



Comments on the DC Council Committee on Transportation & the Environment Oversight Hearing re: the District Department of Transportation Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

April 14, 2023

Chairman Allen and members of the Committee on Transportation and Energy:

I am writing to share comments on the FY2024 DDOT budget on behalf of the Capital Trails Coalition.

The Capital Trails Coalition (“Coalition”) is a collaboration of more than 75 public and private organizations, agencies, and volunteer advocates, across six jurisdictions, working to complete an 990 mile interconnected network of multi-use trails in the national capital region. Our founding partners include the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, and the National Park Service. The Coalition’s vision is to create an equitably-distributed, well-connected, and low-stress trail network that will transform public life by providing access to open space, active recreation, and reliable transportation for people of all ages and abilities.

The Coalition’s goals to establish the Capital Trails Network and encourage their use overlap with the District of Columbia’s Long Range Transportation Plan, the moveDC Plan, which calls for expanding the bicycle and pedestrian network by building more trails in the Capital Trails Network (Strategy #22).

We urge you to preserve and continue to prioritize the overall funding for trail projects large and small to complete the city’s ambitious vision and ensure access for all residents and neighborhoods. These investments will pay off. The Coalition’s report, *The Economic, Health, and Environmental Benefits of Completing the Capital Trails Network*, show that completing all 100+ miles of the Capital Trails Network in the District would result in \$162 million in economic impacts per year, as well as \$463 million in savings per year.

We applaud the inclusion of several capital projects to plan, build, and improve multi-use, paved trails across the District, especially in areas historically underserved by trails for transportation and recreation, including:

- \$2.4M for planning and design of the Military Road NW (Oregon to Beach) multimodal trail,
- \$27M for streetscape improvements and a new pedestrian and bicycle trail along New York Ave. in the Ivy City neighborhood, providing connections to the Metropolitan Branch Trail and the National Arboretum,
- \$47M to build the Shepherd Branch Trail, and
- \$3M for Phase 2 of the Oxon Run Trail.

Among the capital projects, we are glad to see a commitment to improving connections between existing trails and from neighborhoods to trails by dedicating funds to filling in critical gaps, such as:

- \$3.7M to complete the Arizona Ave. NW connection to the Capital Crescent Trail,



- \$16M to connect Wards 5 and 7 by creating the Anacostia River Trail through Kenilworth Park and for construction of the pedestrian and bike bridge to the National Arboretum,
- \$14M to complete the Metropolitan Branch Trail from First Place to Oglethorpe Street NW, and
- \$20M for the Anacostia Riverwalk Neighborhood Access trail work from 11th Street SE to Pennsylvania Avenue SE.

To bring about the vision of a well-connected, accessible trail network, we believe further staff support is needed, particularly from DDOT's legal office. Without the experienced legal experts to navigate and negotiate hurdles like right-of-way acquisitions, thorny projects like the Shepherd Branch Trail, a community priority for more than two decades, will continue to stagnate in a standoff between parties.

Finally, we encourage DDOT to prioritize the Suitland Parkway Trail in Ward 8 on their schedule. As has been previously shared, this vital trail's conditions have been cited as dangerously deteriorated since 2013 and have now reached truly unsafe levels. We are encouraged that DDOT has begun planning work to rehabilitate and improve the trail, but additional funding is needed to move the project forward. We therefore urge that DDOT reallocate capital funding from projects with longer and more uncertain timelines to the most critical network repairs. Growing our trail network cannot come at the expense of existing, unsafe trails.

We celebrate the investment in trails in DDOT's FY24 budget that helps advance our shared goals and we applaud the Council for recognizing that the multi-use trails in the Capital Trails Network, all 102 total miles - with 30+ miles still to be built, are critical elements of sustainable, healthy transportation and recreation infrastructure, that benefit our mental and physical health, environment, and economy.

Thank you for your consideration and for the Committee's continued efforts to make ours a greater, more walkable, and more bikeable city.

Sincerely,

Kalli Krumpas
Senior Organizing Manager