

By Electronic Mail

January 14th, 2022

Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

RE: Request for Expedited Consideration of the Walk Without Worry, Safe Routes to School, and Metro for DC Acts

To the DC Council:

This past year, forty residents paid the ultimate price for our continuing failure to make our roads and school zones safe for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. These included our most vulnerable, 5-year-old Allison Hart and 4-year-old Zy'aire Joshua, as well as cyclist and traffic safety advocate Jim Pagels. Other residents were struck and injured while engaged in the most routine activities: walking to or from school (6- and 8-year-old Heavyn and Faith White, and their father, Tyrone Bell, struck and seriously injured on Walk to School Day, and 9-year-old Kaydn Green, permanently paralyzed), or bicycling near home (9-year-old Peter Dziekan and 4-year-old Nathan Ballard Means). It was the deadliest year on record since 2007, and traffic deaths have been on the increase every year but one since 2015. That was the year the mayor announced the goal of zero deaths by 2024. Half of the deaths involved pedestrians (17) or cyclists (3); notably, half of the total were in Wards 7 and 8.

Over the past year, a number of policy interventions have been announced, including \$10 million for traffic speed cameras and enhanced enforcement in school zones, as well as streamlined procedures for DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) traffic calming measures. While these are welcome (to emphasize the District's commitment to equity we encourage the Council to also have a hearing on the DC Driving to Opportunity Act as well), they fall short of addressing ongoing systemic challenges to pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Three measures introduced by the DC Council are a step in the right direction:

The Walk Without Worry Act, introduced by Councilmember Brianne Nadeau with 13 co-sponsors, would standardize the use of continuous sidewalks, raised crosswalks, and raised intersections and require DDOT to incorporate them in all new paving or roadway resurfacing contracts.

The Safe Routes to School Expansion Regulation Act (Bill 24-0565), introduced by Councilmember Janeese Lewis George with unanimous support from the Council, would enhance public school safety infrastructure and enforcement, including larger school zones and reduced speed limits.

The Metro for DC Act, introduced by Councilmember Charles Allen with nine co-sponsors, would give eligible DC residents \$100 a month in free transit credits and create a fund to improve bus service in underserved neighborhoods.

We urge Transportation and Environment Committee Chair Mary Cheh to schedule hearings on these bills right away, and Council Chair Phil Mendelson to make it a top legislative priority of the Council to schedule these measures for consideration and a vote. In addition, as part of this effort, we encourage the Council to conduct robust oversight to ensure these bills are effectively implemented.

Sincerely,

Brian Romanowski, 2F01
Chuck Elkins, 3D01
Jonah Goodman, 4C10
Colleen Costello, 5B05
Stephen Cobb, 5D07
Keya Chatterjee, 6A01
Robb Dooling, 6A06
Anthony Lorenzo Green, 7C04
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Sauleh Siddiqui, 3C05
Janell Pagats, 3C03
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