



**WABA Testimony before the DC Council Committee on Transportation & the Environment:  
Traffic Enforcement Roundtable  
May 23, 2023**

Hello Chair Allen and members of the committee. My name is Kalli Krumpas. I appreciate the chance to share testimony on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association.

As we've heard today, traffic safety on DC's streets is a complex, nuanced, and too-often heartbreaking public policy problem, which the DC government has failed to significantly improve in the past decade. Nearly half way into 2023, twenty people have lost their lives in traffic crashes on DC streets. 134 people have suffered a serious, life-altering injury. And more than 2,000 people suffered other injuries. The District's goals to reach zero traffic fatalities or serious injuries by next year are a long way off.

To achieve Vision Zero, we need a safe systems approach that layers together safe road users, safe vehicles, safe speeds, safe roads, and post-crash care so that severe injury and death are nearly impossible due to layers of redundancy for safety precautions. Focusing on road design, bike networks, and sidewalks is WABA's major focus; we know complete streets enable people of all ages and abilities, regardless of how they are traveling- as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders, to get around easily and safely.

Traffic enforcement plays a role, too. Especially in the short term while we work to design and operate safer streets. With violent and dangerous driving habits on display across the city, DC's approach to traffic enforcement is not working.

**Shifting Traffic Enforcement away from Armed Police**

Data from across the country makes it clear: police traffic stops perpetuate systemic racial injustice. People of color are more likely to be targeted by police for stops, more likely to be adversely affected by ensuing fines, and more likely to be victims of police violence. This is not an acceptable status quo.

Along with many others, WABA supports more effective, objective traffic enforcement measures, including shifting responsibility for minor, day-to-day traffic enforcement away from the Metropolitan Police Department to reduce the likelihood of police interactions escalating into violence.

Other cities like Philadelphia and Berkely have transitioned to civilian public safety enforcement officers to do traffic enforcement and write citations in place of armed police. We believe this could be successful in DC.

### **Automated Traffic Enforcement Cameras**

Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) is an effective tool for changing behavior and reducing crashes. The Federal Highway Administration recognizes Speed Safety Cameras as a Proven Safety Countermeasure; fixed cameras can reduce injury crashes on urban arterials by up to 47%. In DC, travel speeds were reduced by 14 percent at speed camera sites, and the proportion of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by more than 10 miles per hour decreased by 82 percent.

Yet ATE cameras are not effective on their own. Too many of DC's most dangerous, high-speed streets run through predominantly Black and lower-income communities in Wards 5, 7, and 8, where, due to car-centered road design and under-investment, residents experience a far-higher crash and injury rate than in other parts of the city. ATE cameras belong on these streets to help improve safety, but must also include substantial road redesign so the impact of those cameras lands equitably.

### **Fair & Effective Consequences For Unsafe Driving**

With hundreds more ATE cameras heading to DC's streets, now is the time to find the most effective ways to use them to improve road safety. Research shows that a high certainty of being caught is a more impactful deterrent than severe punishments. However, DMV records show more than 2,100 cars were linked to fines of more than \$20,000 over the past five years, indicating that fines alone are not sufficient to deter some drivers.

The Council must consider other consequences. In DC, a moving violation issued by police can put points on the driver's license, with escalating consequences like higher insurance costs, license suspension, and accountability for out-of-state drivers. ATE citations come with fines and a remote possibility of the car being booted after multiple unpaid citations. We support expanding the law to allow cameras to assess points to a license, with leeway for the vehicle owner to prove they were not behind the wheel. Appropriate consequences for flagrant, repeated, and dangerous driver behavior should be considered, such as license suspension and seizure of a vehicle.

DC also needs a more proactive, serious approach to address fake and defaced license plates. We call for additional attention to this matter and are glad to hear that several committees are considering next steps.

### **Targeted Approach for the Worst Offenders**

Some drivers show a pattern of dangerous driving, putting lives at risk every time they sit behind the wheel. DC's Fatal Crash Review Task Force noted that drivers with a significant history of repeated impairment or speeding-related offenses may be overrepresented in the District's fatal and critical injury crashes and both Chicago and New York found the same pattern.

The Council, MPD, and other Vision Zero agencies should develop a targeted approach to meaningfully intervene to prevent these dangerous drivers from continuing to threaten other road users.

We look forward to working with you and many of the stakeholders around this roundtable to help make the District safer and easier to get around for everyone. Thank you.