



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

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TESTIMONY OF THE WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION ON THE 2016 PERFORMANCE OF THE DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

March 13, 2017

Councilmember Cheh and Members of the Committee:

Good morning. My name is Tamara Evans. I am the Advocacy Director of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

The District Department of Transportation had some praiseworthy accomplishments this year. A number of long-awaited infrastructure projects have been completed or are moving forward: there is movement on extension of the Met Branch Trail, long-awaited rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Trail has begun, the 15th Street protected bike lanes have been extended to Euclid, protected bike lanes have been installed on Klinge Road to provide a safe route into Rock Creek Park, and the beautiful Kenilworth section of Anacostia River Trail opened last fall. Crash and other traffic data is publicly available on the opendata.dc.gov website. The agency completed a district mobility analysis to study multi-modal congestion and accessibility. DDOT is an active partner in the newly formed Capital Trails Coalition. This is all work that is making the city a better place for bicycling.

My testimony will focus on two areas of concern— the agency's progress on ensuring safe accommodations for bicyclists through construction work zones, and the pace at which bike infrastructure and other multi-modal safety projects are being implemented.

Four years ago, this Council passed the Bicycle Safety Amendment Act of 2013 requiring that construction impacting bike lanes provide equivalent safe accommodations through the area. At last year's oversight hearing, WABA raised concerns over a permit issued by DDOT's Public Space Regulation Administration to the developer of the old Washington Post Building at 15th and L St NW. We get regular calls and complaints from bicyclists who have terrifying experiences along this and other construction routes. The stress of a bike route is determined by its most stressful link. Ordinary people will not use a bike lane that disappears when it is needed most on a busy street.

Public Space Regulation Administration is working on guidelines to help clarify the regulations for permit applicants and permit reviewers and we applaud that effort to ensure that traffic control plans are properly issued. WABA is providing comments to DDOT during this process.

Beyond issuing permits correctly, however, is the need for proper oversight and enforcement to ensure protections and correct implementation on the ground. In the past year, a single dedicated WABA member has reported to the public space office nearly one hundred safe accommodation violations along his commute. This individual's near daily documentation of violations, more than anything, has revealed the shortcomings of the public space office's ability to take in complaints, rapidly respond to those complaints, or create a process for ensuring that permit violators are in compliance before they are allowed to resume work.



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More needs to be done to enable the public space office to enforce traffic control permits. Whether the problem stems from ignorance, negligence, or indifference on the part of road crews and permit holders, it is essential that the major, regular violators be educated and held accountable to keeping the roads safe for all users, especially in corridors where the infrastructure has made bicycling a modal priority. We would like this Committee to work with DDOT to determine the needs and additional resources—such as more permit inspectors— to ensure this law is enforced.

WABA's second overarching concern is DDOT's slow pace and lack of demonstrated commitment to building a network of safe streets for people who bike. The 2014 Move DC two-year action plan called for 15 miles of new on-street bicycle infrastructure. We are nowhere close to that pace, and never have been, as we point out every year. Yet, the public is eager for greater access to bicycling.

The city is now in year two of implementing the Vision Zero action plan. We are eagerly awaiting the release of the year one progress report. Until then, we have to question the degree to which each of DDOT's departments is contributing to the initiative.

- Why are some projects, like the Florida Avenue Multimodal Transportation project, clearly prioritizing moving rush hour car traffic instead of a continuous protected bicycle lane and sorely needed traffic calming?
- How can DDOT propose to spend millions improving miles of the Rhode Island Ave streetscape, yet not make the corridor safe for people who bike, as called for in Move DC?
- Are project scoring criteria changing to reflect Vision Zero goals and are we weighing road safety higher than driver delay? For example, the rehabilitated East Capital Bridge will move forward with the same substandard sidewalk which is stressful and dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- What are DDOT's current targets and metrics for developing the bicycle network? How are they measuring and reporting success? The Eastern Downtown protected bike lane study was supposed to be finished in the spring of 2016. Now, the agency is moving two concepts to 30% design, and at best, the project will be completed 24 months late. Meanwhile, with every month that passes, people are at risk and getting injured on these roads.

People who bike on dedicated trails and protected bike lanes are far less likely to suffer death or serious injuries than those forced to rely on motorists to share road space. When safety and mobility are at stake, we need a transportation agency that is clear about its goals and meeting them. We understand the projects are getting harder, require extensive public outreach and lengthy planning. This underscores the need for deeper buy-in and contribution from the full agency, and a powerful vision and approach that can galvanize citizen support for these projects. We will continue to work with DDOT to find pathways forward. Thank you.