CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE
ESTABLISHED 1890

March 23, 2012

Ms. Melinda Peters
Administrator
Maryland State Highway Administration
707 North Calvert Street, C-400
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: Pedestrian-Activated Traffic Signal at Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) and Lenox Street

Dear Ms. Peters:

On behalf of the Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers, I am writing to strongly urge the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to install a pedestrian-activated traffic signal at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) and Lenox Street. The installation of this signal will create a safe pedestrian access across this busy commuter artery into and out of the District of Columbia, facilitate access to public transportation on either side of Connecticut Avenue (the avenue) and provide for other societal benefits.

Chevy Chase Village (the Village) is in a unique situation as we are the only municipality in the area that is bisected by a State Highway with no traffic control measures within its boundaries to allow safe crossing. The avenue thereby impedes residents' safe and convenient passage between the Village's east and west sides and impedes access to and from public transportation. A pedestrian-activated traffic light would greatly improve pedestrian safety; enhance east side residents' access to the Village's offices and the Chevy Chase branch of the United States Post Office, located at West Lenox Street and Connecticut Avenue, both of which are on the west side of the Village, and further promote the use of public transportation as providing access to the seven bus stops along the avenue. Thus, a traffic signal would facilitate integration of the community and residents' participation in community affairs.

To give just one pertinent instance of the latter, Connecticut Avenue is a significant obstacle to participation in Village governance by residents who live on its east side because all Village elections, Board meetings, and Committee meetings are held in the Village Hall on the west side. For example, in the 2010 Village Board election, 346 voters were from the avenue's west side as compared to just 76 from the east side. Voter numbers from the 2011 Village Board election likewise showed a much greater rate of participation by voters on the west side than those on the east side. As common sense would dictate, the six-lane state highway that bisects the Village is a major impediment to political participation of all kinds by residents who live on its east side.

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On November 10, 2011, the Village asked SHA Assistant District Engineer (Traffic) Mr. Cedric Ward to review the feasibility of installing a pedestrian-activated traffic signal at Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) and Lenox Street. According to Mr. Ward, SHA did not conduct a traffic/pedestrian count study of the area, but rather used data it had available from bus stop usage and older traffic study counts to evaluate our request. As a result of two (2) follow-up meetings on February 9, 2012 and February 21, 2012, Mr. Ward agreed to conduct an updated traffic/pedestrian count study of the avenue between Chevy Chase Circle and Bradley Lane (MD 191). This study was conducted on March 1, 2012. Mr. Ward also agreed to review available data from transactions made at the Chevy Chase Post office and citizen visits to the Chevy Chase Village Hall/offices. I applaud Mr. Ward's willingness to work with us on this matter.

In order to assist the SHA in reviewing and evaluating our request, the Chevy Chase Village Traffic Committee has compiled the following facts further supporting the need for a pedestrian-activated traffic signal along this busy corridor.

- It is dangerous for pedestrians to cross Connecticut Avenue at present. There are no lights or marked crosswalks for more than 3,000 feet. There are six lanes and a minimal median strip. SHA planning guidance for pedestrian speed (3.5 feet/second) means that it would require about 15 seconds for an individual to cross curb-to-curb.[1]
- Daily traffic volume is 25,000-30,000 vehicles. The average vehicle speed on Connecticut Ave. is almost 30 MPH.[2] At that speed the pedestrian fatality rate is 45 percent in crashes.[3]
- Nationwide, nearly 60 percent of the 34,260 pedestrian deaths in urban areas from 2000 through 2009 occurred on arterial roads such as Connecticut Avenue (MD 185).[4]
- The Village does not have the authority to provide safe crossing for pedestrians on its own. Because Connecticut Avenue is a State Highway (MD 185), approval of the SHA is needed.
- A pedestrian-activated traffic signal has been demonstrated to reduce pedestrian fatalities by as much as 69 percent by the Federal Highway Administration.[5]

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[1] State Highway Administration. Maryland Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, 2011 Edition, Sec. 4E.06. http://sha.md.gov/mmutcd/2011_Chapters_04E.pdf

[2] Source: Chevy Chase Village speed camera data, 2010 and 2011.

[3] FHWA Safety Program. Pedestrian Safety Strategic Plan: Background Report. Fig. 4. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/pssp/background/psafety.cfm

[4] Transportation for America. Dangerous by Design 2011. May 2011, p. 26. https://www.T4america.org/resources/dangerousbydesign

- A marked crosswalk alone (without other traffic control devices) is not a satisfactory alternative. In fact, Federal Highway Administration analysis of more than 1,000 pedestrian crashes demonstrates that for a multi-lane road (with traffic volumes above 12,000/day), marked crosswalks are more dangerous than unmarked crosswalks at uncontrolled crossings.[6].
- A pedestrian-activated traffic signal (and not a signal on a timer) will minimize disruptions to the through traffic on Connecticut Avenue - an important consideration in gaining approval.
- A pedestrian-activated traffic signal minimizes diversion traffic to side streets in the Village. Because the traffic signal is triggered by a pedestrian and not by a vehicle, it will not encourage left turns or crossing traffic by vehicles over present patterns of traffic. Furthermore, because West Lenox Street is a one-way street, northbound traffic on Connecticut Avenue will not make left turns at the intersection.
- Lenox Street is the most appropriate location for a pedestrian-activated traffic signal: it links both parts of the Village to the Village Hall, Post Office, and public transportation, with bus stops on either side of Connecticut Ave. at Lenox St.
- Locating the pedestrian-activated traffic signal at intersections other than Lenox - including midblock locations - are not as beneficial to Village residents. Such locations will force pedestrians seeking to reach the Village Hall, Post Office, or bus stop to walk greater distances to the signal, which will discourage use and may lead to jaywalking.
- A pedestrian-activated traffic signal is particularly valuable to Village residents who wish to remain active in the community - supporting the aging in place movement. Pedestrians 65 years and older are more vulnerable to accidents and have greater needs for public transportation and walking. Nationwide, individuals 65+ constitute 12.4% of the population and account for 21.7% of pedestrian deaths. "Older Americans are 96% more likely to be killed while walking than those under 65 years of age."[7]
- See attachment for additional pedestrian crossing issues for your consideration.

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[5] Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. Proven Safety Countermeasures: Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon. FHSA-SA-12-012. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/proven countermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_012.htm

[6] Safety Effects of Marked versus Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations: Final Report and Recommended Guidelines. Report FHWA-HRT-04-100. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina. August 2005. http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/04100/04100.pdf

[7] Transportation for America. Dangerous by Design 2011. May 2011, pp. 18 and 20. Based on death certificate information from the Centers for Disease Control. https://www.T4america.org/resources/dangerousbydesign

Again, I strongly urge the Maryland State Highway Administration to install a pedestrian-activated traffic signal at the intersection of Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) and Lenox Street to increase public safety and facilitate safe access across this busy commuter route. On behalf of the Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers I thank you and the SHA staff for your careful consideration of our request. Should you or a member of your staff need to contact the Village office, please do not hesitate to contact our Village Manager, Shana Davis-Cook or our Director of Municipal Operations, Michael Younes at (301) 654-7300.

Sincerely,

Patricia Baptiste

Patricia Baptiste
Chair, Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers

Attachment

cc: Senator Richard S. Madaleno, Jr., Maryland District 18
Delegate Alfred C. Carr, Jr., Maryland District 18
Delegate Ana Sol Gutierrez, Maryland District 18
Delegate Jeffrey D. Waldstreicher, Maryland District 18
Honorable Roger Berliner & Montgomery County Council
Beverley Swaim-Staley, Secretary of Transportation, Maryland Department of Transportation
Darrell Mobley, Deputy Secretary of Transportation, Maryland Department of Transportation
Brian Young, District Engineer, State Highway Administration District 3
Augustine Rebish, Assistant District Engineer, State Highway Administration District 3
Cedric Ward, Assistant District Engineer - Traffic, State Highway Administration District 3
Thomas Hicks, Director, Office of Traffic & Safety, State Highway Administration
Woody Hood, III, Deputy Director, Office of Traffic & Safety, State Highway Administration
Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Shana R. Davis-Cook, Village Manger, Chevy Chase Village
Michael W. Younes, Director of Municipal Operations, Chevy Chase Village
Chevy Chase Village Traffic Committee

PSB:mwy

Attachment 1

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ISSUES—CONNECTICUT AVE. (MD 185) CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

- 3,200 feet between Chevy Chase Circle and Bradley Lane
- In that stretch there are:
  - No marked crosswalks
  - No pedestrian crossing lights
  - 7 Bus Stops
- Traffic Volume—approximately 30,000 vehicle/day[1]
- 6 lanes of traffic
- No shoulders
- Median is less than 30 inches
- Lane width below modern standards (approximately 8 feet)
- No traffic controls connecting public transit stops

CONNECTICUT AVE DIVIDES CHEVY CHASE VILLAGE

- Public facilities are cut off from many Village residents
  - Village Hall
  - Police
  - Post Office
- 2,100 residents
- 720 households
- Approximately equal numbers on either side of Connecticut Ave

VILLAGE HALL AND POST OFFICE ARE HEAVILY USED

- More than 3,200 walk-in and pickup transactions with police per year[2]
- More than 650 in-person visits to Village officials (permits and enforcement)[3]
- More than 113 events per year in Village Hall (ranging from fewer than 10 to more than 500 individual per event)[4]
- About 31,650 transactions per year at Village Post Office (2,645/month on average)[5]
- Sources: Village data and USPS

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[1] Source: Chevy Chase Village speed camera data, 2010 and 2011.
[2] Source: Chevy Chase Village Police reports to Village, year ending December 2011.
[3] Source: Chevy Chase Village Board briefing book, monthly, 2011, projected to annual value.
[4] Source: Chevy Chase Village Board briefing book, 2011.
[5] Source: U.S. Postal Service, memorandum Gabriel Hamilton to Jan Acton, email, Feb. 21, 2012.

PEDESTRIAN USE IS DISCOURAGED BY LACK OF SAFE CROSSING

- Pedestrians must step into the roadway to have right of way
- Pedestrians do not feel safe stepping into Connecticut without added protection
  - Vehicles average 28 – 30 MPH at speed cameras
    - About 50,000 – 60,000 vehicles per year exceed 42 MPH (0.6-0.7%)
    - Violators average 45 – 47 MPH
    - Source: Village speed camera data
  - Pedestrian fatalities rise with vehicle speed
    - Pedestrians struck by a vehicle travelling 20 MPH have a fatality rate of 5%
    - Pedestrians struck by a vehicle travelling 30 MPH have a fatality rate of 45%
    - Pedestrians struck by a vehicle travelling 40 MPH have a fatality rate of 85%
    - Source: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)[6]

- It is dangerous to stand on the median
  - Median is narrow—less than 30 inches
  - No space for adults with children or strollers
  - No space for pedestrians with animals on leash
  - No space for stopping with a bicycle
- Individuals with physical or visual disabilities are discouraged or prevented from using public transit or participating in community activities

PEDESTRIAN CROSS LIGHTS SAVE LIVES

- FHWA recommends pedestrian-triggered lights at uncontrolled crossings
  - The pedestrian hybrid beacon (also known as High intensity Activated crosswalk or HAWK) is a recommended FHWA safety measure[7]
  - HAWK signals have reduced pedestrian fatalities 69% at midblock installations and 29% overall[8]

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[6] FHWA Safety Program. Pedestrian Safety Strategic Plan: Background Report. Fig. 4. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/pssp/background/psafety.cfm

[7] Tony Furst, Acting Associate Administrator for Safety, FHWA Office of Safety. "ACTION: Promoting the Implementation of Proven Safety Countermeasures," Memorandum to Division Administrators, Jan 12, 2012. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/pc_memo.htm

[8] Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. Proven Safety Countermeasures: Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon. FHSA-SA-12-012. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/proven countermeasures/fhwa_sa_12_012.htm.

- HAWK has been tested successfully in Montgomery County (Gude Drive)[9]
- In-Road Warning Lights (INWL) in crosswalk pavement has also been successfully implemented in Montgomery County and other locations[10]

ONLY A LIGHT WILL PERMIT PEDESTRIANS TO CROSS AT GRADE WITH A SENSE OF SAFETY

- Marked crosswalks alone do not control multilane traffic adequately according to FHWA study of 1,000 pedestrian crashes over a 5 year period
  - Pedestrian fatalities increased at marked crosswalks with multilane roads and traffic volume above 12,000/day compared with unmarked crosswalks[11]

- Traffic benefits of pedestrian-triggered lights
  - Minimizes disruption to traffic on Connecticut Ave.
  - No increased side-street diversions

IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN ACCESS HAS VALUABLE BENEFITS

- Promotes participation in civic and governmental affairs by half of Village residents cut off from community facilities
- Health and social benefits from increased walking
- Environmental benefits from reduced vehicular traffic
- Heavy pedestrian traffic in eastern half of Village demonstrates desire to walk
  - Parents walking children to Blessed Sacrament school
  - Walkers to all churches on Circle
  - Walkers to Chevy Chase DC facilities
  - Heavy use of Brookville Rd. after sidewalks installed
  - Fitness and dog walking in Village
- Almost no one crosses Connecticut Ave. at present for these purposes

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS IS NECESSARY FOR LONG TERM COMMUNITY GOALS

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[9] "Go Montgomery". Montgomery County, MD – BLOG. Downloaded 2/29/2012. http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/News/Blog/pioBlog.asp?blogID=17&Cat=Traffic%20Signal

[10] Personal communication, Chief John Fitzgerald, Chevy Chase Village Police. See installation at Dover Air Force Base. http://www.dover.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123122232 An animated demonstration of the light is presented at http://www.crosswalks.com/

[11] Safety Effects of Marked versus Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations: Final Report and Recommended Guidelines. Report FHWA-HRT-04-100. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina. August 2005. http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/04100/04100.pdf

- Nationwide, pedestrian fatalities account for nearly 12 percent of all traffic fatalities[12]
- Seniors 65 years and older have a 96 percent increased fatality risk as pedestrians compared with the population under 65 years of age[13]
- Older adults have much to gain from walking when it is safe
  - Many older adults cannot or choose not to drive
  - If they do not have safe transportation alternatives, including walking, they often become stranded in their homes
- "Aging in place" requires safe pedestrian facilities as people drive less
- People with disabilities need to use public transportation
  - Requires safe access to cross Connecticut Av to reach bus stops at Lenox St.

[12] In the most recent decade, 2000 through 2009, more than 47,700 pedestrians were killed. Transportation for America. Dangerous by Design 2011. May 2011, p. 4. https://www.T4america.org/resources/dangerousbydesign.

[13] Transportation for America. Dangerous by Design 2011. May 2011, pp. 18 and 20. Based on death certificate information from the Centers for Disease Control. https://www.T4america.org/resources/dangerousbydesign.