



**Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G**

Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, Hawthorne

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**ANC 3/4G Testimony Before the
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Roundtable on The Surge in Traffic Crashes, Fatalities, and
Injuries in the District and the Urgent Need to
Fully Fund the Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act
May 13, 2021**

Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment, I am Randy Speck, Chair of ANC 3/4G (Chevy Chase). Thank you for the opportunity to testify at the Committee’s roundtable on the “Surge in Traffic Crashes, Fatalities, and Injuries in the District and the Urgent Need to Fully Fund the Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act.” I am testifying on behalf of our Commission, which authorized this testimony at its May 10, 2021 meeting by a vote of 7 to 0 (a quorum being 4).

As you are all aware, Vision Zero is a part of Mayor Bowser’s response to the US Department of Transportation’s “Mayor’s Challenge for Safer People and Safer Streets,”

which aims to improve pedestrian and bicycle transportation safety by showcasing effective local actions, empowering local leaders to take action, and promoting partnerships to advance pedestrian and bicycle safety. The goal set by the Mayor is for Washington, DC to reach zero fatalities and serious injuries to travelers of our transportation system, through more effective use of data, education, enforcement, and engineering, by the year 2024. Unfortunately, instead of the predicted decline in traffic-related deaths and injuries in the District, they are increasing. We can and must take steps to reverse that disturbing trend. We offer a few ideas below.

First, we need to make our streets safe for the most vulnerable — e.g., children traveling to and from school, seniors and those with disabilities who may move more slowly and are less able to avoid a collision, and bicyclists and pedestrians who too often must share roadways with cars and trucks without adequate protection for safe travel. Presently, if a traffic calming petition is submitted to DDOT through the 311 system or otherwise, the delay time for completing the traffic safety investigation is over four months and that does not include any remedial measures. This timeline is unacceptable.

Second, we need to make buses truly accessible and reliable so that they provide a viable alternative to more dangerous transportation modes. Presently, in our community we face the prospect of reduced bus routes. Specifically, the proposed elimination or reduction in the M4 and E6 bus lines creates a real and present danger to students who rely on these buses to get to and from the schools in our area, seniors who depend on the bus to get to shopping and medical appointments, and workers who use these buses to

commute to their jobs. Elimination or reduction in these bus lines runs directly counter to the Vision Zero goals.

Third, all planning should incorporate transportation safety built on a foundation of reliable data and modeling as a central premise. While our ANC voted to support Concept C in DDOT's Connecticut Ave Reversible Lane Study, we noted the need for DDOT to implement measures that will assure that any changes to traffic patterns on Connecticut Avenue do not have the unintended consequence of making the side streets in our community less safe because of traffic diversions. It is incumbent on DDOT to take proactive measures now as after-the-fact remedial measures may prove too little too late

Making Streets Safe for the Most Vulnerable

The most important funding need is for sidewalks and protected bike lanes to keep bicyclists and pedestrians out of harm's way and enhanced traffic calming and enforcement measures to slow the rate of speed that vehicles travel throughout our community, especially near schools. Our Commission has consistently urged DDOT to create this essential transportation infrastructure. Among other steps, we have encouraged DDOT to build protected bike lanes on Connecticut Avenue and Broad Branch Road¹ and to provide more visibility to existing bike routes on less-traveled streets. For more than a

¹ Regrettably, DDOT concluded that the existing right-of-way on Broad Branch Road could not accommodate a bike lane. We continue to believe that a more aggressive effort with the affected embassies — including early involvement of Congresswoman Norton's office — might have produced a compromise that would have permitted this important bicycle link to Rock Creek Park and downtown. As now planned, Broad Branch Road will continue to be a serious hazard for both bicycles and cars.

decade, we have advocated for sidewalks on Chestnut Street. Although DDOT promised the start of the Chestnut Street construction in the Spring of 2021,² no work has begun. We have similarly advocated stop signs at the intersection of Chevy Chase Parkway and Military Road to protect both pedestrians and vehicles, but to no avail.

Other streets in our ANC still have no sidewalks at all, including Utah Avenue from Pinehurst Circle to Barnaby Street, NW, Chevy Chase Parkway, NW between Military Road and the alley between Kanawha and Jocelyn Streets, NW, and parts of 33rd Street, NW. Many others have sidewalks on only one side of the street (e.g., upper Nevada Ave, NW) making it more difficult for students to get to and from school safely. Indeed, some of these streets are characterized by both a significant number of pedestrians and an increasing number of cars. We believe this increase in traffic may be being directed onto these side streets by Waze and other similar mobile apps, which is why we argue above for DDOT to take proactive measures now before new and more dangerous traffic patterns are baked in. They are accidents waiting to happen, e.g., the intersection of Chevy Chase Parkway and Military Road is a prime example, where we have repeatedly advocated for stop signs. Lives are at stake.

The Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act³ mandates some expansion of both protected bike lanes and sidewalks — though it may not be enough to

² DDOT Presentation to ANC 3/4G on Chestnut Street Sidewalk Improvements, February 8, 2021, available at <https://bit.ly/3et7Csr>.

³ D.C. Law 23-158. Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2020 (the Act), available at <https://bit.ly/3vWzpr7>.

fully address the problem.⁴ Without funding to implement this Act, however, it is virtually certain that bicyclists and pedestrians will continue to be killed or seriously injured on our streets. Vision Zero must be a funding priority.

Most importantly, the budget should fund development of the Multimodal Long-Range Transportation Plan, as specified in the Act.⁵ This Plan will provide essential guidance to identify hazards and gaps in our protection infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians. This Plan is a necessary first step and should receive priority funding.

Restoring and Improving Metrobus Service

One significant way to improve safety is to make buses readily available, thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the roads and pedestrians navigating hazardous streets and intersections. Instead of expanding bus service to underserved residents so that they can safely reach essential destinations, WMATA has continually sought to eliminate key bus routes, forcing communities like ours to fight to retain even a minimal level of service. The Multimodal Long-Range Transportation Plan should be funded to ensure that all communities in the District have equitable access to reliable public transportation.

⁴ The Act requires some in-fill of missing sidewalks or bike lanes, but it is not comprehensive. For instance, the Act is unlikely to mandate sidewalks on Utah Avenue or Chevy Chase Parkway in the foreseeable future since it is only triggered when there is “reconstruction or major repair, installation of a curb and gutter, or curb and gutter replacement.” The Act, Sec. 3(a)(1). We can and should do better.

⁵ The Act, Sec. 7(e)(3).

As indicated above, many residents in our ANC rely on Metrobus, particularly the E6 and M4 routes. These buses provide a vital link for children attending Lafayette Elementary School, Deal Middle School, and Wilson High School. They give seniors access to recreation and shopping along Connecticut Avenue and to the medical offices and Metro at Friendship Heights. They provide vital transport for essential workers at facilities like the Knollwood Life Plan Community and Ingleside at Rock Creek. This community of dedicated Metrobus riders certainly qualifies as having “a higher-than-average reliance on public transportation,” thus warranting development of a plan to ensure their equitable access under the Act.⁶

Planning for Transportation Safety

Finally, our community is in the midst of preparing the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan to guide any future development of new commercial, residential, and public facilities along the upper Connecticut Avenue corridor. That development could increase the vitality of our community’s “Main Street,” add customers and residents who will be walking or biking to the new amenities and create additional transportation challenges. We want to make sure that the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan incorporates considerations and plans for *eliminating* traffic fatalities and injuries as the Chevy Chase Gateway becomes even more vibrant and lively. A fully funded Vision Zero program is vitally important in supporting our efforts.

Thank you.

⁶ The Act, Sec. 7(e)(3).