



Council of the District of Columbia, Committee on Executive Administration and Labor

## 2025 Performance Oversight Hearing, Office of the City Administrator

March 6, 2025

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), on behalf of its 5,000 members and nearly 25,000 regional advocacy supporters, appreciates the opportunity to testify on this occasion. WABA envisions a just and sustainable transportation system where walking, biking, and transit are the best ways to get around.

The focus of this testimony is Vision Zero DC, a multi-departmental program whose management resides in the Office of the City Administrator.

We have found the staff of the DC Vision Zero Office, including Director Charlie Willson, and of the Highway Safety Office under Director Rick Birt, to be capable, dedicated, and responsive. Nonetheless, we must cite a data point that the Council is aware of, that has been and will be cited by other witnesses:

*Washington, DC experienced 52 traffic deaths in 2024, the same number as in 2023, itself 16-year high. Mayor Bowser pledged in 2015, "We will do everything in our power to eliminate transportation fatalities and serious injuries, because no loss of life is acceptable." We have not succeeded.*

The fatality and injury rates so far this year are significantly improved: Three fatalities and 29 major injuries to date this year compared to nine fatalities and 55 major injuries last year through March 6. Sustained attention and action will be essential to keep these numbers down and drive them to Zero.

We appreciate the recent announcement of a new safety-corridor enforcement effort targeting stretches of New York Avenue NE and South Capitol Street. We note the District's extensive use of speed, red-light, and stop-sign enforcement cameras and the attorney general's recent suits against egregious reckless driving offenders. We especially appreciate the creation and improvement of protected bike lanes and intersection safety and similar measures although we are disappointed in politically charged decisions that have sacrificed safety measures due to political pressure.

The DC Vision Zero Office is a focal point for these efforts. We urge a redoubled focus on their work. Mr. Willson has indicated that the DC Vision Zero Office will publish a new strategic plan later this year. We specifically ask that there be extensive opportunity for public input and comment in this effort.

One anecdotal point: As a bicyclist riding in a painted Sherman Circle NW bike lane in October, 2023, I was hit and injured by a pickup truck driver who was cited by the MPD for failure to yield. I couldn't find this incident in the DC Vision Zero dashboard. It turned out the date was misreported and my injuries were miscoded as 'driver' injuries. Attention to data accuracy is always in order, in addition of course to upgrading to protected bicycling infrastructure and safety improvements for pedestrians and transit users.

Data completeness is also essential. Evidently there is pilot study of incorporating EMS/trauma data in crash and injury counts, despite calls for Washington, DC to apply this data dating back to at least 2017.

We ask that the Council and the Office of the City Administrator redouble Vision Zero DC efforts. They are literally a matter of life and death.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration.

Seth Grimes  
Washington DC Organizer  
seth.grimes@waba.org