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July 20, 2023

Director Everett Lott
District Department of Transportation
250 M Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Director Lott,

On behalf of Ward 5 residents, I am writing to express appreciation for the agency's efforts to reduce traffic deaths and injuries in our corner of the District, to provide feedback on the multiple streetscape, bus priority, and trail projects underway in Ward 5, and to identify areas of additional need that I hope we can work together to address.

Last year, Mayor Bowser renewed her commitment to the goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries in the District. Under your leadership, DDOT issued its Vision Zero 2022 Update that, among other things, emphasized DDOT's commitment to "investing in the communities and areas that are in the greatest need" and identified strategies "to place more efforts and resources on proactive, systems-level safety than ever before."¹

While it is unacceptable that 34 individuals lost their lives to crashes on Ward 5 streets between 2017 and 2021 (and many others suffered serious injuries), it is encouraging to see DDOT prioritize both small and large investments on communities like ours that have the greatest need. I am also grateful that DDOT is pursuing major capital projects on most Ward 5 corridors in the "high injury network," which includes Bladensburg Road, Benning Road, Florida Avenue, North Capitol Street, New York Avenue, and Rhode Island Avenue.²

As I have shared with you on several occasions, road safety in Ward 5 is one of the most frequent concerns raised by my constituents. Ensuring that DDOT has the resources and support to make decisive progress on road safety is a top priority for my office. I am also deeply committed to ensuring that the District and our partners at the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) prioritize investments in our bus system—a mode of transportation

¹ <https://visionzero.dc.gov/pages/2022-update>.

² <https://projects.ddot.dc.gov/>.

that is critical to many Black and brown residents and that is critical to meeting our safety and environmental goals.

Feedback on Ongoing Projects

Bladensburg Road, NE Multimodal Safety and Access Study

I am supportive of the preferred alternative that DDOT has selected in the ongoing Bladensburg Road, NE Multimodal Safety and Access Study.³ My main point of feedback is the desire to see bus priority enhancements if WMATA adds high frequency bus service on Bladensburg road as part of its Better Bus network redesign, and I am encouraged that DDOT’s project team has expressed willingness to do so. I also encourage DDOT to continue to evaluate the signal phases at the intersection of New York Avenue and Bladensburg Road to look for ways to permit pedestrians and cyclists to cross that intersection in a single phase.

Florida Avenue NE/NW Bus Priority Study

I am thrilled that DDOT has launched a bus priority project on Florida Avenue between 9th Street NW and 1st Street NE. This stretch of Florida Avenue is extremely unsafe and inefficient: It is a tier one vision-zero priority corridor because of the number of crashes, injuries, and fatalities on the corridor.⁴ According to DDOT’s Bus Priority Plan, Florida Avenue bus riders experience some of the most significant passenger/mile delays in the District—including the largest peak delays and off-peak delays in the network.⁵ Indeed, this segment of Florida Avenue is among the most important for bus riders in the District. An average of 11,000 people a day ride the 90, 92, or 96 bus routes, all of which serve this corridor. The 90 and 92 are also likely candidates for future 24/7 bus service. This project is a critical opportunity to improve safety and transit reliability on a corridor where street design can be modified with no impact to on-street parking.

While this project has only just begun, I encourage DDOT to engage the community on corridor-long options that directly address its most glaring problems, such as installing bus priority lanes to ensure efficient and reliable bus service or constructing a road diet to align the road design with the posted speed limit and to make the corridor safer for all users. According to DDOT’s Bus Priority Toolbox, curbside bus lanes are an appropriate treatment “on corridors with frequent bus service and traffic congestion that causes slow bus speeds and reliability issues.”⁶

I also encourage the Bus Priority team to listen to adjacent communities about several longstanding needs, including:

- pedestrian safety at numerous uncontrolled intersections where drivers frequently fail to yield to pedestrians who are crossing four lanes of traffic;

³ <https://engage.dc.gov/BladensburgSafetyStudy#1>

⁴ <https://visionzero.dc.gov/pages/2022-update>.

⁵ https://ddot.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddot/Bus%20Priority%20Plan_2021-12-20.pdf

⁶ <https://ddot.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddot/DDOT%20Bus%20Priority%20Toolbox.pdf>

- the 5-lane wide segment of Florida Avenue east of Q Street NW that encourages high vehicle speeds;
- the intersection of Florida Avenue, North Capitol Street, and Lincoln Road, which has numerous acute pedestrian safety risks, including two unsafe slip lanes, uncontrolled right turns where drivers fail to yield to pedestrians, and frequent red-light running;
- The lack a safe east-west route for cyclists and scooter riders that connects to the Metropolitan Branch Trail and the protected bike lanes currently under construction on Florida Avenue NE as well as existing protected lanes to the west, such as 9th Street NW and 15th Street NW.

New York Avenue Streetscape and Trail Project⁷

I support DDOT's efforts to move forward with a New York Avenue Trail concept that can be constructed in the next 5-10 years, rather than waiting for one that could take 20 years to construct. At the same time, if the District is to invest approximately \$25 million in this project, I believe that it should fulfil certain basic needs of Ward 5 residents.

The most pressing problem along New York Avenue NE (and the adjacent rail tracks) is the lack of safe ways to travel along and across the corridor. East of Florida Avenue, there are only three locations where residents can walk or bike between communities to the south and north of the corridor east of Florida Avenue: 9th street/Brentwood Road; Montana Avenue; and Bladensburg Road. The good news is that DDOT is already pursuing a separate project on Bladensburg Road and envisions better access between New York Avenue and 9th Street NE in this project. I am confident, though, that Ward 5 residents would appreciate attention to establishing safer pedestrian and micromobility access between Langdon to the north and Ivy City/Arboretum to the south.

In addition, most of the existing residents along this corridor lack access to a true low-stress recreational trail facility. Our goal should be to deliver a space where a parent would be comfortable letting a young child ride a scooter or ride a bike by including vertical protection between the curb and the trail. As you are no doubt aware, access to free or low-cost recreational facilities is critical to ensuring that local residents engage in physical activity that is correlated with better health outcomes.⁸ Such treatment is already commonplace in locations where trail facilities have been constructed adjacent to arterial roads like New York Avenue. For instance, recently constructed trails along Dorothea Dix Avenue SE and near the Wharf are bordered by fences that prevent trail users from straying into traffic. It would be meaningful for DDOT to ensure that, at a minimum, the north side of the envisioned shared-use path is a true low-stress facility that our most vulnerable residents can enjoy.

⁷ <https://ddot-cp-ny-ave-ne-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/>.

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8654348/>.



Google Maps image of new trail adjacent to Dorothea Dix Ave SE



Image of new trail adjacent to Maine Avenue SW

For these reasons, I respectfully request that DDOT's new concept be modified to specifically include planning for:

- A recreational trail facility on the north side of the corridor that has a vertical fence or other physical buffer between the road and the trail as well as sufficient trail width to account for the shy space created by vertical protection;
- Direct and safe connections to existing trail or on-street facilities, such as the Metropolitan Branch Trail, the 4th Street NE cycletrack, and the 18th Street NE on-street bike lanes;
- A new, fully signalized crossing located proximate to the Red Carpet Inn, which is a facility that is frequently by the District to house individuals who need emergency housing assistance;
- Where appropriate, modifications to the speed limit to ensure the safety of all road users on New York Avenue.

I also continue to encourage DDOT to work with WMATA on a plan to introduce bus service to the New York Avenue corridor, including the bus priority enhancements required to make that service reliable and efficient. To meet our climate, safety, and equity goals, we need to dramatically increase the share of trips on this corridor that are on public transit. While I appreciate that this project is focused on the right of way outside of the curbs, I want to underscore the ongoing need for frequent bus service on New York Avenue NE.

North Capitol Street Corridor Feasibility Study

I noted the beginning of the public phase of the North Capitol Street Corridor Feasibility Study and am looking forward to DDOT’s presentation of concepts this fall.⁹ At this time, I am requesting that DDOT’s proposed “quick-delivery” proposals¹⁰ include more aggressive steps to improve safety along the corridor while we wait for the permanent redesign of the corridor. Specifically, I request that DDOT:

- Increase pedestrian crossing times across the corridor to meet the needs of seniors and families with small kids that require extra time—not just the minimum standards required by engineering manuals;
- Increase speeding and red light enforcement between P street and Randolph Place NE—a series of five intersections that all experience high crashes and that have been the site of traffic fatalities;
- Install a new traffic signal at the intersection of Channing Street to ensure safe pedestrian access to and from the McMillan Recreation Center that is slated to be completed in 2024; and
- Install a missing crosswalk at the intersection of Quincy Place and North Capitol Street.

Finally, while I understand that bus priority will be analyzed as part of the assessment of alternatives for the corridor; I encourage DDOT to come up with a plan to deliver bus priority on an interim basis. Bus riders experience delays on North Capitol Street between Massachusetts Avenue and Florida Avenue that are among the worst in the city,¹¹ and we should not wait 5-10 years to improve bus reliability and efficiency along the corridor.

Additional Priorities

South Dakota Avenue NE

I appreciate you and your team joining me and neighbors for a safety walk on South Dakota Avenue this Spring. I look forward to working with you to leverage the \$1 million I secured in the FY 2024 budget to install quick-build safety enhancements on the corridor, such as a road

⁹ <https://north-capitol-st-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/>.

¹⁰ <https://dcgis.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/f1bd3d7ce3d84926b49f4723d3f21f5b/data>.

¹¹ https://ddot.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddot/BUS%20Priority%20Plan_2021-12-20.pdf#page=24.

diet. I am eager to work with DDOT to develop a concept for corridor-long safety improvements once those funds become available in the fiscal year that commences on October 1, 2023.

Rhode Island Avenue

It is encouraging that DDOT has major capital projects underway for most of Ward 5's Vision Zero high injury corridors; however, Rhode Island Avenue NE/NW is a notable omission. As you and your team begin to identify needs that might be addressed in the Mayor's FY 2025 budget, I encourage you to put Rhode Island Avenue at the top of the list.

While residents wait for permanent fixes, short-term investments along Rhode Island Avenue are needed. As local community leaders have pointed out, the sidewalks west of 4th Street NE are inaccessibly narrow in many places. The sidewalks along the rail and metro overpass are obviously unsafe, despite this being a crucial connection between Edgewood and Eckington to the west, and Brookland and Brentwood to the west. Farther east, between Rhode Island Avenue Center and the Maryland Border, the corridor lacks a median, has far too many curb cuts, and the road design encourages drivers to travel at speeds in excess of the posted speed limit. These flaws with Rhode Island Avenue's existing condition are extremely pressing safety issues, and I look forward to partnering with you and adjacent Ward 5 communities to address them.

Eastern Avenue

On March 17, I joined neighbors, MD County Commissioner Wanika Fisher, and ANC Commissioners for a walkthrough along Eastern Avenue. My office sent you a list of concerns and requests compiled by my team and Commissioners following that walkthrough, including a need streetscape re-envisioning project, improved pedestrian signals, needed bump-outs, sidewalk repair, raised crosswalks to reduce speeding, improved signage, and more. I am urging you to prioritize these requests and others shared in the list in DDOT's quarterly TSI system. District residents along Eastern Ave have long-awaited improvements to create a safer and more functional corridor.

The Northeast D.C. Trail Network

I want to congratulate DDOT and its regional partners on securing a \$25 million grant for projects in the District, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County that will improve pedestrian and cyclist connections in historically underserved communities.¹² Among the projects funded are the Arboretum trail and bridge that will establish safe trail access between Wards 5 and 7 and the PG Connector Trail that will improve access to the Anacostia Trail Network from Eastern Ave, NE. My hope is that we can work together to realize the full potential of these investments by closing remaining gaps in the trail network by: (1) ensuring

¹² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2023/06/28/dc-trails-federal-grants/>.

there is unrestricted access between the Carver/Langston community and the Arboretum bridge, including at times when the National Arboretum is closed; and (2) establishing a low-stress on or off-street trail connection between the future PG Connector and the Metropolitan Branch Trail.

DC Smart Street Lighting Project

DDOT's efforts to modernize street lighting throughout the District are needed and appreciated, especially as they reduce light pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and allow for more rapid repairs through remote monitoring. However, several neighbors have raised concerns as the replacements have begun, noting missing streetlights, low- or no-visibility areas created by lights that are too dim, and the quality of poles being used to replace lights. As the Smart Street Lighting Project continues, it will be important for DDOT to address these concerns and ensure that neighborhoods have safe lighting and clear communication in the process.

Providence Redevelopment Traffic Considerations

Finally, I want to elevate anticipated traffic safety issues as the Providence redevelopment in the Michigan Park area moves forward. Given the size of this redevelopment, we want to be proactively prepared for traffic flow during various construction phases, as well as the traffic impact on the neighborhood at project completion. I recently met with neighbors on the 4600 block of 12th St NE, who shared concerns about the potential of their alleyway abutting Allison St NE, which is part of the redevelopment. As the project begins, it will be important that we work together to address these resident concerns, as well as plan for the finished design to ensure traffic safety and consider neighborhood impacts.

Thank you for your partnership and for DDOT's ongoing investment of time and resources in Ward 5. While I know that safer roads can not come soon enough for our residents, I am optimistic about the District's efforts to make significant strides over the next few years.

In partnership,



Zachary Parker
Ward 5 Councilmember