



WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

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December 16, 2016

The Honorable Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004

Mayor Bowser,

I write to inquire about the status of the Eastern Downtown Protected Bike Lane Study¹ project through the Mount Vernon and Shaw neighborhoods and downtown. As the original timeline for selecting a preferred alternative for the project was April 2016, we regularly get questions from our members and supporters about when we will see this project move forward.

The District Department of Transportation should be commended for the thorough technical analysis and extensive community outreach that went into this project. Final alternatives have been presented that represent a more-than-fair compromise by maintaining up to 95% of on-street residential and Sunday church parking spots, minimal impacts to traffic, and installing critical pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements. DDOT is recommending a win-win-win.

The reality is that travel through the Shaw corridor is not as safe as it could or should be for people who walk and bike. In 2014 alone, 49 people were struck by vehicles while walking and biking along streets in the bike lane project study area. In 2015, 25 people were struck by vehicles on 6th and 9th St. In the first six months of 2016 (the period for which crash data is available), 19 people were struck by vehicles on those streets.² These figures represent only those incidents that were reported to police and caused injury, so presumably the actual crash rate is much higher. These statistics also hint at another very important benefit to implementing this street calming project: the number of people who would *like* to ride bikes, walk, and take transit along

¹ <http://dccycletrack.com/study-process.html>

² DC GIS Open Data. "Crashes in the District of Columbia" [GIS Dataset]. October 2016, http://opendata.dc.gov/datasets/95254fae17bc4792bd47b53f71c2e503_19

this corridor to go to school, to work, to shop, and to church who currently do not feel safe doing so.

Last fall, your constituents submitted more than 1700 supportive comments to DDOT and your office (attached), eleven Shaw businesses signed onto a letter of support³ for the project, and nearly 100 residents took the time on a beautiful Saturday afternoon last February to show up in person to the project's public meeting to demonstrate support⁴ and present testimony on what being able to ride around Shaw on a protected bike lane would mean to them. Importantly, there are religious communities in Shaw that support the project, including the Hemingway Temple African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church⁵.

Projects such as the Eastern Downtown Protected Bike Lane must not be considered in isolation. The expedited Metrorail maintenance program called Safetrack is significantly impacting travel patterns in the region. Residents and commuters are reassessing their travel choices and trying new transportation options. Now is the time to double down on increasing opportunities to safely walk and bike, not the time to delay. During the first surge of Safetrack along the Orange Line, bike ridership on the parallel trail network in Arlington County increased by 94%⁶. In stark contrast, the safety surge in Ward 7 showed no measured increase in biking, largely due to the lack of safe places to bike along dangerous streets like Benning Road.

Realistically, even an immediate approval by your office of the Eastern Downtown Protected Bike Lane preferred alternative would mean up to a year of additional design, engineering, and construction planning before implementation. As the crash statistics above clearly show, your constituents are regularly coming to harm on these streets. This is preventable and we cannot afford further delays.

Vision Zero is a commitment to end all roadway fatalities and serious injuries. This means that as a city, as a matter of policy, we must design streets that prioritize safety over convenience, and we must do so as expeditiously as possible. Street calming projects like the Eastern Downtown study are where your administration must demonstrate that you are serious about making DC a vibrant, walkable and bikeable city, by increasing the share of non-motorized travel, and eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries.

³ <http://www.waba.org/blog/2016/02/shaw-businesses-support-safe-streets/>

⁴ <http://www.waba.org/blog/2016/02/outpouring-of-community-support-for-eastern-downtown-protected-bike-lane-project/>

⁵ <http://greatergreaterwashington.org/post/29656/a-church-in-shaw-thinks-bike-lanes-make-streets-safer/>

⁶ <http://www.citylab.com/commute/2016/06/metro-safetrack-surges-cycling/486437/>

You have regularly emphasized that your number one priority for District residents is public safety. As your Deputy Mayor Kevin Donahue and MPD Interim Chief Peter Newsham both stated in a recent press conference: protected bike lanes provide undeniable public safety benefits for all road users.

WABA stands ready to do all we can to help this project move forward expeditiously. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory Billing". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "G".

Gregory Billing
Executive Director
Washington Area Bicyclist Association

*CC: DC Councilmember Mary Cheh, Chair, Committee on Transportation & the Environment
DC Councilmember Jack Evans, Ward 2
DC Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6
DC Councilmember Brianne Nadeau, Ward 1
Leif Dormsjo, Director, District Department of Transportation
Kevin Donahue, DC Deputy Mayor for Public Safety*