



Then and Now: 11th Street Bridge

At the advent of the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s, planners envisioned the DC area with three beltways. In addition to the Capital Beltway we know today through Maryland and Virginia, the District was slated for two beltways of its own. The Southeast/Southwest Freeway was constructed as part of the innermost beltway, which was to connect to the Anacostia Freeway by way of a bridge across the Anacostia River at 11th Street SE. The first span of the 11th Street Bridge opened in 1965.

During the so-called “freeway revolts” that occurred across the nation in the 1960s and 1970s, most freeway plans in the District were abandoned. Portions that were already built or under construction were left in service, but their development and integration were largely halted. As a result, connections between the Anacostia and SE/SW Freeways were incomplete and interstate traffic was forced onto local roads, causing congestion in the surrounding residential areas.

In 2009, DDOT began construction on the new 11th Street Bridge project, the District’s first river bridge replacement in 40 years and the largest project in DDOT’s history. The project allows for direct connections between the Anacostia and Southeast/Southwest Freeways, diverting traffic from local roads. It also replaces the structurally-deficient spans and provides an enhanced emergency evacuation route.

The initial estimated cost of the project was \$459 million, far more than the \$300 million DDOT was able to finance. In order to encourage contractors to develop innovative ways to deliver the project efficiently under financial constraints, DDOT used a design-build-to-budget procurement. This procurement method not only significantly reduced the cost of the project, but also allowed DDOT to accelerate the construction schedule. The project also marked DDOT’s first use of GARVEE bonds, debt instruments that are eligible for repayment using future Federal funds, further reducing the financial impact to District residents.

In November 2012, Roads&Bridges magazine named the new 11th Street Bridge its No. 1 Bridge of 2012.

PROSPEROUS PLACES



DDOT has played a major role in shaping the city during a decade of historic growth by leveraging transportation investment and implementing programs that foster the development of complete, connected, sustainable communities.

Investment in transportation can serve as a catalyst for economic growth, and DDOT works with the public, other city agencies, private developers and business improvement districts to create strategies and projects with the greatest impact on quality of life in the District. Prosperous places are well-connected, easily-accessible, safe and attractive to many users. DDOT's Complete Streets policy guides development of transportation projects by ensuring that motorists, pedestrians, cyclists and transit-users are able to access inviting commercial and residential areas. By prioritizing transportation options, DDOT has enabled residents to reduce their household transportation costs by owning fewer cars and driving less. These options allow people to spend their household budgets on other necessities that promote economic growth and development.

Some of the most striking examples of transportation investment driving economic development are the revitalizations of H St. NE and Columbia Heights. Both neighborhoods were devastated by the 1968 riots, and lay underutilized for decades afterwards. Thanks to the coordinated efforts of DDOT, citizens, the business community and numerous city and regional agencies, these areas were given new life, largely sparked by transportation improvements.

In addition to making passage through our city safe, sustainable and economically advantageous, DDOT also works to make streets fun. Whether it is widening sidewalks to accommodate green areas and sidewalk cafes or developing dedicated bike lanes and trail networks, DDOT strives to make streets and sidewalks appealing places to spend time. Projects like the Met Branch Trail, Marvin Gaye Park, the Columbia Heights fountain plaza and Anacostia Riverwalk Trail demonstrate DDOT's commitment to making our transportation network more than just a means for getting from one place to another.

Left: Penn Quarter Farmers Market (photo by JBrazito, Flickr)

Local Perspective: Barracks Row

Barracks Row was one of the many neighborhoods devastated by the riots of 1968. Although most of the buildings remained intact, widespread looting caused some business owners along the District's oldest commercial corridor to leave the area. With few business-owners to fight for improvements along the corridor, the neighborhood's infrastructure deteriorated.

"It was not very well-lit," recalls Denise D'amour, a resident of the area since 1999 and owner of Capitol Hill Bikes. "It was very run down. It was dirty. It was not very well kept, and kind of scary. When I first moved here, I didn't go past the fire station" less than a block from the Eastern Market Metro station.

Jorge Zamorano, owner of Banana Café, remembers having to convince customers it was safe to come to the area. "It was dark and there weren't many people. People were scared to come here. I used to tell people, if you want to come, I will walk you back to your car."

In the late 1990s, community stakeholders began to lobby the city for improvements in the area. In 2002, DDOT began work on the Barracks Row streetscape, a project that would pave the way for the Great Streets Initiative. The massive façade-to-façade rebuild of the sidewalks, curbs, roadbeds and utilities sought to create a safe, visually-appealing, green environment that was useful and accessible to more users.

The results have been dramatic. "I don't think anyone expected this much of an improvement," said Martin Smith, Executive Director of Barracks Row Main Street. Since the streetscape improvements were completed, Barracks Row has attracted numerous new businesses. In 2011, 11 new businesses opened on Barracks Row, and 12 more are scheduled to open in 2012. The area has been transformed into a major destination for nightlife in the District.

"I was amazed at how much progress had been made when I returned this summer," said Col. Christian Cabaniss, Commanding Officer of Marine Barracks Washington, who was previously stationed there from 2000-2003. "I'm very pleased to be moving my family back into such a vibrant neighborhood. My wife, daughters and I have truly enjoyed experiencing all of the things that Barracks Row has to offer."



Great Streets. Following the success of the Barracks Row streetscape improvements, DDOT began to undertake similar projects across the District. The Great Streets program is a comprehensive strategy to use public investment in infrastructure, streetscape improvements, land use planning, and development assistance to encourage private investment and economic development. A collaboration between DDOT, the Office of Planning and the Deputy Mayor's Office for Planning and Economic Development, the Great Streets program looks to transform some of the District's most heavily-traveled corridors into safer, more visually-appealing, complete communities.

One of the strengths of the Great Streets program is its adaptability. Since every neighborhood is different, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for improving transportation and quality of life. On Barracks Row, the improvements were largely focused on drawing pedestrian traffic by reconfiguring sidewalks, refreshing building façades and increasing lighting. On H St. NE and Benning Rd., streetcar tracks were installed in anticipation of restoring fixed rail transit to the area for the first time in five decades. Pennsylvania Ave. Great Streets improvements focused on vehicular and pedestrian safety, as well as environmental sustainability. During DDOT's history, the Great Streets program has enhanced corridors and communities from Petworth to Anacostia.

Top: Georgia Ave. (photo by Andrew Bossi, Flickr); Bottom: H St. NE (photo by Elvert Barnes, Flickr)

Public Space Management. The Public Space Regulation Administration (PSRA) is responsible for managing private use of public space to ensure that competing uses of public space can be accommodated safely and appropriately in the District’s transportation network. Public space is defined as all publicly-owned property between property lines and includes roads, tree spaces, sidewalks and alleys. PSRA also enforces public space laws and regulations, inspects all work performed in public space, provides technical reviews for public space permit applications and conducts design reviews for all complex and large-scale projects affecting public space.

PSRA processes all public space permit applications, including those for construction, valet parking, block parties, sidewalk cafes and farmers markets. In December 2009, DDOT launched the Transportation Online Permitting System (TOPS) to streamline the permitting process and reduce the amount of paperwork needed to obtain a public space permit. Since the system went online, it has handled nearly 60,000 permits, more than 17,000 of which were approved automatically without need for review by DDOT staff. PSRA inspects work done in public space by private entities to ensure the work conforms to DDOT standards and that the integrity of the right-of-way is maintained. It also provides emergency assistance, including responding to natural disasters and utility emergencies as needed, and can be called on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Anacostia Waterfront Initiative. DDOT is one of 19 federal and District agencies engaged in recapturing underutilized properties along the Anacostia River with the goal of transforming Washington into one of the nation’s great waterfront cities. The agency has worked to remove transportation barriers and enhance multimodal access to waterfront neighborhoods, retail and recreation areas. More than 13 miles of dedicated bike lanes have been constructed in Wards 6, 7 and 8 under the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) since 2002. Circulator service began between Union Station and Navy Yard in 2009. Today, nearly 40,000 people each month travel this route. In 2011, DDOT began Circulator service across the Anacostia River, a route that now boasts 35,000 riders per month. As part of the improvements along the river, DDOT also planted more than 5,500 trees throughout the corridor to expand the District’s overall tree canopy and enhance the aesthetic appeal of neighborhood streets.

AWI also spurred several bridge investments to improve connectivity to neighborhoods south of the river and to improve the dependability of emergency routes out of the city. Two of the District’s largest investments—11th Street Bridge and Frederick Douglass Bridge replacements—were envisioned under the Middle Anacostia Crossing Study, which formed the basis for many of the completed, ongoing and future improvements in the AWI study area.



DDOT Perspective: Driving Economic Growth

DC has been experiencing a historic population boom, even as the rest of the nation was crippled by recession. With consistent growth since 2000, the District is now ranked among the fastest growing cities on the east coast. Nearly 1,000 new residents move here each month, the highest level since World War II.

Providing new, convenient, low-cost transportation options is as important to forming vibrant communities as creating mixed-use residential, office and retail spaces. For this reason, connecting neighborhoods and communities has been a key goal of DDOT since its formation.

“If one word encapsulates our transportation improvements this decade, it’s multimodalism,” said Maurice Keys, Strategic Planning Manager. “DDOT is continually looking for new ways to balance bike, pedestrian and driver needs to make destinations more easily accessible through a range of options.”

“DDOT is investing more in biking and pedestrian planning and transit management than it was a decade ago. We’re proud to see programs such as bikesharing and pay-by-phone parking being emulated in other major cities.” Beyond the highly visible initiatives like Capital Bikeshare and the Circulator, DDOT has provided behind-the-scenes support for numerous other projects. DDOT has participated in every recent city development plan to ensure that new neighborhoods are accessible for motorists, pedestrians, transit and cyclists.

“Transportation is everything you don’t pay attention to but use on a daily basis,” says Keys. “The less visible investments in our system are often as important as the highly visible ones in residents’ daily lives.”



Then and Now: Columbia Heights

In the early 1800s, Columbia Heights was a sleepy rural area in Washington County, DC, far from the urban life of Georgetown and the City of Washington. Home to farmland, Columbian College (now George Washington University), and the personal estates of Senators, Supreme Court Justices and cabinet-level officials, the area's main draw for city-dwellers was John Tayloe's horse racing track. When electric streetcars began running along 11th and 14th Streets at the turn of the 20th century, life in Columbia Heights picked up: farmland and estates were subdivided and rowhouses were built. Drug stores, restaurants, clothing shops and numerous other businesses began to open along 14th Street. The Arcade, located at 14th and Park, drew crowds to its street-level vendor stalls, movie theater, bowling alley, sports arena, dance hall and skating rink. The Tivoli Theatre became one of the grandest theaters in the District, with seating for 2,500 people.

Columbia Heights enjoyed this prosperity for nearly seven decades. April 4, 1968, however, would see the area's fortunes go up in smoke—literally. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. had a profound effect on the District's residents, resulting in five days of riots and looting across the city. Businesses in Columbia Heights were looted and burned, with their owners never to return. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development acquired hundreds of properties in the area and razed many that had been damaged. The result was a neighborhood of empty lots and abandoned buildings largely ignored by developers.

Revitalization began in 1999 when Metro service reached the area. Since service began, Columbia Heights has reemerged as an important commercial center. New development has brought national chains that once refused to enter the area, creating the largest retail development in the District. In 2010, DDOT completed roadway and sidewalk improvements and constructed a plaza and fountain to aid in the continued revitalization of this historic neighborhood.

Above: Destroyed buildings on the 3100 block of 14th St., April 1968; Right: Columbia Heights today, showing fountain plaza and redeveloped 3100 block of 14th St. (photo by Bill McNeal, Flickr)



FIRM FOUNDATION



DDOT's most valuable asset is not a bridge, park or building; our strength is our workforce. At its core, DDOT is a service agency. From approving transportation permits and controlling traffic at busy intersections to filling potholes and inspecting bridges, DDOT serves the District's residents, workers and visitors on a daily basis.

In order to provide first-rate customer service, we must ensure that our employees have the tools necessary to understand and address the concerns of users. In order to maintain this level of service into the future, we must ensure that our employees have the skills not only to develop professionally, but also to push the organization forward. As part of this effort, DDOT began a competency initiative to outline the core competencies and position-specific skills required for each position within the agency. The competency initiative not only sets a benchmark for evaluating individual performance, but also allows employees to see the skills they will need to develop in order to advance within the agency.

DDOT is committed to investing in its employees so that they can grow professionally and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the agency. In addition to providing online training relative to specific occupations and tasks, DDOT also has a paid degree program that gives employees the opportunity to attend a college or university to obtain a degree that will benefit both the employee and the agency.

Strengthening and streamlining internal operations enables DDOT to more effectively serve the public. During the past 10 years, DDOT has made numerous strides to enhance its organizational efficiency. In 2011, DDOT moved its headquarters to the Washington Navy Yard, co-locating more than half of our employees. In just two years, DDOT cut its vehicle fleet by 50%, using fleet sharing programs to decrease waste and reduce the agency's environmental impact.

DDOT will continue to be a go-to agency within the District government into the future due in large part to its commitment to strengthening its own processes and workforce.



In-house Training. DDOT maintains an extensive training program to ensure that its employees are equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to provide top-quality service to the residents, businesses and visitors of the District. In 2011, DDOT employees completed more than 20,000 hours of training—an average of nearly 24 hours per employee. Training courses and programs are available for nearly all DDOT employees, covering numerous roles and occupations. Courses offered include basic computer skills, GIS, CAD, statistics, construction law, operations management and organizational theory. DDOT organized 523 training events in 2011, including courses offered through the National Highway Institute, covering topics from management and project financing to transportation safety planning and bridge maintenance.

DDOT Paid Degree Program. As part of its workforce training program, DDOT offers its employees the opportunity to pursue undergraduate or graduate degrees through its paid degree program. Since 2008, more than two dozen employees annually have taken university coursework as part of this program. DDOT pays for tuition and books for students in the paid degree program. Participants have studied at Catholic University, George Washington University, American University, University of the District of Columbia, University of Maryland and many more colleges and universities, and have earned degrees ranging from business administration to homeland security. DDOT also works with employees to assess whether courses taken previously can be applied to a degree program. These are just a few of the many success stories from DDOT's paid degree program.



Bernadette Edwards
Program Support Supervisor

"One of my personal goals has always been to obtain a college degree; DDOT providing the opportunity to accomplish this goal means a great deal to me, and I will be forever thankful. DDOT's investment has provided me an opportunity to develop the skills needed for growth, as well as heighten my professional development."

"I would like to thank DDOT for encouraging advancement in education and the enormous financial contribution that DDOT has made in ensuring that I was able to complete my advanced degree. By obtaining my degree, I feel more confident and qualified working with my colleagues. Having my degree allows me to push myself further while demonstrating a stronger work ethic."

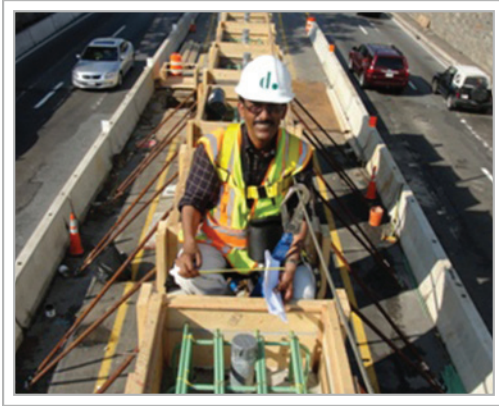


Anthony Bundy
Customer Service Specialist



Jessica Bembry
Staff Assistant

"How do you quantify the support given by team members and management? The funding was and is invaluable, however, much greater and appreciated was the support and encouragement given by all. The experience is and has been priceless."



Bruke Siraga
Civil Engineer

“Determination brings you success! In order to get promoted and improve yourself, your family and your career, you need to go to school. Knowing that, I made the commitment to finish school. I am pleased that DDOT has helped me get educated. With the support of DDOT, I have reached my goals. This is something big in my life.”



Shannon Jones
Staff Assistant

“The investment DDOT has made in my education has allotted me the experience and knowledge to handle issues on a professional level. My education is a major achievement that wouldn’t have been attained without the assistance of DDOT. Knowing that DDOT is 100% behind me and willing to incur the cost of my education has made me strive for greatness! I will be forever grateful.”

DDOT Perspective: 55 M St. Headquarters Move

In April 2011, DDOT moved its headquarters to a LEED-certified facility at 55 M St. SE. Nearly 450 agency employees moved into a new transit-accessible office building above the Navy Yard metro station. The co-location of numerous complementary departments and functions has reduced the need to travel for meetings and collaboration, creating a more efficient organization. Employees now spend less time in transit from place to place and more time concentrating on providing first-rate customer service.

“The move is one strategic example of what we are doing as an agency to decrease our ecological footprint,” said Director Terry Bellamy. “It has made us a more efficient agency and benefits our customers, the residents of the District of Columbia, because for the first time since the department was created, most of our offices are housed under one roof.” In conjunction with the move, DDOT initiated an overhaul of its document management system, paving the way for the digital storage of nearly 8 million documents.

“Cutting the distance between the different administrations within DDOT saves us a tremendous amount of time and makes it much easier for our construction engineers, planners, traffic safety engineers and other team members to collaborate on projects,” said Ronaldo “Nick” Nicholson, DDOT’s Chief Engineer. “It makes us more efficient, which benefits everyone inside and outside the agency.”

