

August 15, 2024, Community Meeting Q&A

Meeting Summary:

The Northern Bus Garage Reconstruction Project team hosted its virtual spring community meeting on August 15, 2024. During the meeting, the team provided an overview of the project, updates on construction progress, and environmental management progress. This Q&A document addresses both the questions that were answered during the meeting and those that remain unanswered. A recording of this meeting is available at wmata.com/northernbusgarage.

Project Overview and Updates

Q: The 14th Street sewer line work is impacting how travelers commute and how pedestrians access the area. What is the team doing to ensure the safety of commuters and pedestrians?

A: Safety is of the utmost importance, and we are committed to being good community partners. We have worked with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to establish and implement a traffic control plan that meets DDOT's standards for both worker protection and public safety. After concerns were raised about construction impacts caused by adjacent projects happening simultaneously with the sewer line work, DDOT reviewed the situation and decided to demobilize its DC Plug project, re-opening two blocks of parking along 14th Street and reducing congestion near the work zone. DDOT will continue to monitor the area, engage with businesses and residents, and collaborate with the Northern Bus Garage Project team to avoid any overlap between the utility work being completed as part of the Northern Bus Garage Project and other DDOT projects.

Q: During the 14th Street sewer line work, local area businesses have experienced impacts including a decline in revenue. Is compensation available for businesses negatively impacted by the sewer work?

A: Metro remains committed to being a good neighbor and partner, as well as meeting its obligations under the law. Compensation of this kind, however, is not available.

Q: What is the timeline for the sewer line work?

A: As outlined in the May and August 2024 community meeting presentations, there are multiple phases to the sewer line installation. The first two phases are already complete, which involved tying into the existing sewer line at the 14th Street and Crittenden Street intersection, and extending the new sewer line out into 14th Street from the tie-in point with the existing sewer line. We are currently in the primary phase of the project, which entails installing the new section of sewer pipe up 14th Street between Crittenden and Decatur Streets. This phase is anticipated to take eight weeks, and as of August 15th, we're in the third week of this phase. Once the primary phase is complete, the concrete barriers will be removed. There are two additional phases after the primary phase, which are expected to take between one to three weeks each. These final two phases are to complete tie-ins to existing sewer lines and drain structures around the 14th Street and Decatur Street intersection. The final two phases will be done inside of traffic barrels and cones between 9:30 AM and 3:30 PM. When the sewer line work is complete, we will start the water line work, which will only impact the east parking lane and east bike lane along 14th Street.

Q: As a follow-up, how many weeks is this sewer line project?

A: The primary phase of the sewer line work that is currently ongoing is an eight-week project. This will be followed by the final two phases to complete the tie-in work to the existing sewer line and drain structures, as outlined above. After the sewer line installation is complete, we will begin the water main replacement along 14th Street, which is split into two six-week work phases. The first phase runs between Decatur and Crittenden Streets, while the second phase runs between Crittenden and Buchanan Streets. The water main is installed below the east parking lane on 14th Street, which is where the work zone will be located. This will require closure of the east parking lane and the adjacent bike lane to create the necessary work zone to complete the water main work. The two traffic lanes of 14th Street and the west parking lane will remain open throughout the water main installation's two phases.

Q: After Metro's sewer line and water line work is done, when will DDOT resume its DC PLUG project?

A: [DDOT representative's response] We will coordinate with the community to determine when to resume the project.

Q: The construction cones at 14th and Decatur Streets leave significantly less space for pedestrians and cyclists to pass, which makes it dangerous. Can those cones be moved?

A: The tapered "V" section you are referring to is a part of DDOT's requirements for the shift in traffic alignment. This allows cars with the necessary space to safely change lanes to adjust to the modified traffic pattern.

[DDOT representative's response] Thank you for bringing this to our attention. The safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers is of the utmost importance. We will review the location and determine whether alternative methods can be implemented. Potential resolutions include adding an additional stop sign to improve conditions.

Environmental Management Update:

Q: Is there any hazardous waste on-site or underground? If so, is the hazardous waste being monitored?

A: We have found petroleum contaminated materials in the soil. We have also identified soils that are contaminated with chlorinated solvents, dry cleaning fluid, and other materials that were used to clean engine parts. We are sampling and characterizing them and then sending them off site for disposal. We're also implementing measures to remediate any residual contamination that remains on site.

Q: The Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ has a garden on the property. Congregants are concerned about hazardous materials impacting the garden. Should the church still test the soil?

A: No sources of contamination from the site that would be on that property have been identified. The groundwater seems to be moving to the southeast away from the side of the former bus garage.

Q: Is the air quality currently being monitored? Since it seems that soil monitoring will continue, will Metro also continue to monitor the air quality once the project is complete?

A: Yes, we are currently monitoring the air quality. The air monitoring is for dust particulates. Once the concrete for the lower level of the garage is completely in place, then the potential for soil flying up will be greatly reduced. There should be no soil coming from the site on a regular basis. One of the things we have built into the Interim Corrective Action Plan is that we will have a PVC network of pipes beneath the concrete foundation with some stub-ups through the concrete foundation. The idea is that after the bus garage is built, we will collect some air samples, which will give us an indication of what kind of residual contamination is below the concrete, but above the groundwater. If it's above a certain level, we'll place vacuums in to pull air out and run it through carbon filtration systems before we exhaust it into the air. This will be done in conjunction with discussions with the Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) so that their team is aware of what is occurring. We are putting measures in place now so that we are prepared to manage potential outcomes.

Q: Will monitoring results impact the LEED certification?

A: It is related to LEED, and does contribute to LEED certification. We're supposed to reuse brownfield sites — sites that have had previous uses as opposed to greenfield sites that have not — but we're doing this outside of the LEED work. One of the elements of LEED is encouraging the use of brownfield sites, and this would be considered a brownfield site.

Q: When were the chlorinated solvents found in the soil?

A: We identified chlorinate solvents about three or four weeks ago. Within 24 hours, we contacted DOEE to convey what we had found and to discuss next steps.

Q: What is the definition of a brownfield?

A: A brownfield is a property or site whose reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, especially from past usage.

Q: There used to be a neighborhood environmental group that met with WMATA on a regular basis. Does that still happen?

A: We do not believe this group still meets.