



# WABA

WASHINGTON AREA  
BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

January 24, 2019

Mayor Bowser  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Director Marootian  
District Department of Transportation  
55 M Street, SE, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20003

Mayor Bowser and Director Marootian,

In September, community members from across the city shared their experiences with traffic violence at the DC Council's Vision Zero Roundtable. Through hours of testimony, we heard dozens of heartbreaking stories of malice, injury, and loss caused by our city's transportation system. These stories starkly contrasted the refrain from administration officials that the DC government is doing everything possible to make our streets safe.

We recognize with appreciation that since September, your administration has taken some important steps to recommit to your Vision Zero Initiative. The proposed engineering, enforcement and education initiatives announced in October lay the groundwork for change. Hardened left turns, safer pedestrian crossings, and expanded restrictions of right turn on red at intersections are very welcomed. The new Office of Vision Zero leadership announcement and the interagency Vision Zero task force offer hope for a renewed all hands on deck approach to bring the full resources and talent of DC's agencies to the task of building safe streets and changing a culture that is too accepting of traffic violence and carnage. We are excited about your recent approach to Open Streets (we are working with DDOT collaboratively) and a car-free 16th Street NW. And, we are encouraged that the Maryland Ave NE project is finally funded and out for bid to rebuild this speedway to be safe for everyone who lives and travels on it.

We welcome and applaud these positive steps. Yet, we are concerned that your administration is not doing everything possible. Last year, 34 people lost their lives to traffic violence. Too many of our city's streets remain dangerous by design, and neither the pace of change nor process seem to be changing. While DDOT has begun studies and design for over a dozen miles of critical street improvements, signs of progress are elusive. DDOT is able to provide residents a weekly update on the status of "PaveDC" projects like citywide alley reconstruction, yet it is often all but impossible to find the

status of critical safety projects or find explanations for years-long delays. It is difficult to express the demoralizing betrayal a resident feels when they discover, after months of attending project meetings, writing letters, delivering testimony, and rallying neighbors in support of an urgent safety project, that the resulting study has been left untouched for a year or more without a word to the community.

We have an urgent need for expedited action to rebuild our streets to prioritize safety over the movement (or storage) of cars and a pressing need for transparency and better communication. Therefore, we request a written status update and meeting to discuss how the administration is moving forward on the following projects.

### **Eastern Downtown Protected Bike Lane Project**

In early 2015, DDOT staff started work on the Eastern Downtown Protected Bike Lane Project to improve a north-south street with protected bike lanes and traffic calming between Shaw and Pennsylvania Ave. More than 2,500 constituents sent letters, signed petitions, and spoke at hearings calling for you to address a demonstrated corridor-long safety problem. In February 2017, citing a need for more analysis of the 6th and 9th St. NW options, DDOT's report concluded that both alternatives should be designed to 30%, increasing the cost and extending the timeline. In April 2018, a new website promised an update soon after.

Nine months later, this project remains in limbo and the administration noticeably silent. Meanwhile, 6th and 9th Streets NW remain undeniably hazardous to people who walk and bike. Between February 2017's decision to punt the selection of a preferred alternative and December 2018, 27 bicyclists and 45 people walking were involved in crashes on 6th and 9th Streets in the project area. For nine months, DDOT has had 30% plans in hand waiting for a decision from the Mayor's Office. Every month this project is delayed, more people are injured. The time for a decision and an accelerated construction timeline are long overdue.

### **Florida Ave NE Streetscape**

After a tragic 2013 pedestrian fatality, DDOT began studying options for redesigning Florida Ave NE to decrease rampant speeding, remove unnecessary travel lanes, and improve options for walking and biking. In early 2017, DDOT presented 30% design plans for wider sidewalks, safer crossings, a new protected bike lane, and fewer driving lanes. Since then, all signs of activity on this project vanished as even the project website became inactive. Yet, devastating high-speed crashes and carnage continue, with at least three fatal crashes since planning began. When can we expect DDOT to follow through on this project and why are temporary improvements off the table?

### **Rock Creek Park Trail Rehabilitation**

In June 2014, trail advocates cheered as DDOT and National Park Service issued final approval for the long-awaited rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Park Trail. We celebrated again in August 2017 when the first phase of Beach Drive reopened with a wider trail. Unfortunately, while road improvements continue towards Silver Spring, DDOT's portion of the trail rehabilitation, which was on track to begin in spring 2018, has yet to start without explanation or communication to the public. Making matters worse, severe

erosion forced the closure of the trail around the Zoo tunnel, forcing all trail users into the extremely narrow and stressful sidewalk through the tunnel. We request an update beyond timeline on this project.

The three projects above are illustrative of critical safety work that is facing unnecessary delays, but it's not a comprehensive list of stalled or delayed work. We also request updates on the following projects:

- DC Streetcar flange filler investigation and H St. traffic calming improvements;
- Alabama Ave SE Bike Lanes;
- Pennsylvania Ave SE Protected Bike Lanes;
- South Capitol St. Trail;
- Western Downtown Protected Bike Lanes;
- K St. NW and K St. NE Protected Bike Lanes.

A key principle of Vision Zero is the initiative should center on data driven decision making and transparency. The public deserves regular and easily found updates on these and other projects. We request the administration compile Vision Zero activity updates (such as a project development line or policy implementation effort) in a single, easily accessible location such as the DC Vision Zero website. When projects or initiatives are delayed, the public deserves an explanation.

We look forward to discussing an expedited path forward for these projects and continuing to work together on our shared Vision Zero and sustainability goals.

Sincerely,



Robert Gardner  
Advocacy Director

CC

Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice Kevin Donahue  
Council Chairman Phil Mendelson  
Councilmember Charles Allen  
Councilmember Anita Bonds  
Councilmember Mary Cheh  
Councilmember Jack Evans  
Councilmember Vincent Gray  
Councilmember David Grosso  
Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie  
Councilmember Brianne Nadeau  
Councilmember Elissa Silverman  
Councilmember Brandon Todd  
Councilmember Robert White  
Councilmember Trayon White