

Wash Post 4/12/01

A Klingle Road for All

FOR AT LEAST 100 years, Klingle Road in Northwest Washington has served as an important crosstown thoroughfare, linking neighborhoods east and west of Rock Creek Park. It was open to all, vehicular traffic included, until 1990, when a stretch nearly a mile long between Porter Street and Woodley Road fell into serious disrepair. The city could not afford to fix the problem at the time, so that portion of the road was closed. Now that the city's back in the black, Klingle Road's fate is back on the public agenda. At issue: whether to repair and reopen that stretch or keep it permanently closed for use as a trail and other recreational purposes. We favor restoring Klingle Road to its historic status as a public road.

Supporters of a closed road, mostly neighborhoods in close proximity to Klingle Road, prefer converting the segment to green space or a bike trail. Either arrangement, they say, would make Klingle Road more compatible with the adjacent Rock Creek Park. Most of all, a permanently closed road would be off-limits to motorists accustomed to using their

Klingle Valley neighborhood as a cut-through.

Undoubtedly a closed-off Klingle Road has been a 10-year convenience for nearby residents. It has been a daily inconvenience, however, for large numbers of other taxpaying citizens who for decades used the road as a crosstown alternative (shortcut, critics would say) and as an access route to Rock Creek Park. What's more, nearby Porter and Macomb streets have unfairly borne the burden of traffic diverted from shut-down Klingle Road. In effect, many have been deprived of the use of a public road for the benefit of a few. That hardly strikes us as fair or the best use of public space.

A D.C. Division of Transportation report with recommendations should be sent to Mayor Anthony Williams by June. A road with improved mobility for cars and a separate lane for bicyclists and hikers might be a suitable approach to the standoff. The D.C. Council, however, will make the final call on Klingle Road. It should be a decision that works for the whole city.