

April 11, 2023

Hon. Charles Allen, Councilmember
Chair, Committee on Transportation & the Environment
Vice Chair, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 110
Washington, DC 20004

RE: DDOT FY2024 Budget Oversight Hearing

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading non-profit organization in the D.C. region advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We wish to recognize the important work of DDOT and its staff. We support the strong capital funding for the Bus Priority Program and walk and bicycle infrastructure. However, the pace of implementation for Vision Zero, and safety improvements has lagged. The DC Auditor's report called this out, finding that the Vision Zero program lacked dedicated funding and had insufficient staffing within key departments at DDOT. We are concerned that the staffing capacity lags behind the commitments of many of these critical programs and investments. We are also concerned that the agency is not retaining its talent pool.

Below are our specific recommendations related to the FY2024 budget for DDOT.

Parking cashout -- remove delay from the BSA, keep ongoing implementation on track: We ask the committee to remove the BSA language postponing the implementation of the parking cashout law which is already in effect. The BSA proposes to delay the implementation of the parking cashout law until 2026, even though the law is in effect and the first employer compliance reports were due January 15, 2023. The BSA specifically proposes to delay compliance for covered employers to 2026 and reporting to 2027 (see BSA: "Subtitle (VI)(F) -- Parking Benefit Equivalent Amendment Act of 2023"). This delay is unnecessary and provides no cost savings, and no benefit. This surprise policy change in the BSA has no impact on the budget. It saves no money, but it does undermine progress towards more walkability, walk and bike safety, increased bus service efficiency, and racial and economic equity.

The parking cashout law implementation is off to a good start with more than 25% of covered employers complying with the reporting requirements in the initial year. As DDOT continues its education and outreach efforts, the level of compliance will rise, benefiting both individual commuters, and the District in general.

K Street Transitway - pause and resync: We are excited by the promise of the K Street Transitway, but we are also concerned that this project has been stripped down to a utilitarian approach and needs to be rethought, especially in light of the new post-pandemic downtown environment. The plan has departed from its original and long-standing goals of both transit priority and creating a Great Street befitting a capital city. Protected bike lanes belong in a great street where so many destinations are on K Street. Downtown revitalization depends on placemaking so this K Street transformation is essential to get right. We continue to enthusiastically support the transit priority as a part of this design but the rebuilt street must also provide a great, walkable, green and shaded boulevard with a generous and coherent streetscape for walking, enjoying benches and sidewalk cafes, and safe access via walking and biking.

Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) expansion -- ensure ATE revenues stay dedicated to Vision Zero and related safety improvements. The goal should be safety for ATE, not revenue. Thus we support the expansion of ATE as an important way to achieve greater compliance with our city's traffic laws. As a part of expansion, we ask for further assessment of ATE and related penalties to ensure these tools address and advance racial and economic equity. We ask the Committee to remove the BSA language which repeals a dedication of certain excess amounts of ATE revenue to the Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act.

Support Metro for All. We ask the Committee to fund Metro for All. We also urge the Committee to address the WMATA FY2024 budget needs and the FY2025 fiscal cliff when WMATA bus and rail services could be seriously endangered by a major projected budget shortfall. Our top goals should continue to be to deliver frequent, reliable transit service accessible to jobs and residents at an affordable cost.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Cort
Policy Director