

Some traffic issues in Mount Pleasant

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Following is a brief listing of some of the principal traffic problems afflicting Mount Pleasant residents. No doubt there are others, which I've overlooked.

Through-traffic routes

Residents along the routes crossing Mount Pleasant, and heavily used by traffic that is merely passing through the neighborhood, and neither originating nor terminating in the neighborhood, complain of excessive traffic speed and noise. These routes include:

1. Park Road, westbound from 16th Street to the Klingle/Walbridge intersection, then proceeding west on Klingle, or west on Park Road, into Rock Creek Park
2. Klingle Road eastbound, proceeding east on Adams Mill Road and Irving Street, to 16th Street and points east
3. Park Road eastbound, originating on Park Road or Klingle Road in Rock Creek Park, continuing to 16th Street either via 17th Street and Monroe Street, or via Mount Pleasant Street and Lamont Street (forced into these residential streets by the one block of Park Road that is one-way westbound).

Sixteenth Street is, of course, a major arterial for north-south traffic along the eastern boundary of Mount Pleasant. The principal Mount Pleasant issue along this street is pedestrian crossing to or from Columbia Heights, specifically at Perry Place/Spring Road, at Park Road, at Lamont Street, at Irving Street, and at Argonne Place/Harvard Street.

Internal routes

The commercial corridor, Mount Pleasant Street from Harvard Street to Park Road, is heavily congested, afflicted with numerous delivery vehicles as well as business patron traffic. Few of the businesses along Mount Pleasant Street have alley access, so deliveries must be from the front, adding delivery trucks to the congestion of passenger vehicles and Metro buses. Parking for business patrons is needed, and unfortunately the zoning of many Mount Pleasant streets for residential use causes business employees to abuse on-street parking, "meter feeding", in the absence of commercial parking lots. There has never been a systematic approach to the problems of customer parking, business employee parking, and business deliveries.

Truck traffic entering Mount Pleasant Street from the south (for local deliveries) finds itself trapped at the north end of Mount Pleasant, the only exit route suitable for trucks being Park Road westbound. Trucks wanting to go north or east have no good route back to 16th Street, and commonly struggle through narrow, unsuitable neighborhood streets in search of a way out.

School traffic

Parents dropping off or picking up children at neighborhood schools tend to cause significant traffic problems, in particular at Park Road just off 16th Street (for the Elsie Stokes Charter School), and on Ingleside Terrace/18th Street (for Bancroft Elementary). There are no good places for parents to wait for

their children to emerge from these schools. The backup of cars on Park Road, waiting for parents' cars blocking the alley from Park Road to Lamont Street, behind the Stokes school, is especially troublesome.

Troublesome intersections

Park Road/Klinge Road/Walbridge Place: the odd geometry of this intersection results in separate green-light phases for eastbound Park Road traffic, one lane having a green while the adjacent lane does not. Drivers are endlessly confused by this, resulting in substantial hazards to pedestrians crossing Park Road just west of this intersection.

Park Road/17th Street/Mount Pleasant Street: Drivers westbound on Park Road encounter great confusion over lanes, as some drivers insist on turning left from the middle lane, and going straight from the right lane, while other drivers go straight from the middle lane, while the right lane abruptly ends on the west side of the intersection. There are no pavement markings to guide drivers here.

Irving Street/Mount Pleasant Street, and Irving/16th, and Irving/15th: the Columbia Heights traffic study pointed out that the traffic lights on 16th Street improperly favor north-south traffic, causing great delays and congestion on east-west Irving Street. Cars build up in the short block of Irving between Mount Pleasant Street and 16th. The east-west direction should have greater green-light time, and these three traffic lights along Irving Street need to be coordinated to minimize congestion.

Mount Pleasant Street/Argonne Place (Harvard Street): this intersection suffers from a very long red-light cycle for southbound traffic, a problem complicated by the addition of a Zipcar/Flexcar parking spot close to the intersection, blocking drivers from executing a right-on-red, and thus adding to the congestion and delays.

Lamont/16th Street: this intersection showed an exceptionally large number of pedestrian collisions. It's not clear why this is so, and this intersection warrants study specifically for pedestrian safety.