

My Testimony at DC Council Budget Hearing

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By Louis Santucci

My name is Louis Santucci and I live in Dupont Circle. I have lived in DC since 1964 except for a couple of years, some of which were spent in the army during the Vietnam war. I have seen the ebb and flow of the best and worst of the city.

I am afraid we are now in a period of the worst and unfortunately, it's not just the crime situation. It is also the mess that has been made of our city streets with the unplanned ridiculous bike lanes and lane closures. There is not one person I have talked to who thinks this street mess is welcome.

Thankfully the new head of the Department seems ready to bring some sanity to this endeavor and promises to rethink these terrible ideas.

But first of all I find it unsettling that this hearing and committee is led by someone who has accepted an award from The Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA), a lobbying organization that has been the recipient of money via the transportation budgets in the past. In fact, one could argue grants to this organization underwrite their lobbying whereby they seek more money be used for bike lanes, lane closures and

removal of parking spaces all to the detriment of the majority of citizens in this city.

I find this a conflict of interest and even if it does not rise to a legal violation it stinks. The winks and nods that must go on between the city council members and WABA would make the K street crowd envious.

The amount of money given to this organization whose main purpose is to ensure that mostly white wealthy bike riders have a multitude of bike lanes all over the city is not in the public interest. This is true in good times but more so now when the budget is making cuts in social services, teacher helper salaries and other more important priorities.

Certainly, in this time of austerity every penny going for these ill-conceived lane closures, bike lanes and parking space elimination could better be spent on people in need of which there are many in this city. In short it is time to make some budget decisions on priorities. Will it be the wealthy haves or the poorer have nots in the city that will be asked to bear the burden of budget cuts. I for one say stop funding WABA and stop funding the expansion of lane closures, bike lanes and parking space elimination. Real leadership would not cater to the wealthy bike riding elites over the less fortunate of the city.