

Opinion: budget priorities and bike lanes

There is an action that will save DC money if the Council pays attention to it; they can place a pause on the automatic and mindless installation of protected bike lanes.

DDOT Director Kerschbaum should be thanked for her sensible decision to eliminate the plans for protected bike lanes on Connecticut Ave; we need more of this kind of thought in street planning and less automatic non-decision making about where protected bike lanes are useful and where they are not. If we are going to spend money, spend it on public transportation, not more protected bike lanes.

When protected bike lanes are installed, especially next to the curb, they impose costly difficulties on residents and visitors. Some examples of problems created by putting protected bike lanes next to the curb:

-People who live in a neighborhood need to have a nearby grocery store, pharmacy or hardware store. These retail facilities need to get deliveries and protected bike lanes next to the curb mean the only place for delivery trucks to park is in the crosswalks, which means that pedestrians walk in the street. This also applies to delivery services such as Amazon, DoorDash and the U.S. Postal Service and is neither safe nor convenient.

-Visitors to a neighborhood come to restaurants, shops, and entertainment venues. Like grocery stores, these places need to get deliveries and without access to the curb their trucks park in the crosswalks, making pedestrians walk in the streets. Walking in the streets is dangerous to pedestrians especially as rules about who has right of way are unclear.

-Emergency and service vehicles such as firetrucks, ambulances, police cars and trash trucks also must park in the crosswalks, making it difficult for the service vehicles to reach the places they are needed and the streets dangerous for pedestrians.

-Alternatives to private cars such as Metro Access or ride shares cannot pick up passengers if the curb is blocked by a protected bike lane (many of such vehicles refuse to come to addresses that don't allow them to stop in front of the address).

-The city cannot meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities laws because there are so many places with no parking that is accessible to the sidewalk

-In case of emergency evacuation or snowstorm, streets cannot be cleared

Finally: the "protected" bike lanes are NEVER available for any other purpose. All other lanes and signals on our streets can be repurposed according to time, day, season, emergency, or special occasion but "protected"

bike lanes can never be used by anything other than a bicycle or scooter. At all times and on all occasions and whether the bike lane is being used by a bike or not, the bike lane stands as a symbol that cyclists are more important in this city than all the rest of us. Some of us find this offensive.

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