



Open House #1 Summary

October 2019

Revision Date	Version	File Path	Description
10/16/2019	1		

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CHAPTER 1 OPEN HOUSE INFORMATION AND FORMAT

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT), in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is proposing transportation improvements along approximately 2 miles of the Benning Road corridor in the northeast area of Washington, DC. The Benning Road Reconstruction and Streetcar Project (the project) aims to improve transportation infrastructure conditions and enhance safety and operations along the Benning Road corridor from Oklahoma Avenue NE to East Capitol Street. The project includes reconstructing bridges in need of repair, enhancing pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and extending streetcar transit service to the Benning Road Metrorail station.

A draft environmental assessment (EA)—Benning Road and Bridges Transportation Improvements Environmental Assessment—has been prepared by others in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), FHWA's Environmental Impact and Related Procedures (23 CFR 771 and 774), FHWA's Technical Advisory Guidance for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents (T6640.8A), and DDOT's *Environmental Process Manual*. The EA also includes the evaluation of potential effects to cultural resources in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.). The draft EA was published in April 2016, followed by a public comment period, and is currently under review.

The current phase of work will build upon the work of the April 2016 draft EA and complete preliminary engineering (PE). In addition to the PE tasks, an interchange modification report (IMR) will be completed for modifications made to the bridges at the interchange of DC-295 and Benning Road NE. To determine the level of impacts associated with modifications to the bridges, environmental study and documentation will be prepared in accordance with DDOT guidance and policy, and pursuant to NEPA for the interchange improvement conceptual design.

Benning Road is a priority corridor to the public with many interested parties ranging from elected officials to neighborhood organizations and District agencies, who will be engaged with throughout the project. The first public Open House took place on September 19, 2019 and two others are planned throughout the course of the project. The feedback gained at these events will be used to refine the design concepts for Benning Road. The following summarizes the findings of the first Open House.

1.1 Purpose of the Open House

The purpose of this open house workshop was to inform stakeholders and the public of the preliminary design phase and assist DDOT in responding to questions received from reviewers and the public during the EA comment period. In addition, DDOT provided an overview of the potential modifications of the DC-295 and Benning Road Interchange. The goal of the open house was to inform, garner needed stakeholder feedback, and address stakeholder concerns.

1.2 Event Information

The event was held on Thursday, September 19, 2019, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Department of Employment Services (DOES). DOES is located in the project area near the Minnesota Avenue Metrorail station and can be accessed via multiple bus lines and mobility options including rideshare, scooter, and bikeshare.

1.3 Format

Due to the voluminous nature of the information that needed to be shared during the meeting, the project team chose an open house format with attendees invited to informally discuss board displays with DDOT staff and project consultants. In anticipation of the large public participation, the project team provided multiple duplicate stations, allowing ample opportunity for stakeholder engagement. To further foster stakeholder engagement, DDOT made certain at least two staff members were present at each station. Three sets



of large corridor maps also were provided, which allowed attendees to place notes at various locations within the project area.

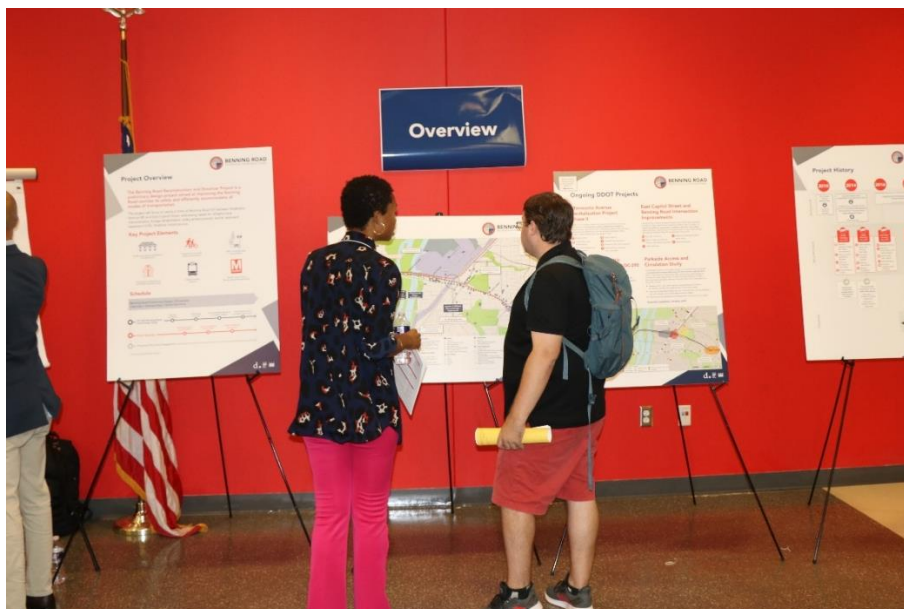
In lieu of a formal presentation, each team member assigned to a station served as the content expert, introducing attendees to the project, providing background information, explaining the EA process, explaining the meeting's purpose, and presenting the next steps in the process. To capture the public's comments, a notetaker was assigned to each station. Participants were encouraged to utilize sticky notes on boards and maps as well as Title VI forms for comments. Project team members were positioned near each board and the maps to listen to comments and answer questions.

1.4 Boards and Activities

The project team designed all boards and activities in such a way as to offer attendees an overview of the project element and collect feedback from them in return. The following boards and activities were provided:

- **Welcome Board**: This board was placed outside the DOES building leading to the community room to greet attendees and provide additional information about the open house.
- **Fact Sheet Board**: This board provided a project overview, outlining the six key project elements and the project schedule.
- **Project Area Context Board**: This board included a large map of the nearly two-mile project area as well as key landmarks, neighborhoods, and points of interest. The map not only highlighted the project corridor, but also included the locations of other nearby DDOT projects and studies.
- **Ongoing Projects Board**: This board highlighted and elaborated on the other nearby DDOT projects and studies included on the Project Area Context Board to provide further context for the project.
- **Project History Board**: The purpose of this board was to provide attendees with background information on the current project and the preceding projects between 2010 and the present. The board also highlighted previous stakeholder comments and outcomes to date.

- Interchange Needs and Deficiencies Board: This board addressed the safety, geometry, mobility, and access needs of the DC-295/Benning Road Interchange.
- Interchange Traffic Board: This board provided recent traffic data and historical crash data from January 2016 to December 2018.
- Interchange Board: This board highlighted the potential interchange modifications at DC-295/Benning Road ramps via to be looked at in the IMR and environmental study.
- Interchange NEPA Board: This board defined the NEPA process and asked that the public identify additional environmental resources to be considered.
- Bridge Conditions Board: This board provided information concerning each of the bridges along the corridor including date constructed, lifecycle, and possible bridge concepts.
- Traffic Board: This board summarized existing daily traffic volumes, historical volume trends, and travel patterns.
- Design Process Board: This board sought to educate the public about the DDOT project development process.
- Design Public Comment Board: This board provided an overview of previous responses to design-related public comments from the Benning Road and Bridges Transportation Improvements EA.
- Scroll Maps: The scroll maps were segmented in three sections, allowing the public ample opportunity to tailor their comments to key locations along the corridor.
- Flip Charts: Flip charts were in multiple locations and provided another opportunity for additional comments.
- Comment Cards: The comment cards were designed to obtain answers to the following questions:
 - Do you agree with the proposed objectives of the DC-295/Benning Road Interchange portion of the project? If not, please explain what you think should be added.
 - Are you aware of any social, cultural, or natural resources in the project area that should be considered in the interchange environmental study? If yes, please explain below.
 - What additional improvements, if any, would you like to see considered in the Benning Road Reconstruction and Streetcar Project and why?
 - Additional comments.



CHAPTER 2 OUTREACH EFFORTS

Outreach for the open house was key to allowing the community to receive project information and get engaged in the process. The project team took careful effort to include stakeholders, organizations, institutions, media outlets, and as many residents as could be reached.

2.1 Notifications

The project team contacted organizations, elected officials, media outlets, residents, and institutions in a variety of ways, including email blasts, social media, flyers, rack cards, and posters that were distributed throughout the community. DDOT also partnered with sister agencies to utilize their stakeholder networks to reach the community.

2.1.1 Media

A press release was crafted and distributed to the DDOT listserv and other media outlets, including social media platforms and websites.

2.1.2 Electronic Communications and Social Media

Contact information was collected and used for information distribution regarding the project. The initial meeting announcement and reminder/follow-up emails were sent to the more than 500 recipients on the project contact database according to the schedule included below:

Table 1: Email Blast Schedule

Date of Email Blast	Number of Recipients	Email Purpose
09/10/19	450	Open House Announcement
09/11/19	452	Meeting Reminder 1
09/16/19	520	Meeting Reminder 2
09/18/19	520	Meeting Reminder 3
09/25/19	587	Thank You Email and Online Survey Requests
09/27/19	587	Online Survey Requests
10/02/19	572	Comments Requests

Electronic notifications also were submitted to:

- DC agency and council member listservs/newsletters
- Federal agency regional office listservs/newsletters
- Neighborhood listservs/social media
- Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) listservs
- Neighborhood listservs and Facebook groups

Open house information also was distributed using DDOT Twitter and Facebook profiles. These profiles together reach almost 44,000 followers. Meeting reminders were posted on Twitter and Facebook, which were later shared by other users.

2.1.3 Organizations

The project team contacted and sent information about the open house to neighborhood and civic organizations including:

- ANC 5D
- ANC 6A
- ANC 7D
- ANC 75
- ANC 2E
- Ward 7 MOCRS
- Ward 5 MOCRS
- Parkside Civic Association
- Kingman Park Civic Association
- ANC 7D Standing Committee
- Trinidad Association
- Langston Terrace Civic Association
- East Capital Gardens Association
- River terrace Association
- Anacostia Park and Community Collaborative
- Marshal Heights Association

2.1.4 Rack Cards and Posters

The project team distributed 2,600 rack cards and 185 posters throughout the project area and to area stakeholders. The rack card provided a brief introduction, project area map, process graphic, meeting information, and contact information. The rack cards and posters were distributed and placed in libraries, recreation centers, churches, coffee shops, grocery stores, bus stops, and other community spaces around the project area. The project team also conducted targeted delivery to homes/residences along the corridor. This type of distribution was intended, in part, to reach Title VI populations.

2.1.5 Website

The project website allows the public to sign up electronically for project emails and provides the opportunity for two-way communication between the public and project team. It also serves as a clearinghouse for timely information updates about the EA and related project activities. The site provides a public-facing presence that clearly identifies project scope, intent, and progress. It also serves as a primary point of access for the public or other stakeholders to view and submit feedback or questions on informational materials.

Join the Conversation!

BENNING ROAD

Open House #1

**THURSDAY
September 19, 2019
6:30 pm to 8:30 pm**

Meeting Location:
Department of Employment Services (DOES)
4058 Minnesota Ave NE
Washington, DC 20019

The Benning Road Reconstruction and Streetcar Project will produce preliminary design concepts with improvements that safely and efficiently accommodate all modes of transportation, as part of the ongoing Benning Road and Bridges Transportation Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA).

At this meeting, DDOT will provide a brief overview of the project and seek public input on concepts and resources that should be considered.

Legend		
—●—●— Proposed new	 Obsolete Stop - Proposd	 Old-Save Trail
—— Interchange or Existing	 Metrolink Line	■ CR Right-Rail Tracks
--- Benning Road - proposed future or	 Potential Station	+ Meeting Locatior
••••• Obsolete Stop - Existing	 On-call bike facility	

Bridge and roadway rehabilitation and replacement

Pedestrian and bicyclist safety enhancements

Streetcar end of line at Benning Road Metrorail station

Interchange modifications at DC-295/Benning Road ramps

Center running streetcar

Safety and streetscape improvements

DDOT is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, its projects, programs, activities, and services on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and other related statutes. If you need special accommodations, please contact Cesar Barreto at 202-671-2829 or cesar.barreto@ddot.gov. If you need language assistance services (translation or interpretation), please contact Karen Randolph at 202-671-2620 or karen.randolph@ddot.gov. These services will be provided free of charge.

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[info@benningproject.com](#)

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@ddotdc
d. dc

Information regarding the open house was posted on the website’s project resources page prior to the meeting date. All meeting materials were also uploaded to the website on Friday, September 20, 2019 (the day after the meeting).

2.1.6 Title VI Outreach

The project team identified key locations in the project area in which it could reach Title VI populations. Information was sent both electronically and physically distributed to the following locations:

Schools/Libraries:

- River Terrace Education Campus
- Phelps ACE High School
- Charles Young Elementary School
- Two Rivers Public Charter School at Young
- Friendship Public Charter School – Collegiate Academy
- Emergent Preparatory Academy
- Smothers Elementary School
- DC PREP

Community Centers:

- Anacostia Recreation Center
- River Terrace Recreation Center
- Marshall Heights Community Development
- Dorothy I. Height/Benning Neighborhood Library
- Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington
- Marshall Heights Community Development

Housing/Multi-family Developments:

- East Capitol Gardens
- Langston Terrace
- Park 7 Apartments
- Minnesota Commons Apartments
- 4228 Benning Road Apartments
- Benning Woods Apartment

Churches:

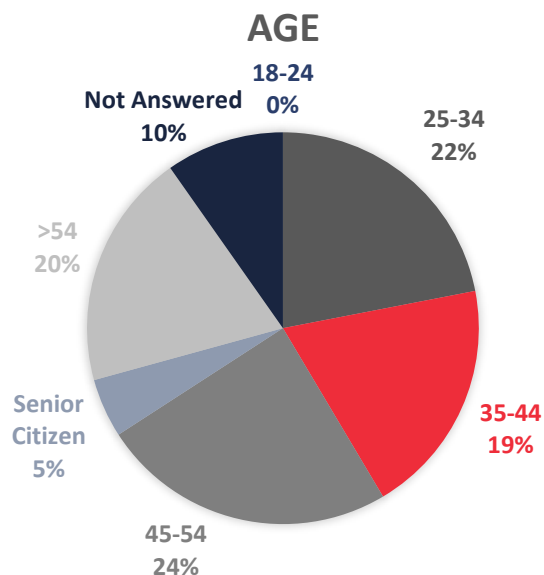
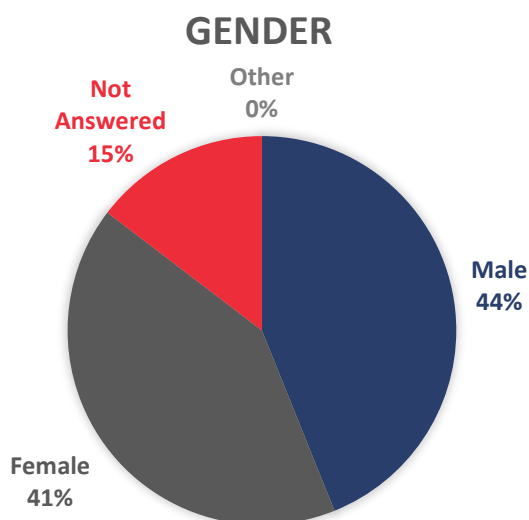
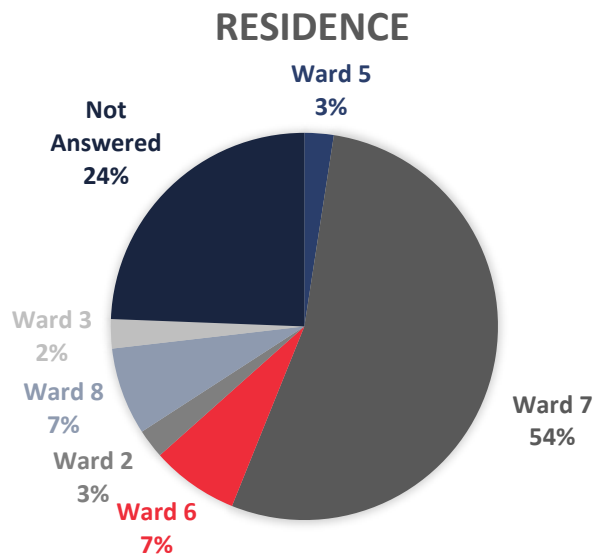
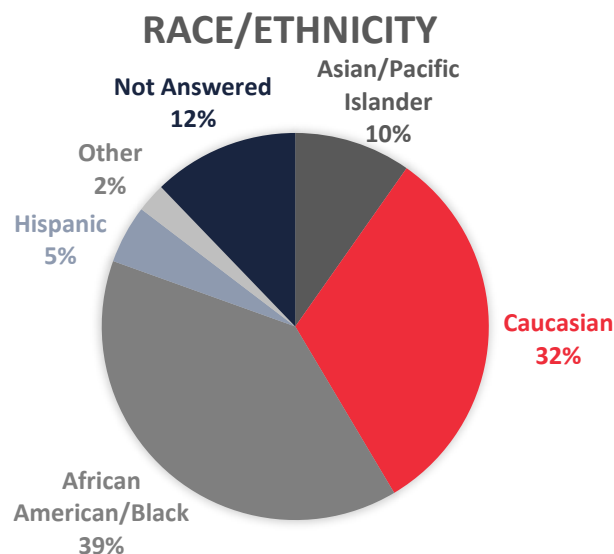
- Varick Memorial AME Zion
- Ward Memorial AME Church
- New Grove Baptist Church
- New Mt Calvary Baptist Church
- East Friendship Baptist Church
- Almas Temple

CHAPTER 3 ATTENDANCE

74 members of the public signed in at the open house. Additional attendees not included on the sign-in sheet included elected officials (ANCs), stakeholders, and representatives from other institutions.

3.1 Attendees

The charts below represent the demographic makeup of meeting attendees who completed Title VI surveys. The location of the meeting was in Ward 7; therefore, there was a higher number of Ward 7 residents in attendance.



CHAPTER 4 COMMENTS

Comments, feedback, and other input were received throughout the duration of the open house as well as afterwards via the provided online comment card. The following sections summarize the input received. A full comment matrix is provided in **Appendix A**.

4.1 Flip Chart Comments

The project team made flip charts available in multiple locations, which provided another opportunity to collect additional comments. The project team collected the flip charts immediately following the open house to record the comments, which are summarized below. Images of the flip charts are provided at the end of this document. The comments include:

- The desire for increased bus service along the corridor, including the introduction of DC Circulator service

- The need for bus shelters
- The desire for dedicated bus- and streetcar-only lanes
- The need for enhanced and expanded pedestrian facilities in the corridor
- Concern for cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets
- Concern for vehicular speeding on Benning Road
- The need for dedicated bicycle facilities along the corridor
- Concern for parking availability
- Support for new connections to Kingman Park
- Not supportive of the proposed streetcar extension
- Streetcar travel speeds compared to bus travel speeds
- Support for proposed streetcar extension
- Concern for access and safety provisions at the Boys and Girls Club
- Concerned for street lighting during construction
- Desire for Minnesota Avenue streetcar alignment option
- Concern for impacts to residences and residential zones along Benning Road
- Concern for property impacts and communication on eminent domain
- Concern for emergency access along the corridor

4.2 Scroll Map Comments

The project team made large scroll maps of the corridor, the DDOT Preferred Alternative streetcar alignment, and potential streetcar stop concepts available at several tabletop stations at the open house. The corridor was divided into three segments to allow participants to review and comment on the section of the corridor that most closely relates to them.

The scroll maps were collected immediately following the open house to record comments, summarized below per segment. Images of the maps are provided at the end of this document.

4.2.1 Kingman Island – Langston

- Streetcar Stops
 - Support for a streetcar stop location at Kingman Island
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements
 - Support for proposed cycle track and separate sidewalk
- Parks and Open Space
 - Desire for shade to be incorporated into design
 - Support for connections to the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail

4.2.2 River Terrace – Parkside

- Streetcar Alignment
 - Desire for a dedicated streetcar-only lane
- Streetcar Stops
 - Desire for enhanced connections to Metrorail service
- Bus Service

- Support for coordinated operation of bus and streetcar service
- Parks and Open Space
 - Desire for maximizing green space within the project
- Traffic, Congestion, and Emergency Vehicle Access
 - Support for dedicated turning lanes
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements
 - Support for more attractive bike and pedestrian access to Kingman Island and along the project corridor
- Safety
 - Desire for floating bus stops to prevent conflicts between bikes, pedestrians, and buses
 - Desire to see the intersections prioritize safety of pedestrians and cyclists over movement of vehicles
 - Support for banning left-turn movements at intersections
 - Concern for safety, specifically within the vicinity of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington

4.2.3 Minnesota Ave Metro – Benning Heights

- Streetcar Alignment
 - Concern for the streetcar interacting with through traffic along Benning Road
 - Desire for a dedicated streetcar-only lane
- Streetcar Stops
 - End of Line Option 1
 - More pedestrian friendly
 - Proximity to Shrimp Boat Plaza and other cultural landmarks
 - Location could help increase business for nearby establishments
 - End of Line Option 2
 - Perceived as less pedestrian friendly than Option 1
 - Suggestion to design the plaza with community amenities
 - Location is farther away from shopping and other destinations
- Bus Service
 - Desire for DC Circulator service in the corridor
 - Concern for potential impacts of the streetcar on existing Metrobus route X2
- Tree Canopy
 - Concern for the project affecting the tree canopy along Benning Road
- Parks and Open Space
 - Interest in potential improvements to Fort Mahan Park
- Traffic, Congestion, and Emergency Vehicle Access
 - Concern for traffic impacts of the project on Benning Road and East Capitol Street
 - Concern for the project's effects on emergency vehicle access
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements
 - Suggestion to extend improvements beyond Minnesota Avenue and along the entire project corridor
- Potential Future Construction

- Concern for noise and vibrations as a result of potential future construction
- Safety
 - Concern for safety, specifically within the vicinity of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington
 - Concern for the safety of a shared travel lane between streetcars and vehicles
- Parking
 - Concern for parking impacts at New Mt. Cavalry Baptist Church

4.3 In-Person Comment Card Responses

The project team distributed an in-person comment card at the open house. The comment card asked participants the following questions:

1. Do you agree with the proposed objectives of the DC-295/Benning Road Interchange portion of the project? If not, please explain what you think should be added.
2. Are you aware of any social, cultural, or natural resources in the project area that should be considered in the interchange environmental study? If yes, please explain below.
3. What additional improvements, if any, would you like to see considered in the Benning Road Reconstruction and Streetcar Project and why?
4. Additional comments.

Responses to the comment cards are summarized below:

- Question 1:
 - The majority of respondents agreed with the proposed objectives of the DC-295/Benning Road Interchange portion of the project,
 - Some noted that additional bicycle and pedestrian facilities would be beneficial for access and safety
 - Some comments expressed concern for traffic congestion at the interchange
 - A few respondents did not agree with the proposed objectives or the project as a whole, largely due to perceived impacts to bus service, traffic congestion, and usefulness to area residents
- Question 2:
 - Some of the resources listed include: the Anacostia River, Kingman Island, parks, historic properties, the tree canopy, and children and senior citizen populations
- Question 3:
 - There was considerable emphasis placed on improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities, especially regarding waterfront, parks, and trails access
 - Some participants noted a preference for dedicated streetcar- and bus-only lanes along the corridor
- Question 4:
 - Additional comments requested increased and enhanced bus service, interest in future community outreach, bridge design, and bicycle access to proposed streetcar stops

4.4 Online Comment Card Responses

In addition to in-person comment cards, meeting participants and others were encouraged to fill out the online comment card, which was posted on the project website. The project team made the online comment card available after the open house and it remained open until October 4, 2019. An email blast was sent to nearly 600 subscribers in the contact database informing them that the open house materials had been posted on the website and encouraging them to complete the online comment card. The comment card asked participants the same questions as the in-person survey (see **Section 4.3**) and was completed by 60 people.

- Question 1:
 - Most respondents agreed with the proposed objectives of the DC-295/Benning Road Interchange portion of the project. Additional comments included are summarized below:
 - Improve transit service and install streetcar- and bus-only lanes
 - Include additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities for safety and access
 - Enhance vehicular connectivity to the neighborhood via the interchange
 - Shift focus more toward streetcar and pedestrians and away from vehicular traffic
- Question 2:
 - When asked about additional environmental resources, several participants responded. Noted environmental resources include:
 - Aging residents and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access
 - Connectivity between neighborhoods as a matter of equity
 - Access to Kingman Island and Anacostia Riverwalk Trail
 - Local health facilities, schools, and community facilities
 - Impacts to residential areas
 - Air pollution and air quality
- Question 3:
 - Several participants noted that they would like additional improvements to be considered. Improvements mentioned most often include:
 - Façade improvements to local businesses
 - Dedicated streetcar- and bus-only lanes
 - Protected bicycle facilities along the project corridor
 - Improved and expanded pedestrian facilities
 - Additional trees and green space
 - Traffic calming
- Question 4:
 - Additional comments touched on vehicular traffic, interest in future community outreach, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities

4.5 Other Comments

The project team received additional comments, feedback, and other input via email or through the comment entry form on the project website. This content is provided in **Appendix A**.

4.6 Key Takeaways

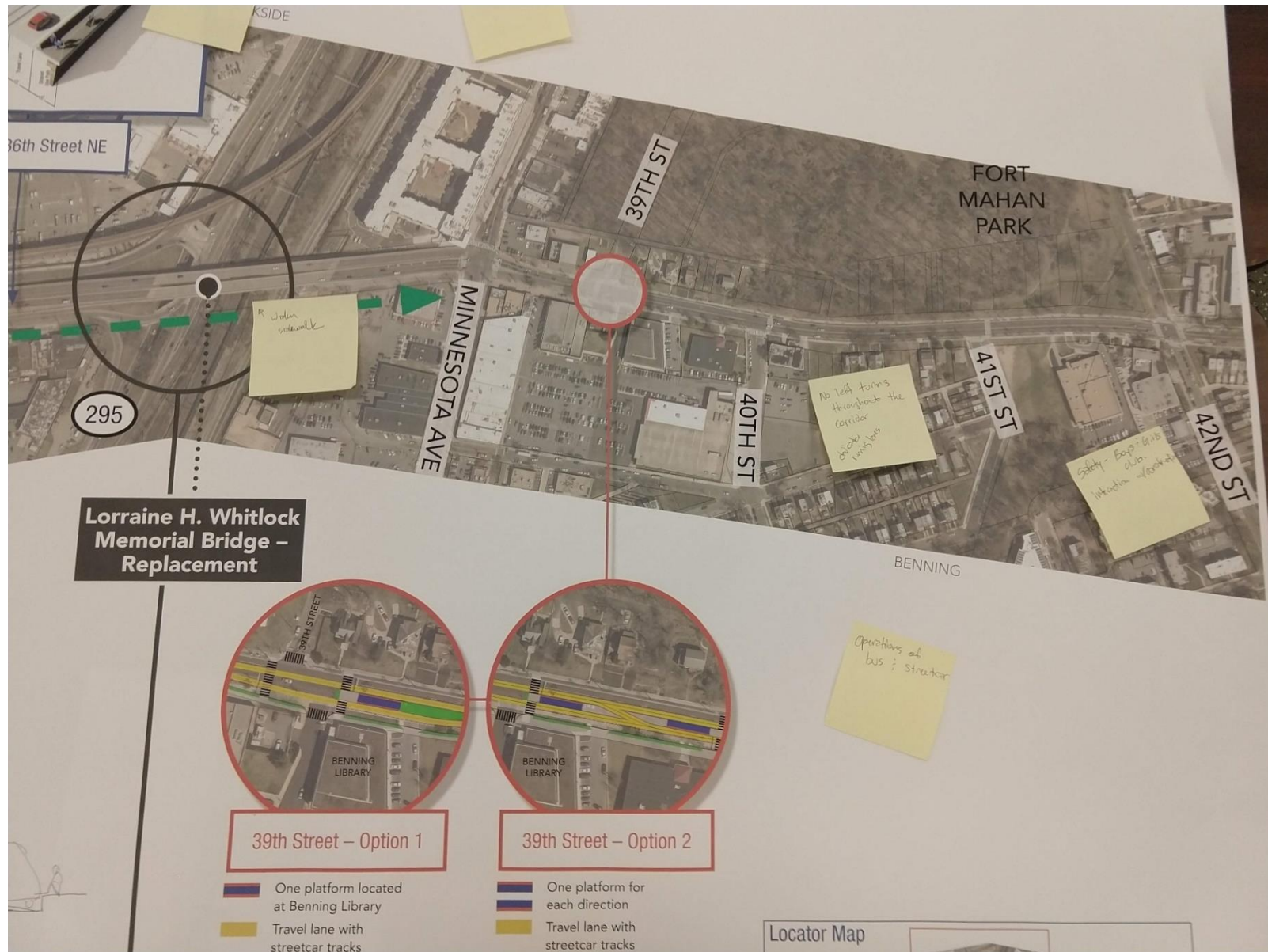
The following section summarizes key takeaways for all means of comment during the open house comment period:

- New and improved facilities for bicycles and pedestrians would provide positive benefits to the neighborhoods within and adjacent to the project area
 - Several community members noted that increased opportunities for active transportation access to Kingman Park and the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail would be a welcome outcome
- Many residents are supportive of the proposed project if design elements include and prioritize:
 - Speed and reliability of transit, including buses; several open house attendees expressed their support and desire for dedicated streetcar- and bus-only lanes along the project corridor
 - Convenient connections to transfer to Metrobus and Metrorail service
 - Improved safety along blocks and at intersections, especially for seniors and children
 - Access to local businesses, landmarks, and community facilities
 - Repairs to critical infrastructure and bridges
 - Expanded green space and trees within the streetscape zone
- Construction impacts, property impacts, and noise are concerns of many residents living near or within the project area
 - Some residents expressed concerns over potential impacts to areas within the DDOT right-of-way that are perceived to be and function as front yards of residences
 - Concern for impacts to the Benning Road tree canopy also were expressed
 - Despite the DDOT Preferred Alternative streetcar alignment being median-running with no impact to off-peak parking, there is a lingering concern for parking access and availability along the corridor
- Community members also have concerns for existing and future traffic congestion, especially in relation to potential shared-lane streetcar operations and emergency vehicle access
- While many residents are supportive of the proposed project and its elements, there were some community opinions who did not agree with a need for an extension of streetcar service among area residents
 - The neighborhoods surrounding the corridor rely heavily on Metrobus and Metrorail service. There is a concern that a streetcar extension would bring adverse effects to the corridor and that existing and future transit needs can be met by expanding bus service (WMATA Metrobus or DC Circulator)
 - Some residents agreed that the city and the immediate project area need expanded transit service and that a potential streetcar extension can meet those needs
 - It is critical that DDOT designs a project that satisfies the needs to residents (minimize the physical and visual impacts to the neighborhood, provide accessible and safe streets)

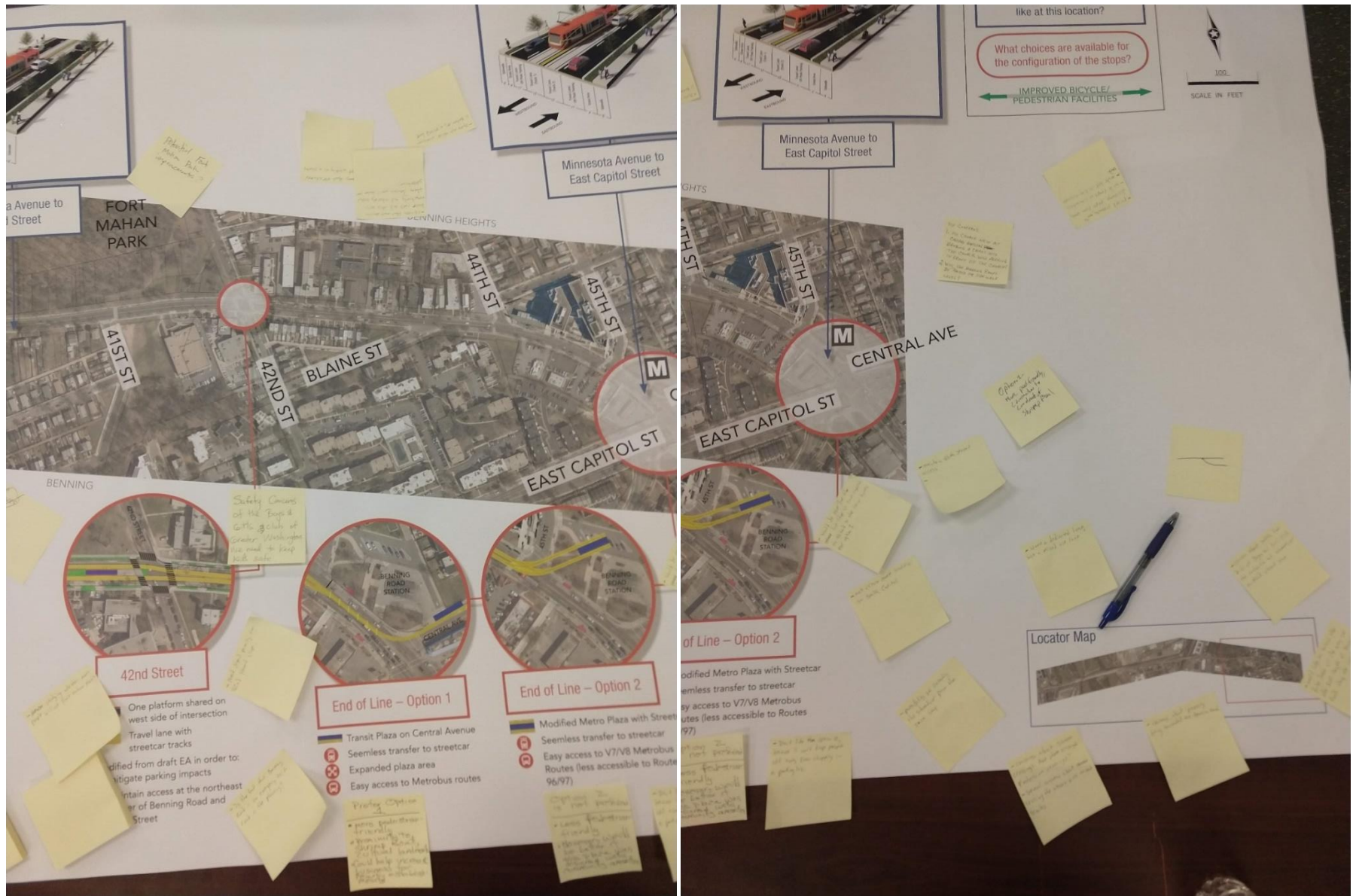
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Scroll Map Comments: River Terrace – Parkside



Scroll Map Comments: Minnesota Ave Metro – Benning Heights



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