



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

2599 ONTARIO RD NW | WASHINGTON, DC 20009 | (202) 518-0524 | WABA.ORG

TESTIMONY OF THE WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION ON THE 2016 PERFORMANCE OF THE DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

February 6, 2017

Councilmember Cheh and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Greg Billing: I am the Executive Director of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, or WABA.

We are a community-based non-profit organization dedicated to helping the people of the District ride bicycles for transportation in their communities, for fun with their families, or for lifelong recreation and fitness.

We believe that the Department of Parks and Recreation is potentially missing opportunities to encourage and support bicycle use among District residents, and we want to help.

In 2016, we saw inspiring leadership from Mayor Bowser on the Vision Zero initiative, making concerted progress on the District's goal of eliminating traffic deaths and increasing awareness of city's most vulnerable road users. But achieving Vision Zero will require access to bike and pedestrian education opportunities for everyone. DPR has a role to play here and WABA wants to help.

In 2016, we saw another District agency, the DC Public School system, enter its second year of bicycling success with the Biking in the Park program, wherein every second grader in the city rides a bike in PE class each school year. But this program, for all its success, cannot serve the entire city. DPR has a role to play here and WABA wants to help.

In 2016, in a small DPR recreation center in the Benning Park neighborhood, there was a successful, vibrant afterschool bike club that could provide a model experience for neighborhoods across the city. DPR has a role to play here and WABA wants to help.

We believe that the Department of Parks and Recreation has a mission-based obligation to support bicycle programming and education for the adults and youth of the District, and this obligation is going unmet. We know that when this city supports, encourages, and believes in bicycling, incredible--even life-changing--things can happen. Many of the employees of DPR and the users of DPR facilities support, encourage, and believe in bicycling. The demand and the opportunities exist, but the will does not. WABA wants to help.

In the past year, we have made numerous attempts to connect with DPR leadership at multiple levels, applied to their community partnership program, and offered to train their staff. We have received mixed messages at best, outright denials at worst. Truly, it should not be so difficult to connect the people of DC with services and opportunities they clearly want.

In closing, we value DPR's existing efforts regarding bicycling, but we are frustrated and concerned at the response we have gotten from the agency. We urge both the DPR leadership and the Council to embrace the opportunities that biking provides for youth and families, and to make it easier to bring people and bikes together for fun, learning, fitness, and transportation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.