



BERWYN DISTRICT CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. BOX 535

COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND 20740

January 9, 2006

Haitham A. Hijazi, Director
Department of Public Works and Transportation
9400 Peppercorn Place
Suite 300
Largo, MD 20774

Dear Director Hijazi;

On behalf of the Berwyn District Civic Association, I would like to urge the Department of Public Works and Transportation to install a pedestrian controlled traffic signal at the intersection of Paint Branch Parkway and the City of College Park's Trolley Trail (also known as the Paint Branch Trail).

The people in our neighborhood have a great deal of interest in the Paint Branch Trail. It gives us easy access to the metro station, it provides us a thoroughfare for visiting our neighbors in Old Town, and it lets us commute to our offices on River Road all without adding to the congestion on Route 1. Unfortunately, we feel the trail's crosswalk at Paint Branch Parkway is just not safe.

The Trail ends abruptly at Paint Branch Parkway, a major road, four lanes wide. The curve of the road to the west allows only about 600 feet of visibility for a pedestrian to see east-bound cars approaching, or for drivers to see pedestrians entering the crosswalk. The posted speed limit on Paint Branch Parkway is thirty-five mph. At this speed, a car that is out of sight of a pedestrian can be on top of the crosswalk in less than 12 seconds.

A pedestrian can count on less than 12 seconds to safely cross four lanes of traffic. This might not be difficult for a healthy jogger or a bicyclist, but imagine a mother with a stroller, an elderly walker, or a wheelchair-bound pedestrian.

Paint Branch Parkway is a wide, moderately-traveled, limited access stretch of road east-bound from Route 1 to the Trail. This makes the speed limit easy to ignore, particularly for drivers who have recently been stuck in a Route 1 backup. A driver traveling at just five miles over the speed limit reduces the time for a pedestrian to safely cross to 10 seconds. What's more, landscaping efforts on the north side of the road near the crosswalk threaten to reduce the visibility to less than 400 feet-- less than 7 seconds.

This still seems like a significant amount of time for a driver to spot a pedestrian and slow down, until you consider that the environment of Paint Branch Parkway does not suggest that crossing pedestrians are likely. One side of the road is a solid sound barrier wall. The opposite side, a dense forest with no sidewalk. An east-bound driver who is not familiar with the road has no reason to expect that a pedestrian would ever try to cross it; there is nothing visible on either side for a pedestrian to cross to.

Despite the existing markings and signs, this crosswalk is simply not in a location where one would expect to see pedestrians in the roadway and experience of four local pedestrians tells us that cars are not slowing down; crossing remains stressful in that area. During rush hour pedestrians often have to wait a long time to find a gap in traffic, and sometimes they risk crossing between cars with little gap at all.

We believe that a traffic light will be an unmistakable signal to drivers that an intersection is there. A red light stands out to a driver more than a pedestrian under any circumstances. If this traffic signal only turns red at the request of a pedestrian waiting to cross, the effect on traffic flow will be minimal. The addition of a crosswalk signal with a count-down timer will ensure that pedestrians of any capability have sufficient time to cross the road in safety.

The residents of Berwyn have a vested interest in the safety of the Paint Branch Parkway crosswalk. At the present time, we feel that the crosswalk is not sufficiently visible to drivers, and does not allow all users sufficient time to cross a wide road, even when it appears to be clear of vehicles. We believe that a pedestrian controlled traffic signal will significantly improve safety at the crosswalk with little disruption to traffic flow for only a modest investment.

We thank you for your time and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather Iliff
President
Berwyn District Civic Association

Attachments: Overhead View Photo, Driver's View Photo, Pedestrian's View Photo

CC: Stephen A. Brayman, Robert T. Catlin, Thomas Dernoga, Andrew M. Fellows, John Giannetti, Emily Guskin, Karen E. Hampton, Thomas Hendershot, Jack B. Johnson, John M. Krouse, Pauline Menes, David L. Milligan, Brian Moe, Eric C. Olson, Joseline Peña-Melnyk, John E. Perry,

Pedestrian Lines-of-Site





Driver's View of crosswalk
east-bound on Paint Branch Parkway



Pedestrian's View of east-bound traffic from north side of Paint Branch crosswalk