



March 9th, 2022

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF THE WASHINGTON AREA
BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION ON THE 2021 PERFORMANCE OF
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES**

My name is Ursula Sandstrom, Trail Ranger and Outreach Director for the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. The Department of General Services has a wide scope of responsibilities for the maintenance, construction and management of facilities, including parks and schools, and the use and wear on park facilities increased as people sought outside sanctuary during pandemic. In the metropolitan area, Chesapeake Conservancy found that park use increase 98% during the pandemic

Many people during the hearing raised important points about delayed repair, opaque maintenance, and DGS non-response to community maintenance complaints, with a particular focus on implications for our schools. We wish to share that we have seen this same level of performance at the parks and recreation facilities that DGS is responsible for. DGS is not fully integrated into the city-wide 311 system, which is counter to residents expectations of the portal role of a city-wide call center. The Community Facilities Request portal does not have a feature to allow photo uploads, requiring photos to be submitted via email as a second step, a labor intensive and complicated workaround.

But more worryingly, we have seen infrastructure broken in Ward 7 & 8 parks for years with no clear movement to completely repair. Residents and park users deserve working water fountains, lights that are installed, and playgrounds with working gates and in a state of good repair. When things break the expectation should be that they are fixed in the time span of weeks or months. But instead, we have a pattern where residents and WABA staff have been reporting the same broken things for years. We are glad to see the Marvin Gaye Recreation Center playground resurfacing finally happen. But it took public organizing by neighbors since 2017, including a public petition campaign, for anything to publicly happen.

DGS needs to address their maintenance pipeline, communication and process. This includes being intuitive for residents to report by standardizing with 311, continuing the expansion of the

dashboard work so residents know that facilities are being fixed, and completing maintenance in a timely and proactive manner.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
Ursula Sandstrom

Trail Ranger and Outreach Director
Washington Area Bicyclist Association



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