



Mayor Muriel Bowser
Deputy Mayor Lucinda Babers
Deputy Mayor John Falcicchio
Deputy Mayor Christopher Geldart
Acting Director Everett Lott
Senior Advisor Beverly Perry

September 14, 2021

To Mayor Bowser, Deputy Mayor Babers, Deputy Mayor John Falcicchio, Deputy Mayor Geldart, Director Lott, and Senior Advisor Perry:

Last night, another driver killed another child in our city. Another sudden, violent hole torn through the heart of a family. It did not have to happen. Today, we demand change as we begin grieving this devastating loss. Traffic violence has a profound physical, emotional, and spiritual impact on our lives, families, and communities. It doesn't have to.

The District has the resources, the tools, and the expertise to make every intersection in this city safe for people—regardless of race, income, age, gender, or ability—to cross on foot, on a bike, in a stroller, or in a wheelchair.

Instead, we see the same grim pattern, over and over again: a violent crash, a public outcry, and a feeble, “tactical” response from the city—some marginal infrastructure changes at the site of the crash, with no plan to address thousands of other similarly unsafe streets and intersections across the District with the urgency that a five-year-old's death demands.

In the wake of the 185th traffic death in the past six years, we aren't asking for more funding or more planning for infrastructure. The administration went a long way toward addressing that challenge in the FY2022 budget. We thank Mayor Bowser for her historic investment in transportation improvements and look forward to the release of an updated MoveDC long-range transportation plan.

We see, however, that on street after street, project after project, the District drags its feet, implementing proven safety measures only reluctantly and after aggressive compromise.

Mobility is a human right. The first section of Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from the United Nations states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state." But the reality is that most American cities limit that freedom to people in cars.

The District can do better. We can and should interpret the right to freedom of movement to mean that people have what they need to protect and preserve their wellbeing as they move through the city.

Thus far, however, the District has only demonstrated that level of commitment to people who are driving cars.

We are asking for an ideology of safety from those leading the District: We want to see, and feel, that Mayor Bowser cares more about safety than parking, more about safety than driving fast, and more about safety than driver convenience. We want to see equitable policy and decisive action to create city streets that ensure no one else's life is lost.

An ideology of safety will lead the District to do everything in its power to slow traffic through the reallocation of parking and driving lanes to multimodal infrastructure, increase investments in transit to ensure every resident has a reliable alternative to driving, advance automated enforcement, and, overall, to shift its culture to one in which lazy, reckless, and unsafe driving is not tolerated.

This will require constraining the privilege of individual drivers, and will no doubt be accompanied by public backlash. We think saving a person's life is well worth that unpleasant endeavor.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Allinger, Executive Director
Greater Greater Washington

Kristin Frontiera, Acting Executive Director
Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Christy Kwan, Co-Chair
DC Families for Safe Streets