

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
District Department of Transportation



Public Hearing on
B25-0040, the “Vehicular Noise Reduction Act of 2023”

Testimony of
Sharon Kershbaum
Interim Director
District Department of Transportation

Before the
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Council of the District of Columbia

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9:30 a.m.
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Good morning, Chairperson Allen, members of the Committee, staff, and District residents. My name is Sharon Kershbaum, Interim Director at the District Department of Transportation, commonly referred to as DDOT. I am here today to present testimony on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser regarding B25-0040, the “Vehicular Noise Reduction Act of 2023.”

This bill would require the implementation of a noise camera pilot program, the creation of a vehicle repair subsidy program, and the commission of a study on strategies to reduce vehicular and transit noise in the District.

As stated in our long-range transportation plan, moveDC, safety is DDOT’s number one priority as we strive for zero fatalities on our roadways. While excessive noise can be a disruption to communities and present legitimate concerns for enjoyable public spaces, the focus of DDOT’s automated enforcement program must remain safety.

DDOT's automated traffic enforcement (or “ATE”) program has been shown to reduce speeds and improve safety on corridors where they are placed. We are always looking for proven, innovative ways to expand this program, such as placing cameras on bus stop arms. For the noise cameras contemplated by this bill, DDOT would be interested to see how similar programs play out in other jurisdictions, such as New York City, and spend an appropriate amount of time researching and speaking to vendors about the capabilities of the sensors before

suggesting an investment in the technology. Our agency currently has some outstanding concerns, such as the noise cameras not being able to enforce against unregistered vehicles. In addition, vehicles traveling in groups or in tunnels are difficult to pinpoint which makes taking enforcement action against offenders particularly challenging.

Beyond the investment risk in noise camera technology and the corresponding studies, there are equity concerns that we believe the Council has also foreseen. These cameras would pick up vehicles that are purposefully loud as well as vehicles that the owner cannot afford to repair, and fining both equally presents different equity challenges than automated enforcement against drivers who choose to speed or run a red light. We presume that the Council aims to account for this concern through the non-means-tested vehicle repair subsidy program envisioned in the bill. This would be a DMV program, but DDOT believes that there would need to be more time put into developing a program that is implementable and targeted to those individuals who cannot afford mechanical repairs.

Overall, while DDOT recognizes the harm caused by excessive noise, it remains focused on roadway safety programs. The concept of a camera program would need to be more thoroughly vetted before making an investment, and additional consideration should be given to the equity impacts of such a program.

DDOT welcomes collaboration with the Council on ways to address our residents' concerns.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am available to answer any questions that you may have.