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Sharon Kershbaum
Interim Director, D.C. Department of Transportation
250 M Street SE, Washington, DC 20003

VIA EMAIL

February 14, 2024

Interim Director Kershbaum,

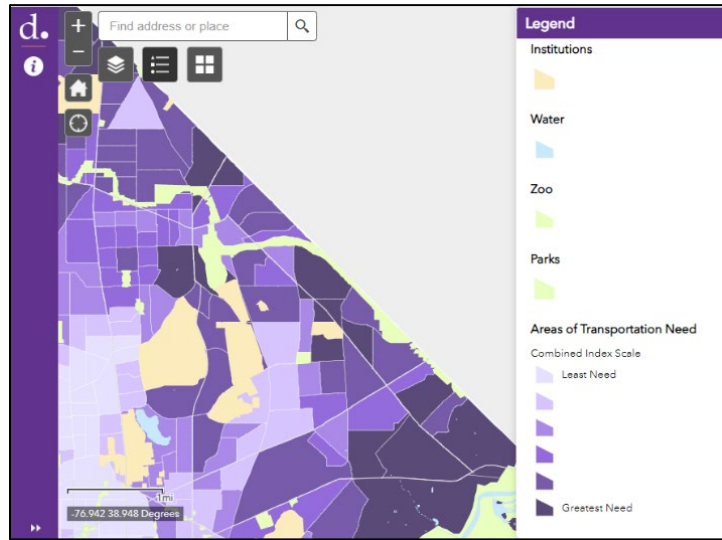
During last week's performance oversight hearing for the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), you testified that a road diet on South Dakota Avenue NE was not "viable."¹ As you know, at my request, the Committee on Transportation and the Environment earmarked \$1 million for a road diet on a portion of South Dakota in the FY 2024 budget.² While this language was intended to give DDOT some flexibility to choose a segment of the road that was feasible with a budget of that size, the purpose of that investment was to fundamentally change the character of at least a portion of this dangerous corridor. I have concerns that DDOT is not currently planning to use these funds as aggressively as it should to prioritize resident safety, and I am requesting that DDOT join me for a community meeting in the coming weeks to address those concerns. I will have a member of my team coordinate with your staff to align on a date.

I have appreciated your partnership on a range of traffic safety matters, and our check-ins throughout the year to intentionally address improvements to Ward 5's roadways. As you can appreciate, I did not secure funding for a road diet on South Dakota Avenue on a whim. Instead, I consulted DDOT and the District's professed equity, safety, mobility, and climate goals to prioritize this corridor. As part of an effort to center equity in its planning, DDOT identified "areas of transportation need" in MoveDC. It will surprise no one who has walked the corridor that South Dakota Avenue borders many communities identified as having the "greatest need" or

¹ Committee on Transportation & the Environment, Performance Oversight Hearing, *available at* <https://dccouncil.gov/video-archive/>.

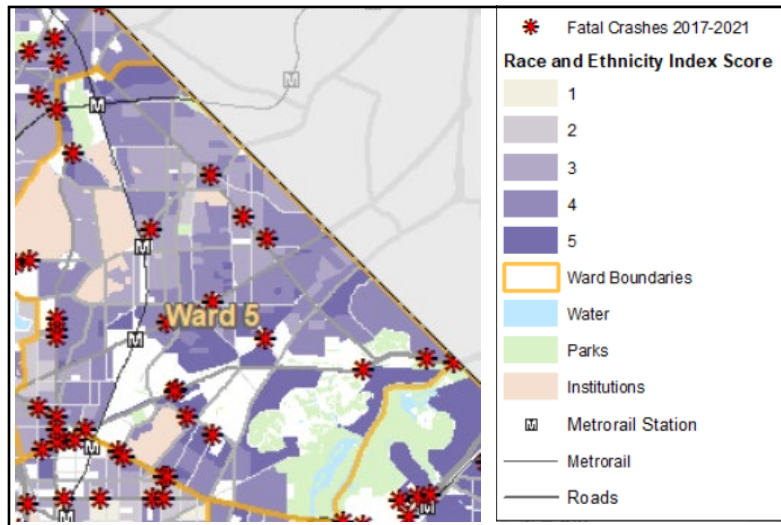
² D.C. Council Committee on Transportation and the Environment, FY 2024 Committee Budget Report, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bbd09f3d74562c7f0e4bb10/t/644d83a16f1c072f5af7d4d1/1682801590630/T%26E+DRAFT+FY24+budget+report+FINAL.pdf>.

close to it.³ The funds that I secured for South Dakota Avenue are currently the only investment in DDOT’s budget that would materially address these needs.



DDOT, MoveDC Transportation Needs

Second, South Dakota Avenue is an extremely dangerous corridor. While it is not as dangerous as several other corridors that DDOT identified as “high injury corridors” that are prioritized for major capital projects, South Dakota Avenue still demands attention. DDOT’s 2022 Vision Zero DC update identifies three fatal crashes that occurred along the South Dakota Avenue corridor, and DDOT’s Vision Zero DC dashboard shows hundreds of injury crashes since 2017 (when data became available).⁴



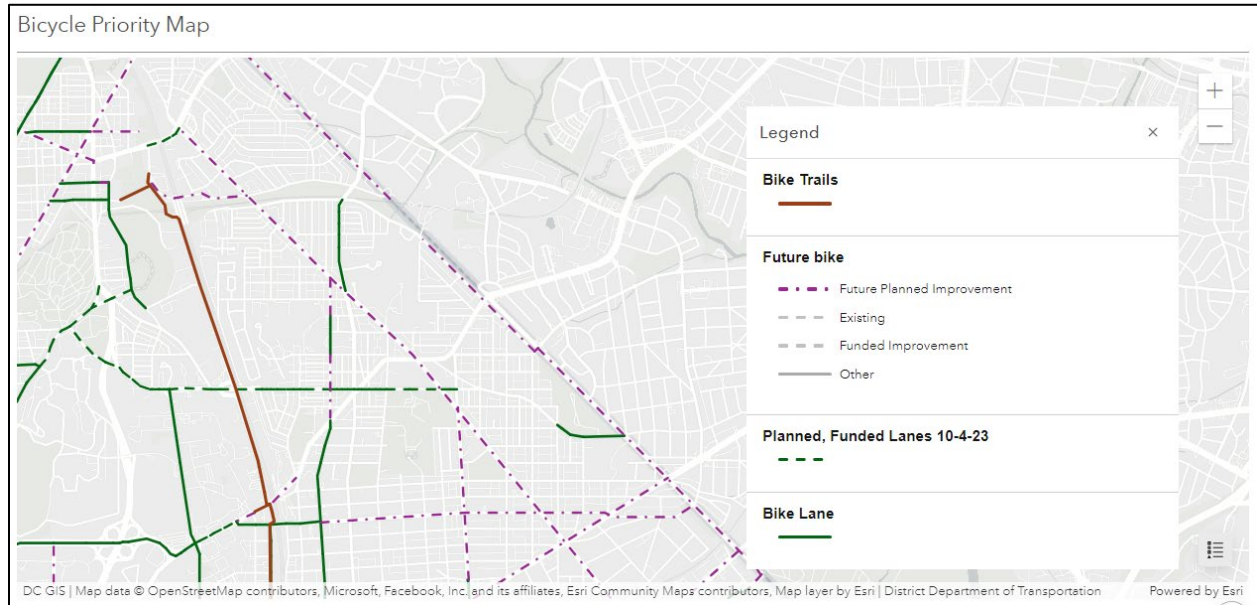
DDOT, Vision Zero 2022 Update⁵

³ DDOT, MoveDC, <https://movedc.dc.gov/pages/mapping-transportation-needs>.

⁴ DDOT, Vision Zero DC, <https://visionzero.dc.gov/pages/crash-analysis>

⁵ DDOT, Vision Zero DC: 2022 Update, <https://visionzero.dc.gov/pages/2022-update>

Third, DDOT identified the entirety of South Dakota Avenue in MoveDC as a mobility priority corridor.⁶ With limited space from curb to curb, the only way that DDOT will ever deliver on this promise is to install a road diet. If a road diet is not viable on South Dakota Avenue as you claim, then DDOT’s current ways of thinking are inconsistent with DDOT’s long-term plans.



MoveDC Bicycle Priority Map⁷

Finally, at the end of last year, Mayor Bowser traveled to Dubai to attend the 2023 UN Climate Conference (COP28), where she announced Carbon-Free DC, the District’s comprehensive strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. Announcing this commitment, Mayor Bowser stated that climate change “is a global challenge, but *the solutions need to come from and be implemented at every level.*”⁸ The Mayor highlighted “[e]nabling more residents to walk, bike, and take public transit to reach their destination”⁹ as one of four key strategies to accomplishing this goal and backed it up with specific targets including “75% of commute trips made without a car by 2032” and reducing vehicle miles traveled in the District.¹⁰ These targets are not just platitudes, they reflect requirements that are codified in the Climate Commitment Amendment

⁶ DDOT, [MoveDC Mobility Priority Networks](https://movedc-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/pages/mobility-priority-networks), <https://movedc-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/pages/mobility-priority-networks>

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Mayor Bowser Releases Carbon Free DC Strategy While Attending COP28, Dec. 1, 2023, <https://mayor.dc.gov/release/mayor-bowser-releases-carbon-free-dc-strategy-while-attending-cop28v1#:~:text=Carbon%20Free%20DC%20is%20dedicated,renewable%20power%20to%20reduce%20emissions.>

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ D.C. Department of Energy and Environment, *Carbon Free DC 2024 Strategic Policy Roadmap*, https://doee.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/doee/service_content/attachments/CFDC%20Policy%20Roadmap_FINAL.pdf.

Act of 2022, D.C. Law 24-176 (D.C. Code § 8–151.09d). Road diets on arterial corridors like South Dakota are the kind of strategy that DDOT will have to employ much more aggressively to implement the Climate Commitment Amendment act and comply with the Mayor’s policies implementing that statute.

I appreciate that DDOT’s approach to projects like these reflects a heavy reliance on traffic engineering—including detailed analyses of traffic volumes. At the same time, publicly available traffic volume counts show that the segment of South Dakota Avenue between Riggs Road and Rhode Island Avenue has comparable volume to H street NE, a corridor on which DDOT is currently proposing to reduce single passenger vehicle lanes from 4 to 2. In addition, much of South Dakota Avenue is within the range the of feasibility for a road diet as advised by the Federal Highway Administration¹¹ —a standard that does not even take into account the fact that the District’s professed climate goals are going to require a 40 percent reduction in traffic volumes (in addition to widespread vehicle electrification).

As detailed above, my objective in securing funds for South Dakota Avenue was to be a partner in working towards our shared equity, mobility, safety, and climate goals. If there are additional resources or support that DDOT needs for the transformation of this corridor, I am eager to be a partner in securing them. If \$1 million only buys us a road diet on a segment of the corridor, then my request is for DDOT to engage the community on where that could happen. If DDOT needs more FTEs devoted to corridor transformation projects on dangerous four-lane corridors like South Dakota Avenue, Michigan Avenue, and countless others throughout the District, then we can work together to make that happen. Ultimately, my invitation is for DDOT to approach this project as an opportunity to act with urgency to deliver Ward 5 residents the safer streets they deserve and are demanding.

In partnership,



Zachary Parker
Ward 5 Councilmember

cc: Councilmember Charles Allen, Chair, Committee on Transportation and the Environment

¹¹ Federal Highway Administration, [Road Diet Mythbusters](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/resources/pdf/roadDiet_MythBuster.pdf), https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/resources/pdf/roadDiet_MythBuster.pdf.