



# WABA

WASHINGTON AREA  
BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

Megan Kanaghy  
DC Department of Transportation  
55 M Street, SE, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20003

January 2, 2019

Dear Megan Kanaghy,

I am pleased to submit comments on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and our 6,000 regional members. Please let this letter serve as the official comments of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (“WABA”) on the 20th, 21st, or 22nd Street NW protected bike lane project redesign by DC Department of Transportation (“DDOT”).

Let us first congratulate you on moving forward with this project. It is a dire need and is a vital first step towards moving vulnerable users safely through the corridor. In addition, this plan is absolutely necessary to the District’s commitment to Vision Zero. Put bluntly, this is a well-traveled corridor and the District’s duty to act is a long time coming: the genesis of this proposed bike lane is the 2005 Bike Master Plan -- a full 15 years in planning and implementation (given the current schedule).

Of the three proposed routes, WABA is in favor of the 21st street proposal. This proposal is a relatively straight-forward attempt at connecting important bicycle routes, existing and planned - (including Florida Ave NW, Q St NW, Connecticut Ave, etc.) - between DuPont in the north to the area around the Mall to the south. It is the longest continuous route proposed and would serve the District well, especially given the high volume of bicycle traffic in the area and the relative lack of current infrastructure.

We do have some concerns with the proposal. Specifically, given that this project was first integrated into the 2005 Bike Master Plan, we cannot help but wonder if 15 years is an acceptable timeline for building such a critical connection to the protected bike lane network? It is our contention that this project should be moved forward as expeditiously as practical. Planning and design should be done carefully, however we urge DDOT to explore options for interim steps to implement some of the planned changes sooner to calm traffic and protect vulnerable users. 2021 is too long to wait for safety.

The current plan suggests a potential compromise on 21st Street north of New Hampshire Ave, where the protected bike lane would become a contraflow bike lane -- this is not ideal and will be stressful and potentially hazardous to many users. Contraflow bike lanes are ideal for very low-stress, low traffic, one-way streets where two-way

bicycle connections are desired. As a popular driving connection between Florida Ave and Foggy Bottom, 21st. St. is neither low-stress nor low-traffic. Additionally, it is too narrow to improve the contraflow bike lane with a wider buffer, bike lane, and barrier as recommended by the National Association of City Transportation Officials guidelines unless parking is removed. Contraflow bike lanes on 21st will not appeal to the majority of people who are interested in biking but are concerned for their safety, so these improvements will have little benefit to experienced and more cautious riders, including families biking with children. Instead, the protected bike lanes should extend all the way to Florida Ave.

In addition, though outside of the scope of this study, we wonder how this project will connect with the greater bicycle network. When complete, there will still be incomplete links to the planned protected bike lanes on Connecticut Avenue and towards Columbia Rd. These connections should be planned for. Taking a network approach to this specific project will assuredly assist in moving the goals of Vision Zero forward and attract new users to the project.

The above said, we do hear and understand the concerns of some members of the local community. As the above clearly states, safety for vulnerable users throughout the corridor must be the primary objective – however, we do understand that for others that is not the case. Adequate on-street parking availability is a primary concern for many. While the number of repurposed parking spaces might seem large, there is still significant on-and-off street parking available in the corridor. In order for all residents of the District to use public space according to their needs, the availability of parking will necessarily be reduced. Across the District, almost 40% of households do not own a car and only 40% of residents commute to work by car. At the same time, the District has adopted the goal of significantly reducing driving trips, increasing biking, walking and transit, and eliminating traffic fatalities. Robust community input to mitigate parking loss and identify options off of 21st street is important, but DDOT cannot achieve its goals without repurposing car parking in some corridors.

The need for high-quality, protected bike infrastructure is demanded by the mandates of the District's commitment to Vision Zero. Safe travel for vulnerable users must be paramount in the planning process. The being said, we want to reiterate that the timeline in this proposal is painfully long and while we appreciate the comprehensive approach to gauging community input, the city simply cannot take this long to build the infrastructure that we need to keep people safe.

We look forward to discussing this with you at your discretion.



Robert Gardner  
Advocacy Director