

Columbia Downtown

Initial Response to Focus Group Comments Regarding Glatting Jackson Traffic Analysis Issued: July 21, 2006

Please find below the DPZ response to many of the issues raised concerning the traffic analysis prepared by Glatting Jackson. In assembling this response, we noticed that the scope and scale of the Glatting Jackson traffic analysis is different from what may have been anticipated. We hope that this response clarifies what was requested by DPZ and what Glatting Jackson provided.

1. Possibility of increased levels of development

The Analysis is unclear but apparently does not assume completion of suggested road improvements when it lists Options A, B and C for different levels of residential, office and retail development. That means the Options may be unduly pessimistic. Road improvements would increase traffic capacity and potentially permit higher levels of development.

DPZ Response

The traffic analysis includes road improvements as suggested by Wells, but it does not include major road improvements such as a full South Entrance interchange or a new interchange with Route 29, improvements to the eastbound LPP road segment, or MD 175 overpass. The analysis is meant to be a conservative or "worst case scenario" assessment. DPZ and DPW will evaluate the feasibility of these improvements. A more specific, detailed traffic study will be undertaken by General Growth Properties (GGP) and other property owners based on a more specific development program, phasing and improvements. What will be permitted in Downtown will be determined by the County Council in a series of discussions on the Master Plan, Zoning regulations, and ultimately a specific zoning proposal and Downtown Development Plan (DDP).

2. Need for analysis of impact of road improvements

In light of item 1 above, it is imperative that the consultant needs to provide additional tables showing the amount of development possible, separately, with the suggested road improvements for Little Patuxent/Governor Warfield; Little Patuxent/Broken Land; and South Entrance Road. However, the problems with road improvements, in item 3 below, need to be addressed first.

DPZ Response

A more detailed traffic study is required with the Downtown Development Plan (DDP) as part of a zoning case. Then, the traffic study will be updated for each Site Development Plan (SDP) to confirm traffic projections, capacity and improvements. Thus, as each new project is submitted, a series of intersections will be evaluated to determine what the impact will be. That process will develop the necessary road improvements, and the improvements will be incorporated into the development, or else the development will not move forward. In this way, development and traffic will be synchronized, self-adjusting, and continuously updated.

3. Problems with suggested road improvements.

There are problems not addressed in the Analysis:

a. There appears not to be adequate space at S. Entrance Road for the suggested full interchange.

b. If Little Patuxent itself is not widened, road improvements at the Governor Warfield and Broken Land, may not significantly improve flow. Discussions to date have contemplated actually narrowing Little Patuxent to allow safe crossing by pedestrians and to create a more leisurely Downtown atmosphere.

c. A 'flyover' at Little Patuxent/Governor Warfield should be considered, eliminating the light there.

DPZ Response

The Department of Public Works (DPW) will be addressing what improvements are possible at South Entrance Road with the State Highway Administration (SHA), as well as the best design option for Little Patuxent Parkway and Governor Warfield Parkway. A balanced approach to multi-modal transportation will be the priority.

4. 1600 CLV is the 'failing' level of traffic volume

We understand DPZ intends to propose increase the permissible maximum traffic volume to 1600 Critical Lane Volume (CLV) not only for Downtown, but for the entire county. We believe this would be oppressive for motorists because 1600 CLV is the "F" Level of Service, which means waiting through 2 or more traffic lights at key intersections during rush hour. The state, which has had lower standards, does not permit the F level on state roads. We advocate a maximum of 1500 CLV (an E level of service) for Downtown and the current 1450 CLV for the rest of the county (a D level of service).

DPZ Response

The County is not considering 1600 CLV for a countywide standard. 1600 CLV is only being considered for those intersections in the town center that currently have no CLV standard.

Please note that the County adopted and uses only the CLV method as described in the Howard County Design Manual, Volume 3, Roads and Bridges. A CLV value of 1600 or less is a level of service E. This level of service is accepted by the State and is not considered a "failing" level of service. This is clearly stated in Design Manual 3 and has been the practice for roads in the County since the Adequate Public Facilities (APF) regulations were adopted in 1992.

If a different CLV standard for Downtown intersections is proposed, it would likely also include a requirement for a queuing analysis by the consultant and/or a broader range of actions that may be required of the developer. Any changes to the APF need to be developed and evaluated by a technical group, followed by opportunities for public input and County Council action.

5. Adequate Public Facilities (APF) Constrained Intersections

Constrained intersections are intersections where road widening is not desirable or required in order to facilitate pedestrian crossings. This means that if a developer proposes a project and the required traffic study determines that the 1450 CLV standard will be exceeded, improvements such as adding or modifying a traffic signal may be required, but not road widening, and the project moves forward. Thus, "constrained intersections" do not stop development.

The purpose of constrained intersections (adopted by Resolution 21 in 1992) is to protect the ambiance of both historic Ellicott City and Columbia Downtown, which are the only two places with constrained intersections. Otherwise, developers would be required to build larger and wider roadways in these areas - which would destroy the special qualities of these places.

Constrained intersections in Columbia are Little Patuxent Parkway and Governor Warfield Parkway (both north and south ends), Little Patuxent Parkway and Broken Land Parkway, and Little Patuxent Parkway and Hickory Ridge Road extended.

Since currently the constrained intersections create an exemption from the 1450 CLV standard, DPZ is proposing that the County consider adopting a standard of 1600 CLV in Downtown, as well as a requirement to also conduct a queuing analysis. The queuing analysis measures how well the intersection actually functions. With a standard in place, the County could then require developers to make mitigating improvements within the Downtown, when traffic exceeds 1600 CLV at these intersections. Mitigation might involve road, pedestrian, transit or parking improvements. This Downtown standard would be a more restrictive standard than that currently used (which is essentially an exemption).

6. Clearly explain anticipated traffic volumes

For each development option include a chart listing the projected level of service, queue lengths, and delay at each of the 12 key intersections.

DPZ Response

The purpose of the traffic analysis by Glatting Jackson is to provide a rough sketch of options available, if major traffic improvements and major transit were not provided. This is not a specific, detailed traffic study like developers are required to provide. A detailed traffic study will be required whenever a DDP or SDP is submitted.

This analysis provides a general guide to traffic conditions under the maximums currently proposed in the DRAFT vision, *i.e.*, 5500 residential units, 5.2 million square feet of office, and 750,000 square feet of retail, *etc.*

A more detailed traffic study will be undertaken when a specific plan for an actual development is proposed. Glatting Jackson recommended that a local engineering firm with a local understanding of conditions be selected to perform the traffic study, based on the final program chosen for Downtown.

7. Detailed Analysis

Note: (#) refers to numbering in Comments document by Walter, Hekimian, and Mugane
+ *with text in italics* refers to Addendum to Comments prepared by Tennenbaum

- (2) Use the projected 6% background traffic increases required by the HC Road Design Manual...
- (3) Provide data to substantiate the assumption that ...
- (4) Provide the phasing plan required by the Road Design Manual showing the schedule for ...
- (5) Show how the distribution of trips affects the levels of service on important new streets ...
- (6) Describe the visual effects of the proposed road improvements ...
- (7) Include the impact on Route 29 and the feasibility of road improvements ...
- (8) Include the approximate cost of the road improvements...
- (9) Add the Master Plan maps which compare the existing road network to the proposed ...

DPZ Response

(2) This analysis is not a detailed traffic study but a rough analysis of general outcomes.

(3) Background information is from the Wells study. Wells & Associates have performed many traffic studies in Downtown over the years, which reflect traffic counts as well as experience.

(4) A detailed phasing plan is appropriate with an actual development proposal, since specific project locations and loading greatly affect the need for mitigation and its scale, location and implementation; however, exact locations of specific projects are not part of the Vision Plan.

Finally, for the remainder, Glatting Jackson was not asked for analysis at this level of detail.

8. Traffic Alleviation

(10) Explain how improvements to the key intersections at Little Patuxent/Governor Warfield and Little Patuxent/Broken Land would alleviate other traffic problems.

DPZ Response

When key intersections are improved to allow for more traffic flow, this relieves some collateral pressure at other intersections.

9. Mass Transit

(11) Explain each type of mass transit + *for commuters* which should be planned and where it could be located + *in Downtown based on realistic options for transit systems now in the concept planning stages by the Mass Transit Administration. Provide realistic time frames (political, financial, environmental etc) for implementation of such transit service for Downtown*, instead of relying on increased congestion to create public demand.

DPZ Response

Glatting Jackson was not asked to prepare a transit study. The update of the Transit Development Plan (TDP) in 2007 can assess potential to expand Howard Transit in and around Downtown.

10. Additional Comments

Note: (#) refers to numbering in Addendum to Comments prepared by Bob Tennenbaum

(12) If transit comes to Downtown in the future it may encourage re-development of older properties, which may increase Downtown density. Project a development scenario with transit service to Downtown.

(13) Since garages are the destination for traffic, study if locating perimeter “park & shuttle or walk” garages on Little Patuxent Parkway and Broken Land Parkway could intercept traffic before it reaches the critical chokepoints. (See examples in Annapolis and Bethesda). Concurrently study the effect of restricting development of office building parking garages in the core of Downtown.

(14) Prepare a concept feasibility study for a full Route 29 interchange at the south entrance including serious consideration of State highway requirements, environmental issues and existing development.

DPZ Response

Glatting Jackson was not asked to review transit activity or to study parking garage locations; however, DPW will be addressing possible improvements at South Entrance Road with SHA.

11. Clarification of Wells Study References

In Table 2 on Page 14 of the Wells study, projects include both pipeline projects, some of which have been completed, as well as contemplated projects for which no plans have been submitted.

Item	Reference
<i>Section 2, Area 8</i>	
Senior Adult Housing	Evergreens
General Office	Contemplated use of vacant lots for parking (west of the Mall)
<i>Parcel 39</i>	
High-Turnover Restaurant	Cheesecake Factory
Drive-in Bank	Bank between restaurants and L.L. Bean
<i>Wincopin Circle</i>	
Condominiums 450 units	All remaining potential residential in Columbia; Rylan and Plaza are included. <i>Note:</i> Wells study anticipates all potential residential that might occur and then calculates its impacts; however, no plans have been submitted for new projects in Downtown (except Plaza).
Retail	First floor retail associated with these residential uses

12. Additional Clarifications

(1) There is no breakdown of total traffic by intersection for any of the possible program impacts other than Table 5. Missing is a figure similar to Figure 3 but for the Charrette traffic or reductions created by reducing office or residential or both. In fact, the only intersection assignments are figures from Wells report.

DPZ Response

Regarding breakdown information, DPZ has requested that Mr. Kulash provide:

1. Chart similar to Table 3, showing the CLVs for options A & B, and
 2. On Tables 4 and 5, percentages of capacity for intersections which exceed 100% capacity.
- Also, as mentioned at the presentation Mr. Kulash will be providing certain assignment sheets.

(2) The key intersections numbered on the last page of the report shows south entrance rd as a four way intersection. It is treated as a three-way intersection in the text and figures.

DPZ Response

Due to the limitations of the requested scope of the traffic analysis, some aspects of the analysis are limited by the underlying data and input which is available.

(3) A major intersection is shown on the last page between intersection 4 and 12. It needs to be shown as a major intersection (13) with traffic volumes shown. There are major left and right turns required at this intersection.

DPZ Response

Again, the limited scope of the analysis requires that some investigations be precluded. As mentioned elsewhere, this traffic analysis is not a detailed traffic study of a specific proposal. To clarify, a specific proposal would include proposed buildings at specific locations with entrances, exits and program to analyze. Because DPZ asked for a very general look at the overall, proposed program in the Preliminary Draft Vision Plan, a detailed and expensive traffic study was not requested or desired.

13. Roadway Improvements Assumed in *Traffic Analysis*

- Extension of South Entrance Road northbound into Corporate Boulevard and the Mall
- Continuous east-west collector street aligned with Corporate Boulevard extending to BLP
- Continuous north-south (Wincopin) street, through the Lakefront district, extending to LPP
- Reconfigured Symphony Woods Circle, providing a major collector to BLP/HRR and SER
- Additionally, the roadway improvements assumed by the Wells study are also incorporated