark chip surfaces on the Mall
- Years of renovation will close the Mall to public demonstrations of free speech – public access must be preserved
- Free speech a national issue – which groups have submitted comments?
- National Mall alternatives not completely different than Central Park issues.
- NPS opportunities for running races have been diminished.
- What is the relationship between the National Mall Plan and the park transportation plan?
- Want to ensure that races and training runs can continue into the future
- 5,000 (scoping) comments seems low
- Free speech takes precedence over the view. East-west views a moot point.
- Free speech near Capitol important.
- Bike parking in short supply; access between Mall and (Potomac River) bridges inadequate; need paths through the Mall
- Bikes important for transportation, not just recreation
- (Need) More direct bike routes
- Passive recreation needs greater emphasis – shouldn't just emphasize active recreation – facilities include chairs, drinking water, tables, shade, playground, etc.
- How do we improve bike commuter access on the N side of the Tidal Basin
- Is recreation space also open to First Amendment? *NPS response – NPS distinguishes between recreation, events and First Amendment demonstrations / public gatherings. Event /demonstration permits are issued on a first come basis.*
- There is virtually no outreach on this process – no efforts to contact First Amendment groups. NPS has been dishonest about public input in the future

management of Mall – false choices – all alternatives are unacceptable. NO actions on Mall should restrict actions related to First Amendment. Why was no notice sent to these users?

- Not fair to accuse NPS of being disingenuous
- It's entirely fair – fraudulent process. Why did NPS discount 4,000 comments? NPS has access to records of 3,000 applicants for free speech demonstrations. This is not a partnership between the government and the American people – it's a partnership between the government and corporate interests to restrict free speech.
- Only 3 alternatives puts First Amendment groups (in position) of appearing to oppose Mall improvements
- Comment period should be expanded. Clock should be stopped. Honest public process should begin.
- Homeless population – NPS needs to consult Homeless Washington
- We need a plan D – no new restriction on public demonstrations on Mall; plans indicate there will be restrictions on First Amendment activities. How many emails will it take to get the NPS to lift potential restrictions?
- We're facing fortress American – pool at the base of the Capitol was built to restrict free speech. Protests do not inhibit people's ability to sit on the Mall.
- What agreements are in place to modify the right of way on Pennsylvania Avenue? Modify to enhance bike / other access.
- Language in draft alts doesn't express for Constitutional rights
- Involve White House and President's Park in planning
- Note that East Potomac Park is not part of plan – (it provides) opportunities for museums, etc. Suggestion for a military museum along lines of the new Marine Corps museum. Range of visitors to Mall (means) need for visitor center.
- Cite National Capital Framework Plan re: East Potomac Park.
- Smithsonian Folklife Festival (representative) – disappointed with Alt B – not use of tree plots. Need space to maintain thematic integrity. Important (to use) for shade (10 degrees cooler). NPS a co-sponsor. Look for mitigation measures.
- Bike parking – valet for large events needed (e.g. Screen on the Green)
- Please explain logistics of multiple concurrent events.
- Entertainment Discussion
  - Opportunity for entertainment in Constitution Gardens
  - Patriotic theme only at DC War Memorial

- Need for move of concert function out of current Sylvan theater to SW corner of Washington Monument grounds (site of Independence Day concerts)
- Increase number of “Screen on the Green” events – good views needed (distance affects views)
- No charges or fees – the Mall should be free
- Keep space unencumbered – free and open for recreation
- Improve turf; artificial turf field for sports?
- Circulation
  - Gravel substructure (3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>) improvements needed to walks as well as lawn panels
  - Incorporate preferred alternative from visitor transportation study into the development of the 3 alts for the Mall Plan
  - Analysis of links to areas outside / off the Mall – (with) transitions to future memorials, museums, etc.
  - Need pedestrian improvements regardless of alternatives Seawalls and Tidal Basin walks
  - Universal access improvements needed – common to all alternatives
  - Improve crosswalk timing – especially during large events / parades / Rolling Thunder
  - Coordinate design elements in signs, site furnishings, support buildings
- Need for the draft plan to identify what will happen regardless of alternatives
- Identify sources of funding? public funding, special Centennial funding, partnerships