

Time for a Fresh Look at Bike Policy and Vision Zero

The departure of DDOT Director Everett Lott creates a path for a fresh look at Vision Zero and the very aggressive and controversial policy the Bowser Administration is pursuing to install bike lanes across the District. Supported by the bike lobby, The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) made choices for bike lanes that residents and businesses opposed on K St., NW, at Mt. Vernon Square, West Virginia Ave., NE, Eye St., SW, 17th St. in Dupont Circle, Pennsylvania Ave. on Capitol Hill, on Minnesota Ave. in Ward 7, on 5th St. at Grant Circle in Ward 4. Perhaps the most controversial are the bike lanes planned for the five-mile stretch on Connecticut Ave., NW, leading to a well-attended recent protest demonstration.

Unfortunately, Ward 6 Council member Charles Allen, chair of the DC Council Transportation Committee, continues his support for these bike lanes and the failed Vision Zero goals. “I’ll be looking for a bold leader. . . . To make Vision Zero mean something. . . . Someone who can truly make DC a world-class city of the future,” he said in a written statement. With Lott’s departure, Allen is leading the relentless drive for protected bike lanes (PBLs) in neighborhoods throughout DC, regardless of suitability, regardless of evidence to the contrary, and despite

growing community opposition. Allen's solution is to push harder, glossing over the fundamental questions: Is it a good idea? Are they safer? Do residents want them?

In fact, Protected Bike Lanes (PBLs) are a misnomer. Their name has been changed from the standard term 'cycle track,' to delude us into thinking they are safe. They are dangerous. PBLs cannot protect bikers wherever they cross an alley, a driveway or at intersections, which is where accidents most frequently occur. In urban streets such interruptions are frequent making PBLs dangerous, not safe.

The rebuilding of Dave Thomas Circle is a prime example of wrong-headed transportation planning. Located at a gateway to the city, at the convergence of Route 50 and New York and Florida Avenues, NE, it is one of the busiest and most hazardous intersections in the city as well as a commercial hub. Amid the din of traffic and exhaust fumes, the city is converting this traffic maelstrom into a playground for neighborhood children. If you are trying to reduce traffic fatalities, why entice our most vulnerable populations into harm's way? There are safer places for children to play. Isn't avoiding such hazards the objective of good planning?

It is abundantly clear that DDOT's bike policy is not achieving the goal of zero fatalities, which the DC

Auditor reports are rising. A new DDOT director can and should take a new look at bike policy with an eye to answering these questions: Where can PBLs be safely installed? What about trucks and deliveries? Should bikes, particularly e-bikes, be registered and users insured? Does converting traffic lanes to bike lanes divert traffic to neighborhood streets? What is the effect of bikes on congestion? And overall, why can't the District develop a transportation policy that seamlessly integrates bikes with cars, trucks, busses, subways, scooters and, of course, pedestrians, and have broad, popular support?

On Oct. 5, the Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA) will honor Allen with its award for furthering the DC Bike Network. For his part, Allen has scheduled hearings on Oct. 4 on Vision Zero and the city of the future. The DC Safe Streets Coalition and others across the city want to take advantage of this hearing and new DDOT leadership to revisit and reform the District transportation policy to make it work for all users and neighborhoods. CM Allen and Mayor Bowser can lead the way.

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Sign up for Council Hearing Wed., Oct 4,—

Register for testimony at Council hearing on safe streets Wed. Oct 4

<https://lims.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/108>

Four bills are being introduced to improve traffic safety in the city of the future. Rising fatalities show DC's lane closures and Protected Bike Lanes make streets unsafe.

B25-0421 - License Suspension Reform Amendment Act of 2023

B25-0422 - Automated Traffic Enforcement Effectiveness Amendment Act of 2023

B25-0425 - Strengthening Traffic Enforcement, Education, and Responsibility ("STEER") Amendment Act of 2023

B25-0435 - Fraudulent Vehicle Tag Enforcement Amendment Act of 2023