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**ANC 3/4G Testimony Before the
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Performance Oversight Hearing on the
Department of Transportation
January 27, 2020**

Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment, I am Randy Speck, Chair of ANC 3/4G (Chevy Chase), and I am testifying on behalf of our Commission, which authorized this testimony at its January 13, 2020 meeting by a vote of 5 to 0 (a quorum being 4).

Our ANC interacts more frequently with the Department of Transportation (DDOT) than any other District agency. In the last year, we have worked with DDOT on street paving projects, sidewalk installation and repair, the reconstruction of Oregon Avenue, safety improvements at hazardous intersections, development of traffic calming measures, and issuance of public space permits. We are encouraged that DDOT continues to improve its services in many respects. Some positive highlights include installation of stop signs at Huntington Street, NW and 38th Street, NW, safety improvements at the

intersection of Chevy Chase Parkway and Military Road, and diligent enforcement of the public space permit for a Washington Gas construction project on 30th Street, NW.

Nevertheless, one overarching problem persists — DDOT still does not communicate adequately with the ANC or the community, the same concern that we raised in our February 25, 2019 performance oversight testimony (<http://bit.ly/2rmpNtu>). There are also too many instances when DDOT has not followed through on its commitments.

One persistent deficiency warrants particular attention. Last year, we testified that we had been

assured in June 2018, that DDOT and the other affected jurisdictions had developed a long-overdue plan to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety for Chevy Chase Circle and that they would conduct a pilot study in the Fall of 2018. We've heard nothing further.

We testified again at the April 11, 2019 budget hearing (<http://bit.ly/2tPOL61>) that

It has been disheartening that DDOT has for years done nothing to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety around Chevy Chase Circle, a key gateway to the District. DDOT assured our Commission in June 2018, that it had developed a comprehensive safety plan with adjacent jurisdictions and would conduct a pilot study in the Fall of 2018. Nothing further has happened, and the safety of pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicular traffic in and around Chevy Chase Circle continues to be a major concern. It should be designated as a priority going forward.

Director Marootian provided some additional information about the status of DDOT's efforts to improve safety in the Circle in an April 23, 2019 letter to Chair Cheh, indicating that he expected to forward to the Maryland State Highway Administration "maintenance of traffic" plans that included options to reduce the number of existing

circulating lanes. He promised to meet with the ANC in late May or early June 2019, “to provide a project update and outline the project’s public engagement plan.”

On July 8, 2019, after hearing nothing at all from DDOT, the ANC wrote Chair Cheh asking the Committee to require “DDOT to complete its plan, report to the community, and implement the necessary changes to make the Circle safe.” More than six months later, nothing has happened, and the Circle remains in the same unsafe condition that it was last year. DDOT’s performance in this instance belies the District Vision Zero commitments and is not acceptable.

After nearly a decade, DDOT has begun the long-delayed Oregon Avenue reconstruction and held a community kickoff meeting on December 11, 2019, immediately before construction began. We are grateful that the project team engaged with the community, but the meeting was not as successful as it should have been. Rather than answering generally applicable questions in an open forum, DDOT insisted that the audience divide into small groups that did not permit everyone to have the benefit of DDOT’s answers. Many constituents were frustrated, and the meeting ended without providing adequate answers to all of residents’ questions. The ANC had to followup with DDOT to get responses and to circulate them to residents.

One of the ANC’s critical concern as the Oregon Avenue reconstruction project begins in earnest is communications to the community of scheduled road closures. The phased construction will necessitate individual lane closures in either direction and on different segments of the road. DDOT has now created a website

(<https://www.oregonavenueproject.com>) that is intended to provide detailed, up-to-date

information that will help residents and commuters know when and where Oregon Avenue will be closed.

Unfortunately, one week after the kickoff meeting, DDOT closed the southern portion of Oregon Avenue for temporary repaving with no notice at all to the ANC or residents, wreaking havoc for all those who use the road — particularly for St. John's College High School, which lost access to its parking lot. DDOT's project manager apologized, but this performance does not bode well for the much more critical communications challenge during the two-year construction.

We applaud DDOT for repaving a number of streets in our ANC during 2019. Again, however, its failure to communicate adequately with residents and the ANC tarnished this effort. In June 2019, DDOT began repaving a number of adjacent streets between Military Road, Nebraska Avenue, and 30th Street, NW after only posting no-parking signs over the weekend before work began on Monday — far less than the required two-week notice. The Pave DC website is an improvement, but it is often inaccurate or untimely and does not provide adequate notice to affected residents about upcoming work.

Moreover, because the signs prohibited parking on many contiguous blocks, some residents had no legal parking spaces anywhere near their homes. While the repaving work itself proceeded relatively smoothly, it was marred by DDOT's failure to provide notice and its failure to consider the burden on residents who had no reasonable parking alternatives for several days. Despite this experience and a meeting with the ANC on June 24, 2019, the same scenario occurred again in September 2019 on eleven blocks of

Ingomar, Jenifer, Jocelyn, 38th and 39th Streets, NW. This time, the ANC promptly notified DDOT, and it agreed to stagger the paving work in such a way to avoid the parking loss all at once (similar to the ANC's recommendation). After the initial instance and a ANC meeting highlighting the problem, DDOT should not have permitted the same problem to recur.

Sidewalk safety is paramount as more residents — including seniors, those with disabilities, and scooter riders — use them in a multi-modal transportation world. Unfortunately, however, it is often difficult to discern DDOT's priorities. Repeatedly in 2019, DDOT replaced sidewalks at ADA-compliant corners but provided no explanation for its decisions. Indeed, other sidewalks have been completely impassible for years (e.g., on Military Road at 28th Street) but seem to have been ignored. DDOT also greatly increased the height of the cross-walk at Broad Branch Road and Northampton Street, NW last fall to control traffic at the Lafayette Elementary School, but made it so high that is is now a hazard for the disabled or those with strollers. DDOT has not responded to a commissioner's multiple requests for an evaluation to determine whether the crosswalk as installed violates ADA requirements.

We recognize the challenges that DDOT faces as it works to repair and maintain our aging transportation infrastructure and to make critical safety improvements. We do not expect perfection and understand that mistakes will occur. DDOT should, however, have systems in place that will give residents and the ANC timely information about its planned work and that will provide candid explanations when unexpected delays occur.

Thank you.