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Ms. Eliza Voigt, AICP
Planner
National Mall and Memorial Parks
National Park Service
1100 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, D.C. 20024-2000

Dear Ms. Voigt:

Re: Initial Comments on the Capital Bikeshare Stations on the National Mall

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City is pleased to provide initial comments on the proposed Capital Bikeshare Stations on the National Mall. Our comments are based on the information provided in the November 22, 2011 email project announcement, and on the Park Service “Planning, Environment and Public Comment” (PEPC) website.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City has long been concerned with protecting and enhancing, in our time, the various elements of the L’Enfant Plan (1791-92) and the planning work of the McMillan Commission (1901-02). The future of the various areas of the Monumental Core of Washington, including the National Mall, is a major interest of the Committee, as these areas evolve in the 21st century.

The Committee has been involved with the planning process for the National Mall for the past several years. In our comments on the National Mall Plan, the Committee of 100 has been concerned with achieving a comprehensive transportation system that helps integrate the National Mall with adjacent areas of Central Washington. We believe that an overall system of bicycle transportation is an important element of the National Mall transportation system.

As this work moves forward, we believe that the National Park Service should take a more comprehensive approach for the Bicycle Plan for the National Mall (part of the overall National Mall Transportation Plan). This would include these initial and future Capital Bikeshare Station locations, the location of bike racks for bicyclists using their own bikes, and the alignment of bike paths and bikeways throughout the National Mall. This plan should be integrated with plans for existing and future Capital Bikeshare Station location in areas adjacent to the National Mall, both in federal areas and areas of private development. The elements of the Bicycle Plan should, of course, be integrated with the overall signage and information system for the National Mall.

The Committee of 100 is therefore pleased to see this initial information on the proposed Capital Bikeshare Stations on the National Mall. However, we are concerned that the information provided is limited, so it is not possible to fully evaluate and comment on the proposed Bikeshare Stations. One of the issues with the overall National Mall Plan, now approved, is that it was supposedly a plan for the entire National Mall but in fact focused primarily on the areas of the National Mall administered by the National Park Service. It appears that this same approach has been followed in outlining these proposed Capital Bikeshare Stations, without adequate consideration of other areas of the National Mall under the jurisdiction of other entities, such as the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, the Department of Agriculture, and the Architect of the Capitol. Our comments are therefore relatively simple and are based on the initial information that the National Park Service has provided.

Location of the Capital Bikeshare Stations on the National Mall

The information that has been made available to the public, in text, photographs and an overall map, proposes five locations for Capital Bikeshare Stations on the National Mall: 1) Smithsonian Metro Station entrance area on the National Mall, 2) Lincoln Memorial area, 3) Jefferson Memorial area, 4) Washington Monument area, and 5) FDR/MLK Memorial area. These five general locations seem appropriate, based on the information that has been provided. As indicated below, more detailed site plan review of each of these areas is needed.

In the overall sense, it seems likely that additional Capital Bikeshare Stations will be needed on the National Mall in the future. For example, there are no locations shown east of 12th Street at the Smithsonian (National Mall) Metrorail Station entrance. It seems likely that one or more additional Capital Bikeshare Station locations will be needed further east along the National Mall, either on National Park Service land or on land administered by the Smithsonian Institution, the National Gallery of Art, or the Architect of the Capitol. It also seems likely that one or more Capital Bikeshare Stations will be needed in the Constitution Gardens section of the National Mall.

It also seems likely that one or more Capital Bikeshare Stations will be needed in President's Park South, an area for which the National Park Service and the U.S. Secret Service are now undertaking planning studies as background for the preparation of a design plan. We understand that technically the President's Park South area is part of a separate administrative area of the National Park Service. However, in fact it functions as part of the National Mall and should be part of overall bicycle system planning for the National Mall.

More Detailed Capital Bikeshare Stations Site Plan Review

It is not entirely clear where each Capital Bikeshare Station is proposed to be located, since only a general description and photographs have been provided (no site plans). Clearly, each location needs to be convenient to appropriate sites (memorials, Metrorail station entrance, etc.), be safe for users and adjacent pedestrian and traffic movements, and yet not detract from the special character of that site (memorials, landscape, etc). The Committee of 100 has not attempted to provide detailed site plan comments at this time. We understand that the five sites will be subject to review by the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and those bodies will certainly consider both transportation and design issues. There will likely be an opportunity for further public comment at the time of those reviews.

Need for Continuing Evaluation Based on Experience

The Committee of 100 realizes that the design and location of Capital Bikeshare Stations is not an exact science, and that a better understanding of needs will be gained as the initial Bikeshare Stations are installed and used. Over time, the number, location and size of Capital Bikeshare Stations on the National Mall may have to be revised, along with other elements of the bicycle system. The Committee of 100 is pleased to see this start of a new element of the bicycle system on the National Mall. We look forward to additional information in the future.

Sincerely,

John Fondersmith

John Fondersmith, AICP

Representing the Committee of 100 on the Federal City

cc: Richard Houghton, Chair
Planning Subcommittee

Meg Maguire, Chair
Transportation Subcommittee

George R. Clark, Esq., Chair
Committee of 100 on the Federal City