

# Calendar No. 575

69TH CONGRESS }  
1st Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT  
{ No. 573

VACATING CERTAIN STREETS AND ALLEYS WITHIN THE AREA KNOWN AS THE WALTER REED GENERAL HOSPITAL, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, AND AUTHORIZING THE EXTENSION AND WIDENING OF FOURTEENTH STREET FROM MONTAGUE STREET TO ITS SOUTHERN TERMINUS SOUTH OF DAHLIA STREET

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APRIL 5 (calendar day, APRIL 12), 1926.—Ordered to be printed

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Mr. CAPPER, from the Committee on the District of Columbia, submitted the following

## REPORT

[To accompany S. 2477]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the bill (S. 2477) to vacate certain streets and alleys within the area known as the Walter Reed General Hospital, District of Columbia, and to authorize the extension and widening of Fourteenth Street from Montague Street to its southern terminus south of Dahlia Street, having considered the same, report favorably thereon with the recommendation that the bill do pass with the following amendments:

In line 7, page 3, strike out the word "is" and insert in lieu thereof the word "as."

Lines 13 and 14, page 3, strike out the words "motor busses."

Page 4, following line 3, insert a new section, as follows:

Sec. 5. That the plan of the permanent system of highways for the District of Columbia shall be, and the same is hereby, amended so that Aspen Street, between Georgia Avenue and Sixteenth Street northwest, as laid down on said plan, shall be shifted southerly so that the north line of said Aspen Street shall be coincident with the south line of said street as laid down on said plan prior to the passage of this act; that the United States, in its own name, through its Attorney General, shall institute condemnation proceedings in accordance with the procedure laid down in Chapter XV of the Code of Law for the District of Columbia for the purpose of acquiring a strip of land ninety feet wide immediately south of and contiguous to the present south line of the Walter Reed General Hospital Reservation, between Georgia Avenue and Sixteenth Street northwest: *Provided*, That upon the conclusion of said proceedings title to the southern forty-five feet of said strip of land shall become vested in the District of Columbia for the purposes of a street, the same to constitute the northern one-half of the new Aspen Street between Georgia Avenue and Sixteenth Street northwest, and that title to the northern forty-five feet of said strip of land shall be vested in the United States as part of the reservation for the Walter Reed General Hospital: *And provided further*, That there is hereby authorized and appropriated out of moneys in the Treasury of the United States not otherwise appropriated a sum sufficient to pay for all damages and costs in connection with the proceedings authorized under this section.

The object of the bill is twofold. It authorizes the relinquishment or abandonment of certain streets and alleys included in the permanent plan of highways for the District of Columbia, within the area known as the Walter Reed Hospital grounds, and it provides for the extension and widening of Fourteenth Street NW., from Montagu Street to the southern boundary of the hospital reservation, as well as a restricted use of a continuation of the street through the hospital grounds, subject to regulation and control of traffic within the reservation by the hospital authorities.

The closing of the streets and alleys within the reservation is necessary in order to provide for additional hospital buildings and extensions to existing buildings. Such streets and alleys are not now in use by the public, but are merely part of the plan of highways adopted some years ago. The District Commissioners have recommended their relinquishment.

There exists a very real and urgent need for the opening up of an additional thoroughfare to the northern boundary of the District of Columbia, to meet the requirements of the rapidly increasing population in the territory adjacent to the Walter Reed Hospital Reservation. The committee is informed that there are more than a thousand homes in Maryland and the District of Columbia immediately beyond the hospital, with an estimated population of 5,000 people. Property owners in that vicinity, as well as residents of the District of Columbia generally, are confronted with a "traffic bottle neck" in traveling to and from adjacent Maryland suburbs, due to the fact that the only streets available are Sixteenth Street (connecting with Alaska Avenue) and Georgia Avenue. Even Sixteenth Street, over part of its length, is restricted against certain kinds of traffic, so that practically the only unrestricted through highway is Georgia Avenue, already congested and certain to become more so unless relief is afforded by the opening of Fourteenth Street through the hospital reservation. Rock Creek Park, the Soldiers' Home grounds, and the grounds of a number of private institutions cut off many streets, with the result that Georgia Avenue and Sixteenth Street are at the present time the only direct routes from the northwestern section of the city to the Maryland line, and are, in fact, the only streets opened between Twelfth Street NW. and Thirty-ninth Street, or Chevy Chase Circle.

Fourteenth Street is now open as far as Montague Street, which is about 4,000 feet south of Walter Reed Hospital, and the District Commissioners also desire to extend the street to the hospital reservation because the property owners are ready and anxious to develop their properties. This is prevented, however, by a special provision of the existing law relating to the opening of streets where benefits equal damages, which specifically prohibits the extension of Fourteenth Street, because of past differences of opinion as to limitation and control of traffic through the hospital grounds. Walter Reed Hospital authorities have objected to unrestricted traffic through the reservation, because of the mental and physical disturbance to patients of the institution.

The bill hereby reported has been agreed upon in conferences between the District Commissioners, the members of the Senate and House District Committees, and those in charge of Walter Reed Hospital. It permits traffic through the hospital reservation, on Fourteenth Street extended, except as to street cars and solid-tire trucks,

which are prohibited. The grade of the street through the hospital reservation shall be subject to the approval of the Secretary of War, and regulation and control of traffic within the limits of the reservation is to be under the supervision of the hospital authorities.

In view of the fact that the extension of the street will be of great benefit to the people of the District of Columbia as a whole, and that there are some residences and other improvements located in the direct line of the street as it is to be extended and widened, a provision has been incorporated in the bill to the effect that the condemnation jury shall separately report the damages for structures between Montague Street and the hospital reservation, and if the total damages for both land and structures does not exceed the benefits by more than the value of such buildings, the excess of damages shall be borne by the District. This departs from the usual requirement that damages awarded shall not exceed benefits assessed, and is considered necessary and advisable by the District Commissioners. The cost if any is to be appropriated entirely from District revenues. There are no existing structures on the hospital grounds which are in line with the proposed extension.

However, when Fourteenth Street is extended, there will be need for the opening of Aspen Street, on the south side of Walter Reed Hospital, intersecting with Fourteenth Street. Some of the structures of the hospital are located in the line of Aspen Street, which has not been opened. These include a power house, laundry, ice plant, steam pipes, and other like service buildings, which would have to be destroyed if Aspen Street were opened along the line laid down in the permanent highway plan. A section has been added to the bill, therefore, as the result of agreement between District and hospital authorities, approved by the House and Senate committees, which provides for the relocation of Aspen Street 90 feet to the south, the necessary land to be acquired by and at the cost of the United States in view of the fact that the land now in the present line of Aspen Street will become a part of the hospital reservation. Half of the strip to be acquired will be developed by the hospital authorities as a park area to remove or lessen the unsightliness of the structures mentioned, which would otherwise immediately face or front the new street.

Appended hereto and made a part of this report is a letter from the District Commissioners, giving additional information.

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COMMISSIONERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,  
*Washington, January 12, 1926.*

HON. ARTHUR CAPPER,  
*Chairman Committee on the District of Columbia,  
United States Senate, Washington, D. C.*

SIR: The Commissioners of the District of Columbia have the honor to transmit herewith a draft of a bill entitled "A bill to vacate certain streets and alleys within the area known as the Walter Reed General Hospital, District of Columbia; and to authorize the extension and widening of Fourteenth Street from Montague Street to its southern terminus south of Dahlia Street," which they request be introduced and enacted during the present Congress.

The object of this bill is to authorize the closing of certain streets and alleys within the Walter Reed Hospital reservation and to provide for the extension and widening of Fourteenth Street NW. from Montague Street to the southern boundary of the Walter Reed Hospital reservation in accordance with the plan of the permanent system of highways for the District of Columbia. The closing of the streets and alleys within the reservation is necessary in order to provide for

additional buildings and extensions to existing buildings within the reservation. The commissioners have no objection to the closing of any of the streets and alleys included within this area with the exception of Aspen and Fourteenth Streets.

There is a general law which authorizes the commissioners to institute condemnation proceedings for the opening of streets in accordance with the highway plan (U. S. Stats. vol. 37, p. 950), which provides that the entire cost of acquiring the necessary land, plus the cost of the proceedings, shall be assessed as benefits. The proposed bill provides that the cost of all land to be condemned for the extension and widening of Fourteenth Street between the limits named, plus the cost and expense of the condemnation proceeding, shall be assessed against any property which the jury shall find to be benefited, and that no greater amount of excess of damages and costs over benefits than the value fixed by the jury for improvements within the lines of Fourteenth Street between Montague Street and the southern boundary of the hospital reservation shall be paid out of the revenues of the District of Columbia. It is estimated that it would cost approximately \$175,000 to condemn the land and improvements required for the opening of Fourteenth Street between the limits named (\$145,000 for the land, including the cost of the proceeding, and \$30,000 for the improvements).

Inasmuch as the opening of this street is required primarily for the logical and orderly development of the community at large, it is the opinion of the commissioners that it would be equitable and proper for the District of Columbia to share in the cost, at least, to the extent provided in the bill.

Fourteenth Street, extended, as laid down on the highway plan, runs through the Walter Reed Hospital reservation, which is continuous from Georgia Avenue to Sixteenth Street, a distance of approximately one-half mile. There has been a very insistent demand for the opening of this street in order to accommodate the ever-increasing traffic. The hospital authorities have recognized that Fourteenth Street would eventually be extended through the reservation, for no buildings, not even of a temporary character, have been erected on the reservation within the lines of the proposed street.

There is inclosed a section of the highway map showing in blue the streets proposed to be vacated and closed and in red the extension of Fourteenth Street between Montague and Aspen Streets. The streets shown in dotted lines within the hospital reservation, except Fourteenth Street, while they appear on the highway extension plan, will never be opened.

When the bill providing for the opening of Fourteenth Street was originally introduced, the hospital authorities were strenuously opposed to the plan, and, as a result, the Highway Commission, consisting of the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Chief of Engineers of the United States Army, held a public hearing in the District Building on June 23, 1921, and as a result of that hearing, the commission recommended the opening of the street through the hospital reservation, the then Secretary of War, a member of the commission, having concurred in this recommendation.

In order to overcome any objection that might be made that traffic through the hospital reservation would endanger the lives of patients, the commissioners have inserted a proviso which would prohibit the operation of street railway cars, motor busses, and trucks equipped with solid tires on Fourteenth Street through the reservation, and would place the regulation and control of traffic within the limits of the reservation under the supervision of the hospital authorities. It is also provided that the grade of Fourteenth Street through the hospital reservation shall be subject to the approval of the Secretary of War.

There is no District legislation now pending that is of more vital importance to the development of the northern part of the District of Columbia than the bill submitted. This part of the District and the adjacent communities in the State of Maryland are being developed very rapidly and with the normal growth of motor transportation the opening of Fourteenth Street as an additional arterial highway leading into the District from the north will be necessary to relieve traffic conditions on Georgia Avenue, Alaska Avenue, and Sixteenth Street.

The Director of the Bureau of the Budget has informed the commissioners that the proposed legislation is in accord with the financial program of the President.

Very respectfully,

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,

By CUNO H. RUDOLPH, *President*.