



CHAIRMAN
ANN HUGHES HARGROVE

Mr. John Parsons
National Capital Region
National Park Service

VICE CHAIRMAN
JOSEPH R. BENDER

June 21, 2002

SECRETARY
FRED JORDAN

Dear Mr. Parsons:

TREASURER
IK PYO HONG

The following are the comments of the Committee of One Hundred on the Federal City pertaining to the document Washington Monument: Permanent Security Improvements: environmental Assessment.

TRUSTEES
SALLY BERK
BONNIE J. CAIN
CHARLES I. CASSELL, AIA
CHARLES E. COTTEN
KATERI E. L. ELLISON
JUDY SCOTT PELOMAN, PhD
ELLEN JONES
DEERING TERRENCE KENDRICK, I
JEFF S. LEE, ASLA
RICHARD LONGSTRETH
ARTHUR COTTON MOORE, FAMA
JAMES NATHANSON
DIANE PEDOR
ELIZABETH SOLOMON
MARY PARHAM WOLFF
BARBARA ZARTMAN

1. An analysis of alternative solutions is mandated in an Environmental Assessment. In the present document only one alternative, other than "no action", is presented to a solution already chosen by the Park Service. That is, a new structure near the Sylvan Theater with a walled walkway through which visitors to the Monument are chanelled. The cutting in half of the greensward to pedestrians crossing the area is so offensive aesthetically and practically that it simply does not fulfill the requirements of a viable alternative. Alternate A, devised in the 1970's and revised in the early 1990's was not driven primarily by security concerns but has grafted onto it additions which are supposed to address security issues. An Environmental Assessment unburdened by the a priori tilt toward an earlier plan would provide several fresh solutions and a transparent process by which the reviewing boards, commissions and citizens could assess various plans. These comments are submitted in the hope that, when an EA is prepared, they will contribute to the creation of a more useful and satisfactory document.

2. In order to judge the value of an out-of-the-weather waiting experience at the Monument, a comparison with the alternative must be provided. NCPC asked for information about traffic loads and circulation patterns at the beginning of April. These would be vital to an analysis that must precede the claim that the proposed tunnel would be preferable. The visitor waiting time is controlled by NPS. Ticket times are currently at thirty minute intervals. The average wait is therefore fifteen minutes. Ticket intervals could be reduced to fifteen minutes, resulting in an average waiting time on line of seven and a half minutes. This is only one quarter of the half hour that it takes for a visitor to walk from the Lodge to the Museum of Natural History and back: not an excessive additional period for a visitor to wait outdoors. The shorter waiting periods would also reduce the number of visitors waiting in the Plaza. Whatever period might be involved,

P.O. BOX 57106 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037
202-628-8030 FAX 202-628-8031

EMAIL: THECOMM100@AOL.COM = WEBSITE: HTTP://WWW.COMMITTEEOF100.NET

the visitors should be allowed to sit on the benches which are going to be built so that they are both more comfortable and less prominent in the prospect of the Monument.

3. The importance of the historic reconciliation of the L'Enfant Plan with the McMillan Commission Plan is asserted but not considered in the design proposal. The placement of the proposed skylight takes no account whatsoever of the geometric reconciliation in its alignment with the Lodge.
4. The effort to separate the security screening process from the building seems to be the result of the Park Police desire to keep all weapons of any sort out of the building. No supporting information on the precise threat from each type of weapon is given. Only with such information may the required judgment of alternatives be made. Recent discussion of this subject with NPS has elicited only unsatisfactory generalizations which do not illuminate this project.
5. An illustration on page 3-4 shows a topographic plan which, contrary to NPS assertions, *differs substantially* from the June submission but precisely reflects our understanding of the original intentions of the Olin proposal. It shows broader, shallower slopes on the downhill sides of the walled paths on the North and South sides of the hill which would render the walls less prominent. In comparing this plan with the June submission we do not see any change in the information about existing conditions that would have generated such a difference. Discussion of this subject has been hindered by NPS insistence that two markedly different plans are actually the same.
6. The description of the tunnel as two hundred thirty feet in length is uninformative and misleading. The distance a visitor must travel in a narrow space on a sloping walkway is five hundred feet. That distance must be added to the almost two hundred feet traversed underground before arriving at the beginning of the slope and the undisclosed distance from the top of the slope to the elevator. Visitors will walk or wheel their chairs seven hundred feet underground. Seven hundred is a far more relevant and informative number than two hundred thirty.
7. NPS has withheld information necessary for an evaluation of the emergency exit provisions for the tunnel. In general it is disturbing to contemplate a single emergency exit serving the six hundred feet between the Lodge stair and the Plaza stair.
8. No evaluation of the skylight appears in the document. The structure as proposed is over two thousand three hundred square feet. Its perimeter trench brings its total footprint to over three thousand eight hundred square feet. The impact of such a structure on the historic landscape would certainly be sufficient to warrant evaluation as a separate entity. This is a surprising omission.
9. In general, the grouping of the separate elements which constitute Alternate A is clumsy and uninformative. In the preparation of the EA each element of each alternate should be evaluated separately. NPS should consider the potential for the Lodge, the

skylight, the tunnel, the barrier walls and the component parts of any yet-to-be-determined alternates to be combined for the best possible result.

10. The extent of the work contemplated in Alternate A combined with the historically questionable subsurface conditions mandates an Environmental Impact Statement. The risk of endangering this unique national symbol must be addressed: digging through the Monument's foundations and relocating tons of soil in the construction of a tunnel are major undertakings which could threaten the stability of the slowly sinking obelisk. An Environmental Impact Statement is essential.

The Committee of One Hundred looks forward to the development of further documentation by the Park Service and evaluation by all parties in an effort to complete the process of securing the Monument against foreseeable threats.

Sincerely

Don A. Hawkins
Chair, Historic Preservation Subcommittee

cc: Hargrove
Sellin