



August 28, 2023

Ms. Colleen Regotti  
Planning Department  
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority  
1 Aviation Circle, Ronald Reagan National Airport  
Washington, DC 20001

**Re: DCA Roadway Network Improvements Project**

Dear Ms. Regotti,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and its nearly 6,000 members across the Washington metropolitan area to provide feedback on the DCA Roadway Network Improvements Project Environmental Assessment.

For fifty years, WABA has worked to transform the capital region by improving the 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 our cities for all residents.

DCA is unique amongst the three DC-area airports and amongst airports nationally in its unparalleled accessibility via transit, bicycle, and on foot. While the tangle of airport roads and paucity of wayfinding make the experience of traveling to or from the airport by bike or foot a bit tricky, the fact that it is possible is cause for celebration. Yet rather than lean into these viable but underdeveloped transportation alternatives, MWAA has chosen to pursue a tired, expensive, and disruptive car-focused design that runs counter to its adopted [Sustainability Plan](#).

The Environmental Assessment fails to properly quantify the environmental impact of the additional vehicle miles traveled (VMT) that this expansion of roadway and parking infrastructure will induce. The proposed action will increase stormwater runoff by adding to impervious surfaces at DCA and worsen air pollution by bringing additional car traffic to the area at a moment when jurisdictions across the region are looking to *reduce* car trips and lower VMT.

This expansion of roadway infrastructure is justified by debunked theories. It fails to account for MWAA's ability to influence passenger and employee travel choices through Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies and misses the opportunity to invest in DCA's other existing and future transportation options so that they are better known and easier to use. TDM has a proven track record of

influencing mode choices and reducing road and parking demand, and for radically lower costs. [Seattle Children's Hospital, for instance, achieved a reduction of their drive-alone rate from 73% to 33% of employees.](#)

Instead of expanding roadways and parking, MWAA should:

1. Improve support for biking to work or travel at DCA by **adding easy-to-follow signage** directing employees and passengers to the Capital Bikeshare Station.
2. Improve support for biking to work or travel at DCA by **adding secure, covered bicycle parking** that is convenient to both the Mount Vernon Trail access and the terminals at DCA.
3. Improve support for biking and walking to Terminal 1 by **building an additional connection from the Mount Vernon Trail to Thomas Avenue** near the TNC/Limo staging lot. DCA's existing trail access is only convenient to Terminal 2.
4. **Scrap the unnecessary construction of new office space** in a market that is already drowning in overbuilt office capacity and lease space in Crystal City instead.
5. **Provide a grade-separated crossing for the Mount Vernon Trail of the onramp from DCA to the Northbound GW Parkway** to mitigate the safety problems at this crossing. Alternatively, close this ramp completely just like MWAA did for its northbound companion more than two decades ago. It is faster, safer and more direct for people driving to use the north-end ramp. MWAA's proposed safety improvements only benefit people who drive and encourage more people to use the ramp, increasing conflicts with trail users. This ramp was closed for several months for a trail project and did not create any problems for airport traffic.
6. Work to **make the user experience of the CC2DCA project as friendly as possible** – avoid unnecessary detours and grade changes and make the wayfinding straightforward and easy to follow. Walking to/from Crystal City should be the premiere travel option rather than an afterthought.
7. Improve support for biking and walking to DCA for work or travel by **improving the existing connection from the Mount Vernon Trail** which is circuitous, poorly-signed, dark, and does not meet ADA requirements. The EA previously mentions rebuilding this connection but provides no details that would allow the public to understand if it will be sufficient.
8. Ensure any airport changes in the vicinity of the Mount Vernon Trail **do not preclude the National Park Service's plans to widen the trail.**
9. **Reduce parking demand through increased pricing**, rather than an expensive and environmentally damaging expansion of supply. DCA already has more parking spaces than any other facility in Arlington County, including the Pentagon. MWAA charges less than market rate prices for employee parking, just \$30 per month (it is regularly several times that in Crystal City),

so simply charging a fair market rate, just like travelers are charged, would negate the need for more employee parking by reducing demand.

10. **Charge people driving a toll to pick up passengers at the curb** like DFW and a number of other airports do. This charge would flex up and down to mitigate congestion more effectively than any road widening project and would provide revenue.

Our proposed actions would help address the very real issues DCA faces with less impacts to the environment and at a much lower cost, leveraging the attributes that make the airport such a unique and valued transportation hub. DCA can and should be an airport geared towards the future of travel rather than one exclusively beholden to a legacy transportation paradigm, as laid out in the MWA 2020 Sustainability Plan. We look forward to continuing to engage with MWA on this project, and hope future public engagement opportunities will provide more room for proper dialogue with community members, stakeholders, and advocates.

Respectfully,

Kevin O'Brien

Virginia Organizer | Washington Area Bicyclist Association