

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Office of the Director

August 14, 2002

The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Councilmember At Large
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Councilmember Mendelson:

On May 9, 2002, you asked the District Department of Transportation to review a number of questions raised by members of the community regarding the status of Klinge Road, NW. Below is the Department response.

Questions & DDOT Responses

Porter Street & Connecticut Avenue

Q) Did you know that the average car spends 9.5 minutes waiting at Porter Street and Connecticut Avenue NW? Did you know that in the year 2017, that same car will wait 14+ minutes? Did you know that in 2017, if Klinge Road were opened, that same car will wait 4 minutes?

DDOT RESPONSE

These questions focused DDOT's attention on the Porter St./Connecticut Ave intersection and the claim that the current wait is 9.5 minutes and will lengthen to 14+ minutes in 2017 if Klinge is kept closed.

First, we carefully examined the intersection, particularly for westbound Porter Street motorists making a left turn on to Connecticut Avenue in the morning rush hour. This is what the 9.5 minutes and 14+ minutes refer to—not the whole intersection. According to data gathered and analyzed by DDOT, the delay for the left turn averages 2-3 minutes in the morning rush-hour and is considerably less during non rush-hour periods.

The 9.5 minutes and 14+ minutes delay numbers for the left turn onto southbound Connecticut Ave. are not related to what drivers actually encounter and are misleading to non-technical readers of the Klinge Road Feasibility Study by the Louis Berger Group (August 2001). If an intersection significantly exceeds its design capacity (i.e. more cars going through the intersection than it was designed for), standard computer traffic models generate meaningless wait-times. These delay numbers for current conditions and for 2017 are not “real” numbers. Traffic engineers know that such high delay figures do not reflect reality; thus, to avoid misunderstanding, the simple notation “over-capacity” is often used in reporting traffic studies. DDOT regrets that this practice was not followed here.

Regarding the situation in 2017, DDOT turned to the Berger Study. According to the report, the rush-hour delay for the intersection as a whole, will increase from about 2 minutes now to about 3 minutes in 2017 if Klinge Road is not reopened to regular traffic.

Connecticut Avenue

Q) Did you know that traffic service levels on Connecticut Avenue southbound will improve a full grade to a level of service “A” if Klinge Road is opened? And it will remain an A for the next 15 years. If not, traffic delays will deteriorate from a level B to a level C.

DDOT RESPONSE

The question wrongly implies that the Berger Study forecasts that a significant portion of southbound Connecticut Avenue will deteriorate if Klinge Road is not reopened. In fact, the report analyzes only the southbound *approach* to the Porter/Connecticut intersection and predicts the same AM peak-period drop in service for Connecticut Avenue southbound intersection (B to C) whether or not Klinge Road is reopened.

Woodley Road

Q) During the AM rush hours, westbound Woodley Road at 34th Street currently carries, on average, one (1!) vehicle per hour, while Porter Street westbound at Connecticut carries in excess of 800 vehicles per hour.

DDOT RESPONSE

The 'one per hour' number is an anomaly, because the Berger Study measured Woodley Road traffic during construction. In fact, existing through traffic flows on Woodley Road are considerably higher.

Along these lines, the Berger Study concludes that if Klinge Road were reopened to vehicles, “Woodley Road at 34th Street will experience a significant traffic volume increase” (185 to 349 more vehicles, depending on the peak period and build scenario).

Such an increase will hit a bottleneck there because of the already heavy north-south traffic on 34th Street, particularly during rush-hour. Westbound traffic will be delayed by the need for signals to favor 34th Street traffic. In addition, the "already failed eastbound approach [will experience] more delays" if Klinge Road is reopened.

In other words, if Klinge Road is reopened, there will be more and slower traffic at the 34th and Woodley intersection. Much of the traffic will simply be redistributed from roads and intersections designed and built to carry heavier volumes (i.e., Porter Street) to roads that are not so designed (i.e. Woodley Road).

Macomb Street

Q) Macomb Street carried 3,000 vehicles per day before Klinge Road was barricaded. Now Macomb carries over 8,000 vehicles per day.

DDOT RESPONSE

According to current data collected by DDOT, Macomb carries about 3,300 vehicles per day between Connecticut Avenue and 34th Street. The 8,000 count from Connecticut Avenue to Ross Place is simply incorrect and we regret this.

Public Safety

Q) Firefighters have to fight fires in the Connecticut Avenue bridge abutments by hanging their hoses over the bridge and approaching the fire in the most dangerous way...from above.

DDOT RESPONSE

The Klinge Road option selected by the Mayor will provide an access road to allow fire, rescue and utility vehicles to use Klinge Road for such emergencies. In fact, without regular traffic, emergency vehicle response would be enhanced for such events.

Q) Firefighters that rescued a boy who fell into the Klinge stream and broke his collarbone said their efforts were hampered by having to approach on foot from Connecticut Avenue. Ambulance response was delayed significantly until the barricades could be moved.

DDOT RESPONSE

We agree. As stated above, the Mayor's plan will reopen Klinge Road to emergency vehicles as necessary.

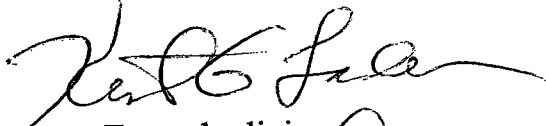
Conclusion

It is our position that the decision to repair Klinge Road for pedestrian/bicycle use and emergency access is a rational decision that provides the necessary repairs to the road,

manages traffic safely and does not deprive other areas of the District of needed funds for transportation improvements.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,


Dan Tangerherlini
Acting Director