

Direct Route vs Safe Route - DDOT's Bikeways Workshop Tonight in Ward 8

You may know the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is preparing a new 5-year Strategic Bikeways Plan. I'm betting you don't know about its workshops in each Ward (Nov. 13 - Dec. 11) to fulfill its obligation for community engagement. Tonight, the meeting is in Ward 8.

At the Ward 4 session last Thursday, I asked DDOT's project leader, Sandra Marks, to consider bikeways on side streets avoiding the obvious hazards of vehicular traffic on DC's major corridors. Marks responded that bikers want a direct route to their destination.

Excuse me, a 'direct route' is not the same as a safe route. Safety is DDOT's stated objective. Directing vulnerable bikers into dense traffic is a dangerous formula that cannot be justified as 'direct.' Streets are dangerous and Protected Bike Lanes make them more so. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety warns against using them on city streets because of the frequency of interruptions in the path by alleys, driveways and intersections.

When I was growing up and wanted to ride my bike downtown, I mapped a route to avoid the most dangerous streets, and it worked. DDOT directs buses

and trucks away from certain streets. It designates some streets as one-way and prohibits traffic in the opposite direction. It can map bike routes through the city on quiet, safer streets and avoid the hazards, expense and disruption of Protected Bike Lanes.

The Pennsylvania Ave. Bike Plan is an example of this folly. Soon after Mayor Bowser abandoned the plan for PBLs on Connecticut Avenue, the ANC on Capitol Hill drafted a letter to say that they are working on Pennsylvania Avenue and could work on Connecticut Avenue. At the ANC meeting, however, one commissioner noted one problem, cars are using residential side streets to escape the congestion caused by PBLs on Pennsylvania Ave. Side streets can more readily accommodate bike traffic safely than the overflow from major arterials.

Not surprisingly, DDOT has not advertised its workshops outside the bike lobby, so most of those attending them are bikers.

When did DC residents decide that a small, even tiny, demographic of bikers should be privileged in their passage through the city, ahead of pedestrians, drivers, and commerce? DDOT has forgotten that its first obligation is to move traffic through the city expeditiously. One thing is certain, DDOT's Strategic Plan has gone too far, and it is time we stop it. DC residents never contemplated nor authorized the radical transformation of traffic we see emerging in DC today at

the hands of bureaucrats, many of whom are members of the bike lobby, and one zealot on the Council, Charles Allen. It's time we begin to roll back bikeways through a public referendum and derail this runaway train.

Tonight. Nov. 17, DDOT will hold its Ward 8 workshop at RISE Demonstration Center, 2739 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE, 6-8 pm. **Register here** <https://bikelanes.ddot.dc.gov/pages/strategicbikeplan>

Tuesday, Nov. 18, 6:30 - 8pm, Kansas Ave NW Protected Bike Lane Community Meeting at Sela Public Charter School. 6015 Chillum PI NE, 20011

Thursday, Nov. 20, the Ward 2 workshop is at MLK Library, 901 G St NW, 6-8 pm.

DCSafeStreetsCoalition.org protests the removal of traffic lanes and the installation of protected bike lanes. We champion bike regulation and world class public transit.

Nick DelleDonne
DCSafeStreetsCoalition.org
703 929 6656