

Testimony for Department of Public Works Oversight Hearing from the Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Good afternoon, Chairperson Nadeau and members of the Committee. My Name is Garrett Hennigan, I live in Ward 6, and I am testifying on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and its 6,000 members in the Washington Region.

WABA empowers people to ride bikes, build connections, and transform places. We envision 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 perspective.

"Build it and they will come," we often say. When communities build safe, convenient, and low-stress places to bike, walk and scoot, people start choosing to leave the car at home for some trips. Connect those streets together into a seamless network linking the places people need to go and suddenly living car-lite or car-free becomes the easy choice.

We know that it works. Just look around DC's streets and you will see people going to work, running errands, hauling groceries and visiting friends by bike. And more and more we see parents biking their kids to school and daycare, not because they are bike fanatics, but because it is convenient, affordable, and in many neighborhoods, really safe. Building these networks, on-street and off-street, is a primary focus for WABA's advocacy and organizing. And we are grateful for the Council's leadership in pushing for expanding and connecting the network more quickly.

But people don't choose to bike when the network is broken. And in DC, piles of leaves, debris, and illegally parked cars and trucks block and break the network constantly, pushing people out into the dangers of chaotic traffic or onto sidewalks. If DC is serious about sustainable transportation and reaching Vision Zero, then it needs to be far more systematic and aggressive about taking care of this network and the people who use it.

In the past few years, DPW has stepped into maintaining DC's protected bike lanes with leaf collection and debris sweeping. We were encouraged to see DPW staff attending Bicycle Advisory Council meetings and taking sweeping requests on Twitter. These teams do thorough work, despite

doing most of it with brooms and hand tools. In the FY23 budget, Mayor Bowser dedicated \$1.7 million for a bike lane maintenance team at DPW with specialized, sweeping equipment. We are really excited to see this team systematize bike lane maintenance. We know that starting a new program takes a lot of planning and time, but we have not yet heard much about the program. We hope to hear from this team soon on its approach to tackling the task and we truly hope for regular coordinator and collaboration.

As DPW builds out this program, we have a few priorities and requests:

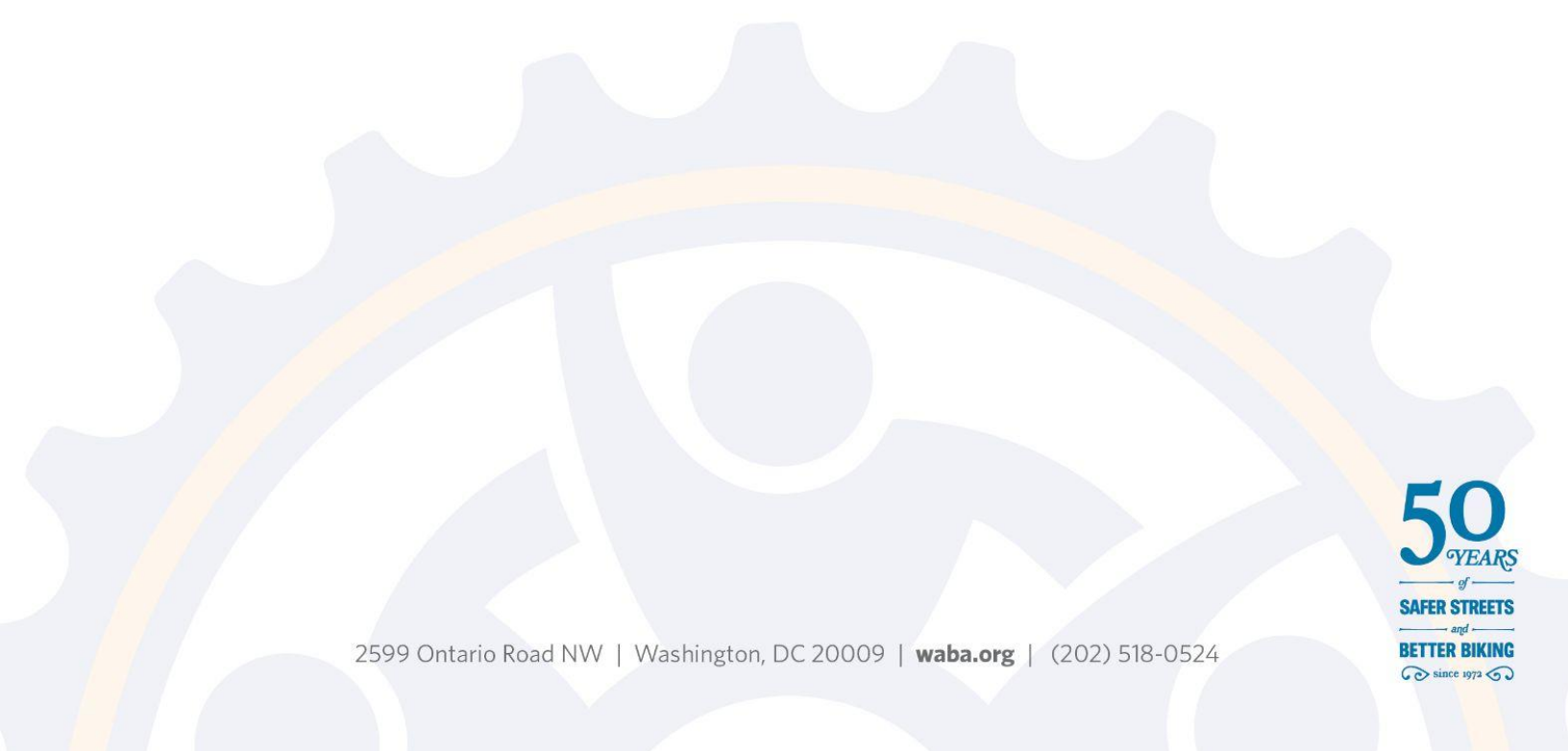
1. Take a systematic approach before chasing complaints - DC's protected bike lane network stretches almost 30 miles and into seven wards. These lanes should be clear and safe whether or not a resident has the time to submit a sweeping request. Take advantage of DDOT usage data to ensure the busiest lanes are cleared more often.
2. Coordinate with DC agencies, NPS, and BIDs to take stock of coverage plans and fill gaps for both sweeping and snow plowing of protected lanes, off-street trails, and especially bridge side-paths, which are critical, but often overlooked connections.
3. Take a proactive approach during leaf season and plan for multiple passes - leaves can make bike lanes hazardous by hiding large debris and creating traction issues when wet. DPW leaf crews do a thorough job, but a more timely response is needed to clear bike lanes.
4. Create a dedicated 311 service request for bike lane sweeping - if a resident does take the time to call 311 or file a request online, then that effort should be rewarded with action, not a closed ticket because they could not find the appropriate service category.

DPW parking enforcement is critical to maintaining the usability of the bicycle network. Yet, parking in bike lanes and blocking crosswalks, which put vulnerable road users at significant risk are commonplace across the city. It is unclear whether parking enforcement still focuses more on residential permit enforcement over safety issues as it did in the past, or if the scale of the problem has outgrown staffing, but requests for parking enforcement rarely result in citations or staff presence.

And perhaps most seriously, between the limits of automated enforcement, ticket reciprocity issues, and fake tags, DPW's booting and towing teams may be the only remaining mechanism DC has to hold repeatedly reckless drivers accountable for their actions by physically preventing them from

driving. This program must be adequately resourced. And more attention from DPW and all executive agencies are needed to address this fundamental accountability gap.

Thank you.



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