



CLEVELAND PARK
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

*PO Box 11444
Washington, DC 20008*

May 17, 2023

Dear Commissioners,

Attached are the results of a survey we conducted of CPCA members regarding whether to keep the service lane closed to traffic, reopen it, or adopt a hybrid approach. Following are our comments on how to proceed in light of these results. As explained below, there are significant issues to understand better. There is also an opportunity currently to try keeping the service lane closed without exposing retailers to a complete loss of parking on that side of the Avenue. This opportunity should be used in our view to gather more comprehensive data to inform future policy on usage of the service lane area.

Our survey addressed both member practices and preferences. Response was robust, indicating significant interest in the topic. In terms of member practices, a great majority of respondents (80%) indicated that they generally walk to Connecticut. At the same time, a substantial minority indicated that they also drive there from time to time. As to what retail they patronize on their visits, respondents frequently use non-eatery establishments on Connecticut Avenue primarily, though they go to eateries as well whether for pick-up or to dine in. When driving, they generally park for up to 20 minutes and rarely for more than an hour. A fairly small minority of respondents primarily drive to the Avenue. It also bears noting that a significant minority of respondents generally frequent Wisconsin Avenue rather than Connecticut; among the reasons is more parking.

Turning to member preferences for the service lane, half of respondents prefer at least some closure and half either prefer to keep the lane open to traffic (@ 1/3) or feel they need more information (the remainder). A strong plurality supported permanent closure, including some who drive to the Avenue. A small minority including of drivers, supported permanent closure. The remainder supported closure under some circumstances such as weekends or special events.

In sum, these results suggest a substantial amount of neighborhood resident patronage currently is on foot for eateries and non-eateries alike, with significant car usage as well, generally requiring parking for less than an hour. They also show support for at least partial closure of the service lane.

These data offer a potential snapshot of neighborhood resident practices and preferences, but can really only be relied on as an indicator warranting further validation. The results do not speak to modes of transport or patronage practices of visitors to the neighborhood. The data also do not speak to the relative volume of sales for walkers vs. drivers or associated with shorter term vs. longer-term parking. They do not address other questions such as loading/unloading needs or employee commuting practices. Nor do they indicate whether patronage currently captured by Wisconsin could instead be captured by Connecticut retailers if there were more parking.

The view of the CPCA Board is that the community and our local businesses now have an important opportunity to assess practices after the Streetscape project wraps up. We now have the chance to gather rigorous data on the effects of service lane closure without exposing retailers to loss of all parking on that side of the Avenue as has been under consideration as part of a Connecticut Avenue traffic redesign.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with ANC 3C and the Cleveland Park Main Street to have an independent survey conducted of patrons, retailers and their employees to understand, for example, the breakdown of modes of transport and its relationship to sales volumes, and to loading and unloading demands. The results would inform longer-term decisions on how to manage the service lane.

It seems clear that closing the service lane to traffic would be a good thing if sufficient parking and capacity for loading and unloading can be maintained. The world has changed since these questions were last evaluated, and the future traffic design of Connecticut Avenue is one of the new variables that may affect the viability of our Connecticut Avenue commercial corridor.

We have time now to gather the information we need to support a vital, diverse business corridor, and inform advocacy for the service lane use longer term and for the traffic design of the Avenue. We look forward to working with you to take advantage of it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Barlow Weiner". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "W".

John Barlow Weiner
President