

April 13, 2004

The Honorable Carol Schwartz
Chair, Public Works Committee
D.C. Council
1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Ms. Schwartz:

At its monthly meeting on April 7, ANC3D voted unanimously to urge that your Public Works Committee act expeditiously on Bill # 15-43, entitled "Right of Way at Crosswalks," and sponsored by Council Member Fenty. As you know, the bill would specify that cars stop—not just yield—for pedestrians in marked crosswalks.

The commission's action reflected its continuing concern that additional steps should be taken to protect the safety of pedestrians as they try to cross such major thoroughfares as MacArthur Boulevard, Loughboro, Nebraska or Arizona in our commission's jurisdiction.

It is true that there has been some improvement in drivers yielding to pedestrians as a result of the signs introduced by the Department of Transportation in the past year or so. But there is still a dangerous ambiguity in how and when drivers interpret the "yield" requirement. In some ways the ambiguity leads to the drivers playing a game of tag with helpless pedestrians. On many occasions, drivers will yield by rushing in front of the pedestrian as he or she enters the crosswalk; on other occasions, drivers will dash behind the pedestrian who has gotten half way across the street. This can become particularly perilous for the pedestrian on two lane roads, such as MacArthur. A driver can stop in one lane, but then a driver behind will turn out and rush down the other lane just as the pedestrian is about to enter that lane.

Our commission feels strongly that the one way to eliminate this ambiguity and enhance the safety of pedestrians is to lay down the flat requirement that drivers STOP for pedestrians in sidewalks.

The commission, therefore, urges your committee to act favorably and expeditiously on Mr. Fenty's bill and report it to the full Council for enactment.

Sincerely yours,

Alma H. Gates
Chair, ANC 3D

cc: Council Member Kathy Patterson