

“Save Connecticut Ave” Testimony At The Transportation and Environment Performance Oversight Hearing

Lee Mayer, President

Feb 9, 2024

Hello. My name is Lee Mayer and I am President of “Save Connecticut Ave”. To date, over 4,000 residents and over 120 Connecticut Ave businesses have signed our petitions opposing the installation of 2 curbside bike lanes on Connecticut Ave. In a letter to Councilmember Frumin, the Chairman of the Police Union stated “we believe that the proposed protected bike lanes along Connecticut Ave may inadvertently compromise public safety and hinder law enforcement efforts. Protected bike lanes can lead to congestion and an increased risk of accidents.” In an emergency, seconds count and “officers have expressed concerns about the potential hinderance of response times.”

The residents of Wards 3 & 4, the Connecticut Ave businesses, and the downtown businesses are relieved to know that DDOT is reevaluating the Connecticut Ave plan. We are hoping that DDOT will resist the misrepresentations and intense lobbying being pushed by the self-serving, Washington Area Bicyclist Association also known as WABA. We maintain that Connecticut Avenue must be safe for all users and especially seniors and the mobility challenged who require direct access to the curbs.

For far too long, WABA has had a cozy relationship with DDOT. In 2023 DDOT paid WABA \$1,260,000. The DC Government, through DDOT, is WABA's single largest funding source. WABA indirectly uses DDOT's payments to fund their Mayor and Council lobbying efforts. This has to stop. WABA needs to rely on their members for their funding and their lobbying activities and not on DDOT or the DC Government.

DDOT and WABA are in the last year of their 5 year, \$2.68 million dollar contract. Some of the more egregious line items in the DDOT contract are as follows:

- \$178,000 to deliver pedestrian and bicycle education courses at 12 DC public charter schools.
- \$58,000 to provide 8 adult bicycle education courses for adults who already ride bikes.
- \$182,000 to implement a Bicycle Ambassadors program which includes funding a full time WABA employee.

This contract can and should be terminated immediately. Furthermore, DDOT should not enter into a new contract with WABA in 2025. This money should be used to fund public transportation which serves a larger and more diverse population.

To their credit, DDOT has made Connecticut Avenue safer. With the removal of the reversible lanes and the lowering of the speed limit, accidents on Conn Ave have dropped by 50%. More recently, DDOT has installed speed cameras on Conn Ave which will help reduce accidents even more. The majority of residents and businesses hope that DDOT's next plan focuses solely on

safety measures and not on bike lanes. Curbside bike lanes would make Connecticut Ave less safe.

Lastly, with the increase in the use of e-bikes and e-scooters, Vision Zero, under DDOT, needs to start tracking pedestrian accidents caused by cyclists and scooter riders. This information is currently unavailable.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.