

Paula Dubberly

August 15, 2019

George Washington Memorial Parkway
Attn: Alexandria to Mount Vernon Safety Study
700 George Washington Memorial Parkway
c/o Turkey Run Park
McLean, Virginia 22101

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the safety study of the George Washington Parkway. I have lived along the GW Parkway for over 25 years. I appreciate the importance of a scenic route to George Washington's Mt. Vernon. One of the main reasons I chose to live in this area was the proximity to the beautiful parkway, including the bike path and Dyke Marsh.

The safety concerns with the Parkway have arisen since the massive increase in personnel at Ft. Belvoir in 2012. To residents along the Parkway, the increase in traffic, particularly at rush hour is very noticeable. Perhaps not surprising, the non-residents that use the Parkway as their commute route to Ft. Belvoir, as a generalization, tend to exceed the speed limit frequently and at higher speeds than were typical before the Ft. Belvoir expansion. These are identifiable by their Maryland license plates or stickers indicating residence outside of the Mt. Vernon area. Over the past few years this seems to have encouraged other drivers to join them in speeding excessively.

Unfortunately, there has not been a concomitant increase in speed enforcement by the Park Service Police. Instead, it actually seems like speed enforcement has decreased in the last seven years.

The Parkway speed limit is 35 mph near Belle Haven and Belle View and 45 mph along the rest of the road until the approach to Mt. Vernon. These speed limits if followed are safe for Parkway travelers as well as bike and pedestrian users crossing the parkway. At the biggest pedestrian locations, Belle Haven and Belle View the speed limit is the same as Ft. Hunt Road. At Belle View, Belle Haven, Collingwood and Stratford landing, islands divide the north and south bound lanes allowing for easy crossing if the vehicles are not excessively speeding.

But that is the problem, the vehicles are often wildly speeding, often going at least 60 to 70 mph and not infrequently racing each other. Users also must understand that the parkway was not designed to be a highway; the parkway is a different type of roadway. We don't need stop lights on the parkway, we just need enforcement of the current speed limits.

Ask congress and the state to allow speed cameras or ask for additional funding for Park Police Officers to enforce the current laws. Lights will merely make the Parkway more dangerous and

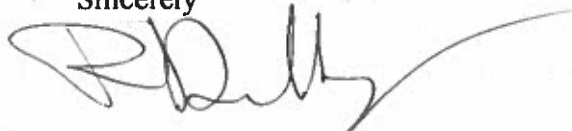
the same speeding drivers will speed in between the lights and slam on their brakes when they get to a red light or worse run them.

In addition, I urge all the elected representatives and the Park Service to work for mass transit options to Ft. Belvoir as the staffing at the base is just going to increase along with the impulse to speed to and from work.

To the extent you consider turn lanes, I assume you are considering dedicated turn lanes into the parkway from the neighborhoods, such as the northbound parkway going to one lane before Morningside so that traffic off of Morningside has a dedicated lane to turn into northbound. Very little traffic turns left into Morningside from the northbound Parkway, and a dedicated turn lane onto Morningside would just further complicate turning out of Morningside. In considering those types of situations you absolutely must take into consideration the impact changes will have in the residential area. For instance, such a turn lane or a light will drastically increase the number of folks coming over from Route One along Sherwood Hall and Morningside. This will further back up and exacerbate a residential route that already carries a lot of commuter traffic it was never designed to handle. You must work with local authorities and representatives to take into account the significant impact any changes you make will have on local neighborhoods. In this regard, serious consideration should be given to transferring the parkway to the state of Virginia since VDOT can better coordinate comprehensively the flow of traffic in the Mt. Vernon area. Furthermore, VDOT does a much better job keeping up the roads than the park service has historically done. A road without the massive potholes is bound to be safer.

Finally, I ask that pre-conceived notions about stop lights and turn lanes be balanced with comments from the community. I note that your webpage and press release regarding the study state that comments may be submitted online through the park Planning, Environment & Public Comment webpage. However, if there is an actual link to submit or review comments on that webpage it is not easily accessible. This plus other public statements about possible changes leave an impression among residents that the service has already decided what steps it intends to take and will not appropriately consider the views of the area residents. I respectfully submit the government has contributed to the problem by not appropriately enforcing traffic laws on the parkway and waiting too long to consider the issue. I hope it will help rectify the years Mt. Vernon residents have dealt with this problem by considering our views and concerns.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paula Dubberly', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Paula Dubberly

cc: Senator Warner
Senator Kaine
Congressman Beyer
Senator Scott Surovell
Senator Adam Ebbin
Delegate Paul Krizek