

by electronic mail

April 6, 2023

Mayor Muriel Bowser

Deputy Mayor Lucinda Babers
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure

Director Jennifer Reed
Office of Budget and Performance Management

Chair Phil Mendelson
Council of the District of Columbia

Councilmember Charles Allen, Chair
Committee on Transportation & the Environment
Council of the District of Columbia

Re: Funding for traffic safety projects

Dear Mayor Bowser, Deputy Mayor Babers, Director Reed, Chair Mendelson, and Councilmember Allen:

We are writing as local Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners to oppose efforts in the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget to redirect revenues from traffic cameras away from life-saving safety projects in an effort to balance the budget, as well as specific concerns if the District is able to replace this potential loss of local dollars with federal infrastructure funds for traffic safety projects.

The [Automated Traffic Enforcement \(ATE\) System Revenue Designation Amendment Act of 2022](#)—which was unanimously approved by the Council and signed by the Mayor—specifies that revenues from traffic cameras must be reinvested back into traffic safety projects. These projects are more than just infrastructure projects. They are projects that will invest in the health and well-being of District residents, visitors, families, and loved ones. They are projects that will increase the likelihood of loved ones making it home safely. Preventing fatal and major traffic crashes is paramount because we are living in an era of the [highest traffic fatalities we have experienced in 15 years](#). And it has been well documented that [fatal traffic crashes disproportionately occur in Wards 7 and 8](#). We envision a District where everyone can travel safely, thus negating the need for traffic cameras and its revenues.

The Office of the DC Auditor recently noted that the lack of progress on Vision Zero is largely attributed to the [“lack of full funding, data and outcome analysis.”](#) The audit specifically recommends that “[t]he Mayor and the DC Council should fund the Vision Zero Omnibus

Amendment Act to the extent required to implement provisions to reach zero fatalities.” That requires investing money in traffic safety infrastructure to reduce dangerous driving.

Redirecting funds from traffic cameras away from safety projects to balance the budget is in direct opposition to the DC Auditor's recommendation.

In addition, the proposed budget reduces funding to [the District Department of Transportation's Vision Zero Division \(table KA0-4\)](#) and [the District Department of Public Works' enforcement resources \(table KT0-4\)](#). **The expansion of the automated traffic enforcement program and its proposed decoupling from street safety for an all-purpose revenue stream validates public criticism that traffic cameras are predatory.** The intent of the program is to discourage dangerous driver behavior and to provide a dedicated source of funding for safety projects—not to simply generate revenue. Data from traffic cameras should direct funding for projects, ultimately working towards eliminating a camera's revenue entirely. The proposed budget worsens the District's ability to enforce traffic safety laws, especially drivers who rack up fines with impunity.

We oppose this loss of local funds for traffic safety projects and have concerns if the District is successful in supplementing with the historical level of funding available from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. **The District must be eligible and better prepared to apply for and win additional sources of transportation funds.**

The District Department of Transportation is currently ineligible to apply for the federal [Safe Streets and Roads for All](#) competitive grant program. This program, as written by law, precludes state departments of transportation from applying. (The Department is considered a state entity in order to receive other federal transportation funds.) We call your attention to this eligibility problem and urge you to work with Congresswoman Norton to fix eligibility so that the Department could apply directly. We also request your assistance to ensure that the Department works in collaboration with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments as an eligible entity to apply for projects in the [current call for applications](#), which closes in July 2023.

Other concerns remain if the Department can maximize other federal transportation dollars for safety. We applaud the recent win for Ward 8's [South Capitol Street Trail](#), but note the Department's non-competitive applications for I-295 from the [Reconnecting Communities](#) and intersection safety improvements from [Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation](#) grant programs. The Department noted in its recent [performance oversight](#) responses that it “did not have the resources to support the program area” (see question 48) and has not explained what resources those would be and how much would be required to support other competitive grants. The District must vigorously pursue additional sources of transportation funds, especially if there is a loss of a dedicated source of funds at the local level.

We must not lose out on every opportunity to save lives. The District can make meaningful and real strides against the rising number of traffic fatalities and serious injuries on our streets by fully funding the departments and programs devoted to traffic safety.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss our concerns in person. Commissioners Christy Kwan (6C01@anc.dc.gov), Santiago Lakatos (1B04@anc.dc.gov), and Aman George (4D06@anc.dc.gov) can assist as points of contact.

Sincerely,

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