



Testimony for the FY23-28 DDOT Budget 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 here today on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and our nearly 7,000 members in the Washington Region. WABA works towards 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 thoughts on the DDOT budget..

Before getting into the budget, I want to spend a brief moment recognizing this committee, and especially Councilmember Cheh, for years of service, leadership, and focus on expanding safe transportation options in the District. You have been instrumental in securing funds, changing policy, and pushing the Mayor to think bigger, bolder, and more urgently. With quite a few promising bills on the table, we are optimistic about what this Council can accomplish before your much-deserved retirement.

We applaud the Mayor's proposed budget for maintaining last year's substantial increases in staff, planning capacity, and capital funding to build out DC's low stress bicycle network at a promised ten miles of protected bike lanes a year. It funds completing much of the planned off-street trail network, with a majority focus on trails connecting to or east of the Anacostia River. It maintains funding for the popular DC Trail Ranger Program, run by WABA, which now brings full-time, year-round, maintenance, support, and community-driven programming to sustain DC's trails and grow their use. And we are thrilled to see in the budget, substantial funding and vision to improve the reliability of DC's bus network in just a few years.

In many ways, the proposed budget reflects how much the conversation and DDOT's own stated priorities on traffic safety, safe streets, transportation equity and investing in areas of historic underinvestment has changed. We are pleased to see full funding for the 9th St. Safety Project, Connecticut Ave Safety Project, major investments in trails East of the River, new Automated Traffic Enforcement cameras, and new funding to upgrade & harden successful traffic calming with sturdier materials as would be required in the proposed Upgrading Tactical Safety Projects Amendment Act of 2022.

Yet, it also shows the limits of that progress. It still leaves critical sections of the Vision Zero Omnibus Act unfunded, such as implementing no right turn on red restrictions at most intersections, speed limit reductions on collector roads, education and testing requirements, and changes to investigation, reporting, and rapid street redesign after crashes. This budget proposal still pushes essential redesigns of unsafe corridors into the uncertain future and green lights projects for true multi-modal transportation options to some wards but not others.

I want to highlight a few projects that deserve more scrutiny:

- Suitland Parkway Trail should be prioritized for rehabilitation before 2027. This trail has been in deplorable condition for more than a decade already and cannot wait another five years. For years we have heard that rehab is just around the corner without action. Let's stop kicking this can into the future and invest in making this existing Ward 8 walking and biking connection a safe and dignified route.
- East Capitol St. Safety & Mobility project is funded for design, yet has no funding for construction. This is a fatally dangerous road with similar habitually unsafe traffic characteristics as Connecticut Ave NW and Florida Ave NE and similar project histories. An equitable spending plan aimed at righting the wrongs of the past would prioritize fixing this Ward 7 corridor.
- The PaveDC program continues to dedicate \$25-36 million per year to tear up, repave, and restripe miles of roads, only to restore their design exactly as they are

today. Since smooth pavement is often not safer pavement, we encourage the Council to explore options to reinvent this program so that its goals are more about building back safer as mandated in the Vision Zero bill and forthcoming Walk Without Worry Act instead of volume.

- Broad Branch Road Rehabilitation should not be funded until DDOT pivots to a complete streets design that works for all current and anticipated users. After seven years of silence, DDOT released the environmental assessment for this project and chose a design that no longer meets DC's standards. The EA document contradicts itself and DC priorities. It acknowledges that Broad Branch Road sees substantial use by people on bikes today, that the current design is unsafe and unsuitable for most people who bike, and that demand for bicycling here will increase into the future.

Yet, DDOT's preferred road design, with the exception of a welcome sidewalk, will be nearly identical to the current design with no dedicated space for people to bike. As WABA and many other organizations noted when this plan was released, there are design options that could improve walking and biking access, such as converting Broad Branch road to a one-way street, that DDOT should reconsider. At more than \$55 million, this project should not move ahead unless the vision is right.

- Prepare a funding mechanism for the Walk Without Worry and Safe Routes to School Amendment Acts - these bills have substantial support in the council and amongst residents so passage is all but certain. Let's plan for the passage of these bills.

Thank you for your consideration.