



February 6, 2020

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Project anager  
District Department of Transportation  
55 M Street SE

Mr. Dahir,

On behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association and our 5,500 members in the region, I submit comments on the Florida Avenue Streetscape and the New York Avenue and Florida Avenue intersection projects.

When complete, the Florida Ave streetscape and New York Ave intersection projects will have cost tens of millions of dollars and more than a decade of study. In that time, these streets and intersections have produced unthinkable carnage and traffic violence, taking the lives and livelihood of community members and touching the lives of thousands across the region. To learn from these tragedies and to prevent future loss, it is imperative that the goals and values of these projects directly follow from the District's commitment to Vision Zero - to creating a safe transportation system where predictable human errors and bad decisions do not lead to injury or death. While DDOT has taken commendable steps to improve the designs, far more must be done to make the entire Florida Ave NE corridor and the New York Ave intersection safe for every person who travels through them.

As design for these projects moves ahead, DDOT's leadership and engineers must find a way to set aside the highway engineer's rulebook and pick up another. We cannot continue prioritizing the free movement of as many vehicles as quickly as possible at the expense of our neighbors. Fewer lanes to cross is safer. Slower is safer. Driver delay is an acceptable compromise for that safety. And as the agency tasked with shifting 20% of driving trips to other modes, DDOT must do everything possible to move the needle. It is not enough to provide sidewalks and bike lanes. They must get people where they need to go safely and conveniently or most people will not choose to bike or walk as is the case today. This streetscape and intersection will remain in place for decades to come and it's design and priorities must take the long view.

**Florida Ave NE (65% design)**

Many elements of the plans presented include positive improvements over the past iterations. Near continuous protected bike lanes, widened sidewalks, trees, curb extensions, and all-side crosswalks are welcome. Yet, too many critical and best-practice safety elements for the most vulnerable road users are missing, incomplete, or compromised in order to push as many cars as quickly as possible through

this urban neighborhood. We urge DDOT to consider the following elements and changes in the next phase of design.

1. Lower design speed and add more aggressive traffic calming - While the interim safety improvements were an important step, speeding, aggressive driving, high-speed turns, and red-light running are still alarmingly common on Florida Avenue, both in the wider sections west of West Virginia Avenue and in the single lane blocks to the east. DDOT needs to lower the speed limit to 25mph and use all possible tools to reduce the design speed to match. Florida Ave should have the feel of a neighborhood connector, not an urban freeway.
2. Protected intersections - While the protected bike lanes are a substantial improvement that separates people on bikes from traffic stress, the intersections encourage conflict and create unnecessary crash risk. Protected intersections, which create safe and intuitive interactions between bicyclists, pedestrians and drivers are the solution. They increase visibility for people on foot and bike, reduce vehicle turning speeds, maintain access for large vehicles, and have a proven safety record.. Especially where protected bike lanes intersect (at 4th St. NE, 6th St. NE and West Virginia Ave NE), protected intersections are a necessary addition to provide a safe, protected, and intuitive space for bicyclists to queue and wait for turns. At other intersections, adding elements of protected intersections such as a forward bicycle stop-line and protective corner island or corner “wedge” would help improve bicyclist visibility, lower vehicle turning speeds and reduce risk. See the MassDOT [Separated Bike Lane Planning & Design Guide’s chapter on Intersection Design](#), NACTO’s [Don’t Give Up at the Intersection](#) guide and Montgomery County’s [Bicycle Facility Design Toolkit](#) section on Intersection treatments for useful templates. In most cases, a high-quality protected intersection fits within the right of way. Some curb re-alignment may be necessary, but this is the optimal time to incorporate these changes into the streetscape.
3. Bike lane width - 8 feet is too narrow for a two-way protected bike lane. Narrow lanes increase the risk and discomfort of passing, does not accommodate many styles of bicycle, and leaves little room to maneuver around obstacles and debris. East of West Virginia, 4.5 feet is far too narrow for a one-way protected bike lane bounded by curbs. Many who bike will not feel comfortable riding in this lane Consider narrowing the travel lanes for an additional 2+ feet of bike lane width.
4. West Virginia and Florida Ave intersection - at this intersection, people on bikes must transition from a one-way protected bike lane to a two-way protected bike lane on the opposite corner to continue eastbound. Bicyclists need an intuitive path and a curb-protected queuing space at the northeast or northwest corner to wait for the light to change. Otherwise, every user will find their own distinct way of navigating this intersection, validating the common refrain that bicyclists are unpredictable. Additionally, this intersection design should include a transition to DDOT’s proposed 2-way protected bike lane on West Virginia north of Florida Ave.
5. Expand the narrow north sidewalk under the rail bridge by removing the third westbound travel lane. With so much development along the north side of Florida Ave and the Union Market area, pedestrian activity, which is already high, will increase substantially. Under vision zero, widening the sidewalk under the bridge for pedestrians should be prioritized over a third travel lane that

encourages speeding. Consider wall-mounted or narrow profile lighting fixtures under the rail bridge to maintain as much usable sidewalk width as possible.

6. Shared lane/bus stops at 12th St, 13th St. and Trinidad Ave - east of West Virginia Ave, the protected bike lane becomes a general travel lane at four bus stops. We have learned from the interim changes that this design encourages higher speeds, fast lane changes and illegal parking just before the intersection, which puts bicyclists at risk and blocks bus stops. Consider far side bus stops, floating bus stops or pavement marking changes to fully protect the bike lane and minimize speed and risk at these intersections.
7. Plan for conflicts at Mac's Tire Service - since the interim changes were installed, customers queuing to enter Mac's Tire Service frequently block both the protected bike lane and the sidewalk. After months of persistent frustration and conversations, the situation has improved. However, the plans propose relocating the 400 block bus stop to lay immediately before the entrance to Mac's. This may not present a new problem for blocking the protected bike lane, but it surely will contribute to the bus stop being frequently blocked if even a few customers queue on the street. Consider relocating this bus stop.

#### **Florida Ave & New York Ave Intersection (30% design)**

The Florida Avenue and New York Avenue intersection is immensely complicated and trying to achieve many uses at once. Traffic engineers at the last public meeting were quick to mention that New York Ave carries more than 30,000 vehicle and truck trips a day, insisting that this volume requires every travel lane in the proposed design, wide intersections, and higher speed limits. The argument goes that these vehicle trips will not simply go away if the street is designed narrower or slower and result in dangerous behaviors by frustrated drivers. But this argument erases the experience and needs of thousands of people, including young students, who walk, bus, and bike through this intersection each day. They are forced by the same street grid to pass through this intersection without reasonable alternatives. And while inadequate design will frustrate them and put them at risk, they will not simply go away either. The intersection's design needs to prioritize the most vulnerable users first, set new expectations for drivers, and prevent (through engineering) their frustrations from turning into carnage. We urge DDOT to add the following elements in the next phase of design.

1. Protected intersections - while the protected bike lanes are a welcome addition to past designs, they fall short at the intersections. Bicyclists and scooter riders should have a secure place to wait that is visible, ahead of waiting drivers, and out of the way of crossing pedestrians. Especially at the southeast corner of First and New York, there should be both a protective corner island to prevent drivers cutting into the bike lane and enough room for people on bikes to wait for the light out of the way of others coming from or turning to the east. These are the standard features and benefits of a protected intersection. These should be added at 1st & New York, 1st and Florida Ave, and at Florida and New York Ave and should include all of the elements described in [MassDOT's separated bike lane Planning & Design Guide Intersection Design chapter](#).

2. Extend a protected bike lane connection across New York Ave to Eckington Place - we applaud the addition of a pedestrian crossing of the southwest leg of New York Ave and Florida Ave, yet insist that there is both room and a need for a bicycle connection here as well. It is human nature to prefer the direct path and many people will take that path even if it is not designed to be safe. Rather than create a frustrating indirect path that only serves a prescribed need, create multiple safe paths.
3. Lower the design speed and speed limit to 25 mph - Slower speeds save lives, whether at rush hour or in the middle of the night. Use every tool in the traffic calming toolbox to make this intersection an uninviting space for speeders. Lane widths should be reduced to their minimums and turn radii sharpened as much as possible to reduce speeds. Consider using mountable aprons around turns which accommodate larger vehicles while slowing down smaller ones. Create an obvious and visible speed transition zone at the bridge with signage and other cues and install an automated speed enforcement camera to reinforce the message.
4. Plan for future connections on New York Ave - a new bicycling and walking trail is funded in the Mayor's budget along New York Avenue beginning just across the New York Ave bridge. Bicyclists and pedestrians at this intersection will undoubtedly want to get there and this intersection design should account for that movement.
5. Buffer the protected bike lane from the travel lanes - neither pedestrians nor bicyclists enjoy being close to noise, stress, and pollution of traffic. Particularly where there is so much extra space, buffer and protect the bicycle lanes and sidewalks from traffic with at least 3 to 5 feet.
6. Re-evaluate the need for so many lanes on New York Ave - In this proposal, the pedestrian crossing of New York Ave is nearly 100 feet. Though commonplace in suburban settings, this intersection width has no place in a neighborhood where so many walk, take transit, and bike to work. Please re-evaluate the need for so many lanes using tools that measure the effects on pedestrian level of service, bicycle traffic stress and change in vehicle miles traveled.

Please contact Garrett Hennigan at 202-518-0524 x210 or [garrett.hennigan@waba.org](mailto:garrett.hennigan@waba.org) with any questions. Thank you for considering these comments.

Garrett Hennigan  
WABA Community Organizer

Figure 1: Typical protected intersection. Source - [Don't Give Up at the Intersection](#) by NACTO

# Protected Intersections

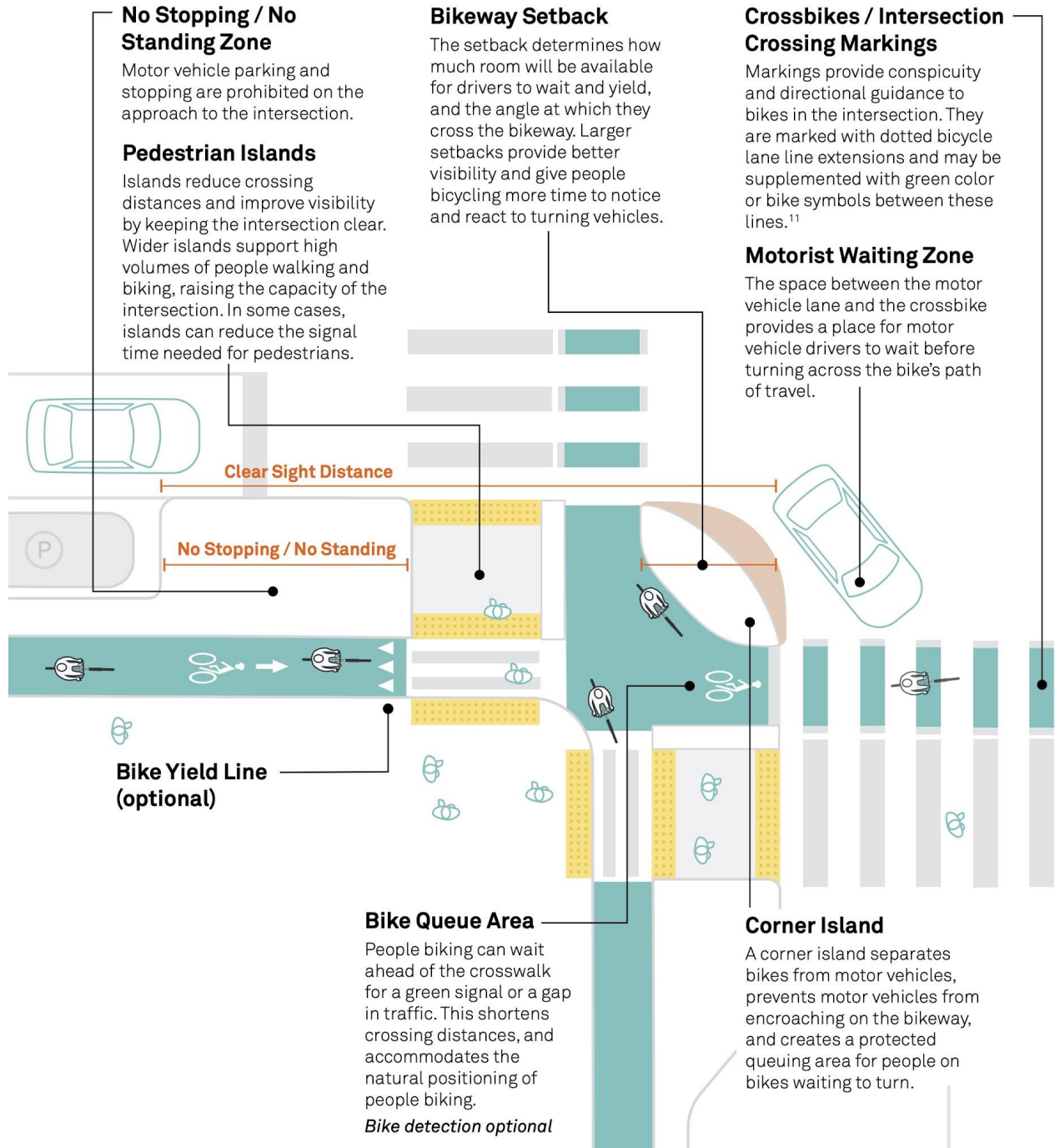


Figure 2: Example protected intersection of two two-way protected bike lanes (consider for Florida & 4th or Florida and 6th St. NE). Source - [Don't Give Up at the Intersection](#) by NACTO

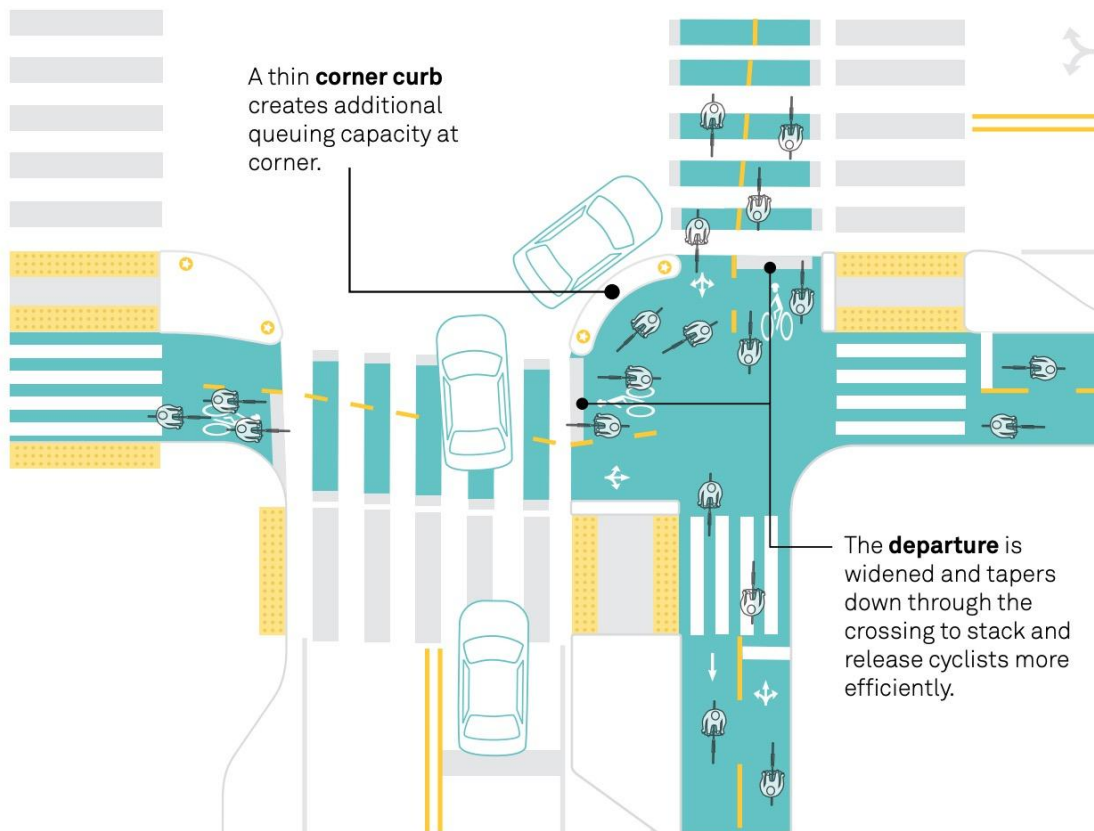
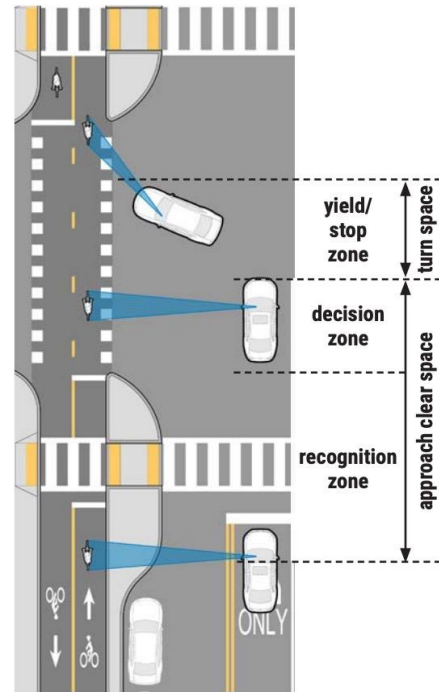


Figure 3: Example protected intersection for a two-way protected bike lane. Source - [Separated Bike Lane Planning & Design Guide](#) by MassDOT



**EXHIBIT 4K: Left Turning Motorist Yields to Through Bicyclist**



Figure 4: Example two-way to one-way protected bike lane transition. Source - [Separated Bike Lane Planning & Design Guide](#) by MassDOT

