



March 31, 2024

Kevin Harrison
District Department of Transportation
250 M Street SE
Washington, D.C. 20003

Re: Columbia Road NW Bus Priority & Safety Improvements Project

Dear Mr. Harrison,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) to express our strong support for the District Department of Transportation's (DDOT) proposed concepts for safety and transit improvements to Columbia Road NW between California St and 16th St NW.

For more than fifty years, WABA has worked to transform the capital region by improving conditions for people who bike. Our work to advocate for dedicated bike infrastructure, pass laws that promote safe roadway behavior, and provide education programming for all road-users has resulted in a drastically different cultural and political approach to biking for transportation. Biking can and should be an equitable, safe, low-cost, time-saving, and sustainable way to navigate the District for all residents and visitors.

This corridor is particularly meaningful for WABA, our staff, and our Adams Morgan community, as Columbia Road has been our home for over a decade. In that time, we have witnessed far too many near misses, frightening crashes, life altering injuries, and a recent death within a few blocks of our front door, highlighting the urgent need for action and the compounding costs of the status quo.

We were encouraged from the project's outset by DDOT taking seriously its commitment to eliminating transportation-related serious injuries and deaths among all users of the street and demonstrating a willingness to consider substantial roadway redesign in this corridor and across the city. **The final concept includes exactly the kind of safety features and roadway design changes that we have advocated for to improve safety for all roadway users in line with the District's Vision Zero commitments.**

In particular, we applaud the inclusion of protected bike lanes (PBLs) along the entire length of the project corridor. PBLs of course improve safety for those who bike but they *also* improve safety for people walking (by providing a more substantial buffer between the sidewalk and vehicle travel lane) and for people driving (by narrowing the roadway and encouraging more appropriate driving speeds). The proposed intersection improvements including protected medians, daylighting, and bulb-outs will play a critical role in realizing the safety benefits as well. Overall we are enthusiastic that this project will deliver a corridor that is a pleasure to transit rather than one that is endured with white-knuckles.

We also commend DDOT for thinking critically and realistically about the parking needs in this busy corridor and thus prioritizing short-term access to businesses and other destinations (via loading and pickup/drop off zones) over long-term storage of private vehicles. Reducing parking will always be a lightning rod for criticism but we think DDOT, after extensive engagement with the many stakeholders in this busy corridor, has gotten it right with this project and successfully balanced commercial needs while remaining steadfastly focused on the priority outcome: safety for the most vulnerable roadway users, in a neighborhood where the majority of residents *do not own a car*.

Not every mile of bike lane is equally impactful (though every mile is welcome!) – the benefits are much greater when projects connect and feed into each other. We believe this project can and should be a keystone improvement, the first of many that stitch together Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Mount Pleasant, Woodley Park, Kalorama, Dupont Circle, and the U Street Corridor into a constellation of connected neighborhoods filled with safe, vibrant streets. We are therefore ecstatic to continue supporting DDOT's proposed redesign of Columbia Road and look forward to the start of construction this year.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these comments,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Kiker', with a stylized, flowing script.

Elizabeth Kiker
Executive Director, Washington Area Bicyclist Association