

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Transportation



Fiscal Year 2018 Performance Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Jeff Marootian
Director

Before the
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Mary M. Cheh, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building
Room 500
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

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11 A.M.

Good morning, Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment. My name is Jeff Marootian, and I am the Director of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). Thank you for inviting me to testify on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser in today's hearing to discuss the work of DDOT in Fiscal Year 2018 (FY 2018).

Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2018 budget made investments that supported our efforts to deliver on the promise of our shared DC values. These efforts include creating economic opportunity, making our neighborhoods safer, and providing more effective and efficient government services. We continue that effort as we work each day to fulfill our commitment to provide every District resident a fair shot at opportunity. As Director of DDOT, I have had the opportunity to work closely with this Council to address both the current needs of the District and to build toward a shared vision of the future.

As you know, the transportation sector has seen rapid transformation over the last decade with no signs of slowing down. This has fundamentally changed the role of DDOT, as we work to both welcome this innovation and to ensure that it meets the needs of our city. As we pilot new technology, such as our dockless bike and scooter program, we remain focused on what these services can add to the District and how they can be optimized. As we have worked with these and other



private providers, analyzed available data, and received public feedback, we have refined the way that we approach new mobility options and continue to learn and improve. We have learned that, in order to succeed, we need to be nimble in our approach from everything to new ideas to reform our core services to innovative strategies to make our city safer by more quickly implementing tactical urbanism and creative Vision Zero strategies. Preparing for the future of transportation in the District requires us to remain agile as new and emerging technologies become available and to determine what approaches to implementing them will best serve the residents of our city.

As I reflect on my time as DDOT Director, I am humbled by the support and guidance I have received from Mayor Bowser and other members of her Administration. I join her in remaining committed to providing a world class transportation system to residents and visitors of the District that is safe, reliable, and efficient, and that connects people to opportunity. I also continue to be impressed by the talent and dedication of our team at DDOT. I have the privilege to work alongside incredible professionals who are passionate about the safety and mobility of people in our city. I am eager to highlight their work today.

Organization, Outreach and Management



In FY2018, DDOT underwent some meaningful organizational changes in the Office of the Director, including the creation of the External Affairs Administration. This Administration now consists of Community Engagement, Public Information, Policy and Legislative Affairs, and the recently announced Vision Zero Division, which will be responsible for coordinating the agency's Vision Zero strategy by analyzing data, evaluating policies, and recommending improvements to ensure multi-modal safety in the District. With the start of our Vision Zero Director in two weeks, we will have a full complement of staff responsible for our highest priority initiatives and increased bandwidth to coordinate and communicate proactively with the public.

The creation of our community engagement team and our focus on transparency has led to an increase in our community participation across all eight wards of the District. During FY 2018, DDOT participated in several hundred public meetings to talk about major projects and small area improvements alike. These range from our own ANC Open Houses, to major project updates and livability study town halls, to meetings of the Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Multimodal Advisory Councils, and to gatherings with neighbors on the block level about urgent safety concerns. My team and I have attended ANC and civic association meetings in every ward of the District, presenting plans, hearing feedback, and



resolving large-and small-scale safety issues. We continue to look for proactive ways to engage with constituents online and in person. Most importantly, we have learned from the public, been open to new ideas, and utilized as many opportunities as possible to collaborate with communities to drive mutually agreed upon outcomes.

We have been receptive to constructive criticism about our processes and have worked to utilize this feedback to be a better and stronger agency. When I first started as the Director, for example, I heard a lot of feedback, including from members of the Council, that our Reserved Residential Parking program for individuals with mobility impairments, needed to be refined. In an effort to be responsive to this consistent constituent feedback, we held public meetings and spoke with residents across the District about the process for obtaining this type of permit. In 2018, DDOT participated in the Mayor’s “Formapalooza” program to revise the application form to coincide with the establishment of a simpler and clearer process. DDOT’s internal performance management team has used our regular bi-weekly “TranStat” meetings to monitor our progress, improve internal and external communication, and resolve bottlenecks that once plagued this process. This new approach has led to a more successful program that has minimized confusion and resident complaints.



We are using a similar process improvement approach in several areas to continuously strengthen our responsiveness and performance. One area we are currently working to improve, for example, is around the enforcement of Safe Accommodations laws at construction sites. While we have some of the most progressive guidelines in the country regarding safe accommodations, they are only effective when followed. That is why I am excited to announce that we are creating a Rapid Response Team that will have dedicated staff to respond quickly to these violations in real time. While our goal is to be proactive and prevent the need for this enforcement, we have heard loud and clear that improvements are needed in this area. Along those lines, we will also be working over the next several months to re-train our own personnel and the contracting community about the law and best practices in construction site management.

Infrastructure Maintenance and Improvement

Roads, Alleys, and Sidewalks

Perfecting the basics of maintenance of our roadways, alleys, and sidewalks is a critical component of our Vision Zero strategy. We also know that future success of transportation innovations will rely on our infrastructure being in a state of good repair. This year, we created the PaveDC program to reform both our



paving process itself and the public engagement that accompanies it. This has brought a critical function of transportation management into the 21st century by increasing internal efficiencies, providing increased transparency, and improving the way DDOT interacts with its customers. By leveraging DDOT software applications to capture the work of cross programmatic processes in the agency, we produced a live, mobile-friendly, interactive dashboard map that allows residents to interact with the data and easily see where DDOT is working and will be working during the infrastructure repair season. The success of the project was immediately felt when, shortly after the launch, the number of calls or emails requesting information about paving went down dramatically.

PaveDC has also changed the internal culture at DDOT to be more collaborative and transparent and set the bar for customer-oriented public service delivery. In FY 2019, we plan to add other activities, such as sidewalk repairs to this dashboard. Our accomplishments in paving are important to highlight in the context of our climate and the record rainfall we saw last year. We lost 45 full days during our paving season due to the rain, and we are seeing the devastating impact of the record rainfall as we are seeing more potholes and flooding issues than usual. This is why DDOT is focused not just on fixing today's infrastructure, but on preparing for and mitigating the effects of climate change through sustainability



efforts like green infrastructure, bio-retention rain gardens, and other collaborative work with DOEE to treat stormwater.

Trees

Since 2015, DDOT has installed nearly 30,000 new trees in public space. As of this month, more than 157,000 trees exist in DDOT's Public Tree Database. This represents an increase of over 7,500 new trees, or more than a five percent increase over this time last year. We will deliver approximately 8,000 trees during this planting season. Over 35 percent of those 8,000 trees will be planted in Wards 7 and 8 alone. In 2018, our Urban Forestry Division (UFD) began a pilot program to provide DCPS and public charter schools with recycled wood products from our tree pruning work to improve school grounds at no cost. To date, we have received six requests from DC public schools and charter schools for benches, stumps (for use as stools or stepping stones), and wood chips for use in school gardens and outdoor classrooms. Teachers, administrators, and school garden coordinators have told us how excited they are to have access to these renewable products of our urban forestry activities.



Major Projects

In 2018, we broke ground on the South Capitol Street Corridor project, which is the largest construction project in the agency's history. Phase One is the replacement of the 67-year old Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge over the Anacostia River and includes new pedestrian and bicycle connections. Phase Two includes a new interchange on Suitland Parkway at Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, plus reconstruction and streetscape improvements on South Capitol Street north of the Nationals Ballpark and on New Jersey Avenue north of M Street SE. We also made significant progress on major Vision Zero projects, such as reconstructing the intersection of Benning Road and Minnesota Avenue NE, adding major safety improvements to Ward Circle, and breaking ground on long awaited streetscapes such as 14th Street NW. We added two Hawk Signals and two Rapid Flashing Beacons. We installed five miles of bike lanes and broke ground on the Met Branch Trail Fort Totten extension. We also installed 107 Leading Pedestrian Intervals, modified 13 intersections that create a conflict between the dual turn lanes and pedestrian crossings, and have closed the equivalent of 20 blocks of sidewalk gaps.

Transit



DDOT continues to provide a reliable transit option for our residents and visitors with the Streetcar and Circulator. The Streetcar will be celebrating a milestone this week. February 27th marks three years since the launch of the service and the system has completed more than three million trips. As you may know, as part of the Mayor's Fair Shot February, the Circulator is free for riders from January 28 through the end of this month.

We know that transit helps connect people to opportunity in a safe, efficient, and affordable way, and we want to continue to seek ways to connect people throughout the District. In that vein, we have begun work in earnest on a bus priority program. This program is focused on enhancements like the Traffic Signal Priority we deployed on 33 traffic signals on 16th Street to help keep busses on schedule. While work to improve bus operations is already underway on 14th and 16th streets, this program is tasked with identifying and implementing bus optimization across the District.

DDOT awarded the DC Circulator operations and maintenance contract to RATP Dev in July 2018. RATP Dev hired the majority of the operations and maintenance staff that worked under the previous contract and worked in close coordination with DDOT to ensure there was no interruption in service. DDOT



has successfully on-boarded staff in all five positions authorized in FY 2019 to support the oversight activities of the operator. DDOT is currently in the process of awarding a project management contract to provide additional support to manage and improve on-time performance for the existing service and continuing to expand our intelligent systems and clean vehicle fleet.

Getting Around- Bikeshare, Dockless and PUDO

Bikeshare & Dockless

The Capital Bikeshare Program continues to see steady ridership numbers, and, in FY 2018, DDOT added 13 Capital Bikeshare Stations across the District to provide even greater coverage. We also introduced an electric bike pilot deploying 80 e-bikes across the system this year. We have had positive feedback on this pilot and are preparing to announce a significant expansion in the coming months.

Separate from the Capital Bikeshare program, DDOT plans to launch an Adaptive Bikeshare program and will be conducting public outreach through March 2019 to better understand desired locations and times of operation.

DDOT transitioned the dockless program from a demonstration period to an application-based, official permit program in January 2019. The demonstration period allowed DDOT to collect data and better understand potential safety and



operational enhancements needed for a longer-term program to be successful. We also realized the need to invest in more bike racks across the District and quickly mobilized a “Rack Attack” to install over 300 bike racks in the last year.

During this time, we also saw the dockless bikes being rapidly supplemented or replaced by dockless scooters. When I testified a year ago, there were no e-scooters in operation, and, in that time, we have been able to adjust our program to allow for this popular new mobility option. The Bowser Administration’s approach to this program is reflective of the way we view the ever-changing transportation landscape – we are open to innovation and supportive of new types of mobility that reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles and will continue to support these changes with pilots that allow for iteration, time for public feedback, and, ultimately, a thoughtful approach that serves the changing needs of a growing District.

PUDO

DDOT’s pick-up and drop-off zone (PUDO) pilot is another example of the kind of innovative solution that helps resolve congestion and safety issues today while actively preparing for and anticipating future transportation needs of the District. Since the launch of the Connecticut Avenue pilot in 2018, DDOT has announced and begun work to install six additional locations to expand the pilot.



These modifications allow for safe loading and unloading directly at the curb and out of travel lanes. Additionally, DDOT is currently reviewing for-hire vehicle data provided by Shared Streets and internal safety data to identify a more comprehensive approach and expansion plan for 2019.

Vision Zero

DDOT's top priority is safety, and it is at the center of all the work I have already highlighted today. While safety informs every decision we make, I want to focus on our work toward our Vision Zero goals over the past year. While the Vision Zero initiative aims to improve the safety of all modes of travel, special attention is focused on vulnerable users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. Under the Mayor's leadership, we have taken a holistic, interagency approach, and we are committed to exploring all options to reach our goal.

In FY 2018 and 2019, DDOT introduced a number of safety initiatives including the elimination of dual turn conflicts, left turn hardening, the targeted prohibition of Right Turn on Red, the formation of the Vision Zero Working Group, the launch of the redesigned Vision Zero website, and the creation of the Vision Zero office at DDOT. We also implemented the Vision Zero rulemaking, which gives the District more tools to reach our goal through a variety of methods,



including imposing higher fines for the most dangerous behaviors and creating slow zones near areas such as schools, recreation centers, and seniors centers.

We also look forward to continuing to deliver on our streetscape program, which aims to beautify our city while making it safer. In FY19, we will break ground on the long-awaited Maryland Ave NE project; fix some of our most troubled intersections, like Blair, 4th and Cedar NW; utilize an expedited planning and design process to begin to fix the safety problems along Alabama Avenue SE; and formally look at our options for making Connecticut Avenue safer.

In closing, I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am truly grateful for your continued leadership and collaboration. I look forward to working with you to continue our progress and seek both every day and long-term improvements to our transportation system for the residents and visitors of the District. I am happy to address your questions at this time.

