



**WABA**  
WASHINGTON AREA  
BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

November 16, 2020

District Department of Transportation  
55 M St. SE  
Washington, DC 20009

Re: Comments on the Broad Branch Road Draft Environmental Assessment

To Whom it May Concern,

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, its 5,000 members in the Washington Region, and the tens of thousands of people who bike for transportation and recreation in the area, I write with comments on the Broad Branch Road Draft Environmental Assessment.

At this study's last update in 2013, bicycling was surging in Washington DC. In response to the buildout of dozens of miles of new bike lanes downtown, including protected bike lanes on 15th St. NW and Pennsylvania Ave NW and the launch of Capital Bikeshare in 2010, bicycle mode share had climbed from 2.2% of trips to work in 2009 to 3.1% in 2013. Today, bicycle mode share has continued to climb to 5% as the Department of Transportation reconfigures streets with innovative designs to create low-stress bicycling options that appeal to more people. In the seven years since the public had the chance to weigh in on Broad Branch Road, more people are biking for all sorts of trips all over the city, DDOT has an aggressive sustainable transportation mode share goal, and the state of the practice for safe and low-stress bicycling options has evolved significantly.

The Draft Environmental Assessment Purpose and Need notes that the road is used frequently by people on bikes and has numerous bicycle safety issues due to blind corners, speeding, and, most notably, a lack of dedicated space for people who bike. It erroneously notes that the master plan does not call for bicycle improvements. In fact the 2014 MoveDC plan does recommend new bike lanes on Broad Branch Road from Beach Drive to Nebraska Ave NW. The document does, however, conclude that bicycle improvements are needed for this road to serve as a viable link in the bicycle network.

Though it may have been acceptable in 2013, the preferred alternative is unacceptable today. It will not improve safety or access for the many people who currently bike on Broad Branch Road and it completely fails to accommodate potential future bicyclists who rightly expect new construction to deliver a low-stress bicycle experience. The preferred alternative fails to meet the EA's stated purpose and need, disregard's DDOT's own Complete Streets policy, and does

not live up to today's District Department of Transportation standard practices for bicycle safety.

We appreciate DDOT's focus on pedestrian access and safety in this project, along with improving storm water treatment, sewer upgrades, environmental conservation, and the safer intersection design at Brandywine St. But for the price tag, the project must deliver a result that improves safety and access for people who bike, too. Rebuilding a smooth road for drivers and adding curbs, but requiring people on bikes to continue sharing a lane with motor vehicles that speed around blind corners is a failure of accommodation, not a safety improvement. Improving safety for people on bikes in this context, requires a minimum of a wide (5-6') climbing lane, restricting vehicle speed.

We insist that the project team return to the purpose and need and consider the alternatives. First, for the sake of limiting runoff and limiting the area of disturbance, we encourage the team to reconsider the merits of converting Broad Branch Road to one-way operation and using the additional road space to accommodate pedestrian and 2-way bicycle access. This option is by far the most environmentally friendly to water quality and wildlife, the best alternative for road safety, especially for drivers, and likely the lowest cost.

Only if the one-way option must be fully eliminated, we support a mix of alternative C and a modified alternative D (with a wider 5' climbing lane). Along the majority of the road, right of way is sufficient to include a 6' sidewalk, a generous sidewalk buffer, and a 5' wide climbing bike lane. Where right of way is constrained, and only there, the climbing bike lane could transition to a shared lane until the right of way again allows a dedicated climbing bike lane. While still a significant compromise, this option arguably satisfies the purpose and need, meets minimum DDOT bike lane standards, and satisfies the mandate of the Complete Streets Policy.

Finally, please note that the recently enacted Vision Zero Omnibus Amendment Act of 2020, when fully funded, will lower speed limits on collector roads, like Broad Branch Road, from 25mph to 20mph. The roadway design and geometry should use a target speed of 20mph rather than 25mph and should encourage this new, slower, and safer speed.

To follow up on these comments, please contact Garrett Hennigan at 202-656-3078 or [garrett.hennigan@waba.org](mailto:garrett.hennigan@waba.org).

Thank you for your attention to our comments,

Garrett Hennigan  
Community Organizer