

By Electronic Mail

August 1, 2021

Everett Lott, Director
District Department of Transportation

Re: Community response to 30% design of the 2021 East Capitol Safety and Mobility Project

With the 2021 East Capitol Safety and Mobility Project, we have a once in a decade opportunity to improve safety and transit accessibility throughout the East Capitol Street corridor in Ward 7. On May 4 2021, DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) presented a 30% design for the corridor from B Street SE to Southern Avenue¹. We are writing to ask that DDOT deliver on Mayor Bowser's commitment to accessible transit and Vision Zero for all DC residents, which can only be achieved with the following improvements to the design.

- **Do not remove any crosswalks:** The proposed design removes pedestrian crosswalks at 40th Street and 60th Street. As residents in the area, we know that increasing distances between crossing intersections incentivizes more crossings outside crosswalk areas, especially for seniors and families who are challenged walking longer distances. This will inevitably lead to pedestrian injuries and deaths. We do not believe this is aligned with the District's commitment to Vision Zero. DDOT must commit to upgrading and expanding current crosswalks, rather than removing them.
- **Incorporate future commercial and residential development projects into the design.** DDOT must thoughtfully consider how increased pedestrian, cyclist and transit needs are met for new projects coming to the corridor. This plan must address safe access, for all people, to Fletcher-Johnson, Capitol Gateway, Benning Road Streetcar Extension, and the former Carter Apartments.
- **Improve transit accessibility:** This project must capitalize on the three major transit opportunities planned:
 1. The plan must incorporate the new Ward 7 Circulator, which will be coming online along a large portion of East Capitol. The plans must explicitly take this into account and have a plan to encourage ridership.
 2. The plan must focus on the interchange with Benning Road metro station. This will be the terminus of the DC Streetcar extension and must therefore be pedestrian centric first.

¹ 2021 East Capitol Street Safety and Mobility Project, Presentation of 30% design, 4 May 2021, DC Department of Transportation (DDOT), https://ddot.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddot/page_content/attachments/FINAL%20East%20Capitol%20Street%20Public%20Meeting%20Presentation_5.4.21.pdf

3. The plan must incorporate dedicated bus lanes. DC is making major investments in creating car free lanes and dedicated bus lanes throughout the District. This corridor must be included as well. We want to support and increase bus ridership in a community with lower car ownership. A dedicated bus lane would support major bus routes such as the 96 and the new Ward 7 Circulator route. Dedicated bus signals can further help advance the transit time for buses on the corridor.
- **Prioritize safe crossing at East Capitol and Stoddert Place (Benning Stoddert Recreation Center):**

This area is deadly for pedestrians. In 2019, a child was killed while crossing East Capitol in the 3900 block, just south of Stoddert Place². Families from the neighborhood north of East Capitol routinely cross here to access the playground, sports fields, and recreation center at Benning-Stoddert, as well as the eastbound 96/97 bus stop to get to school. Walking along the north sidewalk of the 3900 block of East Capitol and crossing at Stoddert Place is today extremely dangerous, especially with small children, and the proposed design fails to improve safety. Vehicles pass at highway speeds and often fail to stop at the red light, because the current traffic signals are small and off to the side. Cars also come flying off East Capitol into the slip lane to get to Minnesota Ave.

The intersection of Benning-Stoddert Recreation Center must be redesigned to focus on pedestrian and bike safety at both the intersection itself as well as the slip lane on the north side that extends from the intersection to Burns St NE and Minnesota Ave. DDOT must mitigate speeding at the intersection through raised crosswalks and bulb outs. DDOT must widen the sidewalk on the north side of East Capitol/slip lane between Burns St NE and the Stoddert Place intersection. These changes to the design will make this area safer for pedestrians accessing the recreation center and playground, and will reduce speeding issues in the slip lanes.
 - **Prioritize safe crossing at the Benning Road and East Capitol intersection:** The proposed design does not offer safe passage for pedestrians who will need to access metro, bus, Ward 7 Circulator and the forthcoming DC Streetcar. Yet DDOT will ask residents to cross between nine and seven lanes of traffic in order to cross Benning Road (western and eastern side). As designed, this intersection is not safe for children, persons with a disability, or our seniors. DDOT must reduce the number of lanes at this intersection to reduce the roadway and allow residents to safely cross.
 - **Add protected bike lanes throughout the entire corridor:** Protected bike lanes have been proposed and recommended for East Capitol Street for at least ten years:

² “One teen kills another in a fatal hit-and-run pedestrian crash in SE, D.C. police say”, Washington Post, 25 October 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/one-teen-kills-another-in-a-fatal-hit-and-run-pedestrian-accident-dc-police-say/2019/10/24/b6b02a08-f6c5-11e9-8cf0-4cc99f74d127_story.html

- a. First in the Far Northeast Livability Study (2011)³;
- b. Then in the MoveDC Plan (2014)⁴;
- c. Most recently in the Far Southeast Livability Study (2017)⁵

Ward 7 residents ride bicycles, use Capital Bikeshare, and use new micro-mobility devices deployed by DDOT. A protected bike lane provides safe access for *all* persons to the schools, libraries, employment locations and health facilities along the corridor. Ward 7 residents want a walkable, bikeable community that allows access to the existing and future amenities without the need of a personal vehicle. Dedicated signals for cyclists throughout the corridor, as it has been implemented on Florida Ave NE, would further improve safety for the protected bike lanes.

DDOT's current proposal of a one-mile protected bike lane and three miles of unprotected bike lanes is not sufficient. These unprotected bike lanes would run adjacent to cars traveling at 30 - 35 mph (if going the speed limit). This will be dangerous and make riding a bike in this corridor inaccessible to all but the most daring riders. Additionally, research shows that, when a crash occurs, each incremental increase in vehicle speed leads to an exponentially higher risk of severe injury to a person riding a bicycle⁶. To enable safe and accessible cycling in line with existing District recommendations, DDOT must extend the protected bike lane for the full length of East Capitol.

- **Address speeding in slip lanes:** The proposed design does not offer a plan for addressing the regular speeding that occur in slip lanes adjacent to East Capitol Street throughout the corridor. We want steeper curves, speed bumps, rumble strips, narrowing of the road and bulb outs, or a complete removal of the slip lanes.
- **Introduce raised crosswalks:** Raised crosswalks can serve as an important tool for speed mitigation, for example when vehicles turn. DDOT has recently begun to introduce raised crosswalks in their design throughout the District, for example on C Street NE from 21st Street to 14th Street NE. DDOT must include raised crosswalks throughout the corridor on both sides of East Capitol Street, where possible.
- **No shared paths between pedestrians and bicyclists:** The proposed design includes a shared path between pedestrians and cyclists on the southern side of East Capitol. This will lead to crashes and congestion that puts members of the community, especially

³ Far Northeast Livability Study, October 2011, DC Department of Transportation (DDOT), https://ddot.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddot/publication/attachments/far_northeast_livability_study_2011_a.pdf

⁴ 2014 MoveDC Plan, DC Department of Transportation (DDOT), <https://movedc-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/documents/DCGIS::2014-movedc-part-2-plan-elements/explore>

⁵ The Far Southeast III Livability Study - Final Report, June 2017, DC Department of Transportation (DDOT), [http://www.fse3livabilitystudy.com/pdf/FSE%20Livability%20Report%20\(to%20print\).pdf](http://www.fse3livabilitystudy.com/pdf/FSE%20Livability%20Report%20(to%20print).pdf)

⁶ "The effect of speed limit reductions in urban areas on cyclists' injuries in collisions with cars" Irene Isaksson-Hellman & Josefin Törek, 2019, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31800325/>

seniors and children, at risk. Instead, we want DDOT to include separate pedestrian facilities and a fully protected bike lane.

Sincerely,

David Alexander, *Ward 2 DC Bicycle Advisory Council*
Anica Allen, *At-Large DC Bicycle Advisory Council*
Stephanie A. Audain, *ANC Commissioner 7D05*
Tamara Blair, *ANC Commissioner 7D01*
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Kelvin E. Brown, *ANC Commissioner 7B06*
Mandla Deskins, *Secretary of Capitol View Civic Association, Ward 7 resident*,
Alexander Domesle, *Ward 7 resident*
Kelly Domesle, *Ward 7 resident*
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Dr. Marie J. Fritz, *Ward 7 resident and Secretary of the Penn Branch Community Association*
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cc: Councilmember Mary M. Cheh, Chair, Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Councilmember Phil Mendelson, Chair
Councilmember Anita Bonds, At-Large
Councilmember Christina Henderson, At-Large
Councilmember Elissa Silverman, At-Large
Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr., At-Large
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Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, Ward 4
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Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6
Councilmember Vincent Gray, Ward 7
Councilmember Trayon White, Sr., Ward 8