



Testimony for the 2021 DDOT Performance Oversight Hearing Before the Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Good afternoon Chairperson Cheh and Members of the Committee,

My name is Garrett Hennigan. I am a Ward 5 resident and here today on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and our nearly 7,000 members in the Washington Region. WABA envisions a just and sustainable transportation system where walking, biking, and transit are the best ways to get around. Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective today.

I wanted to take a moment to thank you, Chairperson Cheh, for your leadership of this committee and for your steadfast service to the safe streets movement during your tenure on the Council. Thank you for your vision, your collaboration, and your hard work over the years making DC a more bikeable, walkable, livable city.

We all know 2021 was a difficult year. Despite the numerous challenges brought about by COVID-19, the District Department of Transportation reached some notable milestones. In 2021, DDOT completed 8 miles of new protected bike lanes, almost double its last record. The department expanded the Capital Bikeshare network, bringing new stations, electric bicycles and easier mobility to residents across the city, while continuing to offer deeply discounted memberships and fees to low income users. DDOT completed an update of its 2014 MoveDC Plan with a new focus on reprioritizing street space for safe walking and biking and more reliable transit. In the fall, we saw the Mayor and the Council invest heavily in our trail network, expand planning staff capacity to deliver projects faster, and DDOT took big steps towards completing the Metropolitan Branch Trail and the Frederick Douglass Bridge.

Our city is still far from a complete, all-Wards, low-stress bicycle network that keeps people safe, that makes bicycling accessible to all, and that creates responsible transportation options to mitigate the climate crisis. This is not a fringe goal, but longstanding city policy. It is wildly popular with voters, confirmed again and again through supportive ANC votes and public meetings. and is a proven strategy to reverse DC's traffic violence crisis., backed by mountains of research,

Last year, our community experienced 40 traffic deaths, which is the most traffic fatalities in the District since 2007. Half of these fatalities occurred East of the Anacostia River showing glaring inequity in street safety. Every single death left a family and community reeling and so many other crashes leave people with crippling injuries and trauma. This is preventable and unacceptable. And it is unconscionable that advocates and victims must come back every year to beg for action.

DDOT is still far too reactive when implementing urgent, proven street safety fixes rather than proactive. Deaths will not be prevented by 12 x 18 signs on the side of the road or begging drivers to slow down. The solutions are proven and require reconfiguring our streets to make more space for walkers, rollers, and bikers, and yes, aggressively slowing down drivers through street design. Just two years shy of the 2024 goal, it is more clear than ever that DC's Vision Zero initiative needs a complete reboot.

WABA has a few major concerns to highlight:

1. There is inadequate coordination between DDOT's Bike/Ped team and the Infrastructure Project Management Division on capital projects. Civil engineering efforts are still focussed on moving as many cars as quickly as possible, and tack on biking and walking at the end, as an afterthought. By then, there is not space for what is needed to serve people on bikes and foot. We have seen this play out with the East Capitol St Bridge, 11th St. SE, Florida Ave NE, and the proposed design of the Teddy Roosevelt Bridge.

2. Trail projects like the South Capitol Street Trail are taking far too long. DDOT is taking 10 plus years to deliver on trail projects and we are deeply concerned about this pace. One hangup: we do not believe that DDOT's legal team is adequately staffed for the right of way negotiations needed to move trail projects forward.
3. We are alarmed by DDOT's interpretation of the mandatory protected bike lane provisions of the Vision Zero Omnibus Act. DDOT cannot be allowed to simply circumvent this long-debated and approved law with semantic trickery.
4. There is inadequate transparency and community engagement in many efforts as shown by the recent MoveDC update and 8th St. NE protected bike lane. Despite being promised an opportunity to review the draft, no draft was ever shown to the public.

We look forward to partnering with DDOT and the DC Council to ensure that DC can meet its Vision Zero and mobility goals.

Thank you