

# Opening Klingle

At long last, the D.C. Department of Transportation is set to complete its environmental impact statement on the reopening of Klingle Road through Rock Creek Park.

The deadline for comments was Sept. 15, and officials said recently they had finalized responses to the 281 submissions.

But the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior have caused a last-minute delay. More than three months after the comment period expired, the agencies submitted a formal comment letter that ends with the rejoinder that the city should not have ruled out converting the road into a bike and pedestrian path.

The D.C. Council made the decision back in 2003 that the city would reopen Klingle Road to vehicular traffic. Though we initially favored alternatives such as a bike or hiking path, the study properly noted that such options failed to meet the project's purpose — as set by locally elected officials.

We see the Interior Department's late filing of comments as an irresponsible boondoggle. The legitimate issues regarding drainage and erosion problems that must be corrected as part of any reconstruction surely could and should have been raised earlier.

Now, District taxpayers presumably will have to foot the bill for consultants to respond to the points, and the eventual contract will be delayed — probably adding more to the cost.

The debate over Klingle Road was long and bitter, but we thought it was over. Unelected officials should not prolong the dispute.

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