

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
District Department of Transportation



Public Roundtable:

Plans to Replace the Collapsed Pedestrian Bridge Along DC-295 and the
Resiliency of the District's Transportation Infrastructure

Testimony of
Everett Lott
Acting Director, District Department of Transportation

Before the
Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Council of the District of Columbia

Friday, July 9, 2021
9:30 a.m.
Room 500
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004



Good morning, Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committees. My name is Everett Lott, Acting-Director of the District Department of Transportation, often referred to as “DDOT.” I am also joined by Dawit Muluneh, DDOT’s Chief Engineer. I am here today to discuss the incident on the morning of June 23, 2021, when a truck, with its boom in the up position while travelling on DC-295, struck the Lane Place NE pedestrian bridge, resulting in its collapse, our general bridge maintenance protocols, and the challenges and solutions moving forward.

On Wednesday, June 23, a vehicle struck the pedestrian bridge spanning DC-295 at Lane Place NE resulting in its collapse and the closure of the highway for about thirteen (13) hours. DDOT was on-site within 15 minutes of being notified of the incident and began immediately documenting the occurrence and taking the steps necessary to remove the debris. With the help of FEMS, MPD, DPW, and Fort Meyer Construction Corporation, the debris was cleared quickly and traffic operations on DC-295 were restored to normal. The ultimate cause of the incident was the truck’s collision with the bridge deck while the hydraulic boom was raised. I am incredibly proud of the way the DDOT team responded and managed the removal of the downed bridge to ensure the timely reopening of the roadway before the morning rush hour.



Thanks to the commitment of Mayor Bowser to improving our infrastructure, the number of structurally deficient bridges in the District has been reduced by half since 2015. Bridges in the District are inspected once every two years by an external inspector against the National Bridge Inspection Standard (NBIS). A bridge's score ranges from zero (0) through nine (9), with zero meaning failed condition and nine meaning excellent condition. Though each inspection report contextualizes the rating, any bridge that is rated four (4) or below is generally considered poor or structurally deficient. A bridge inspection resulting in a grade of four (4) or lower triggers the capital planning process during which DDOT begins preparing for a comprehensive rehabilitation or replacement of the bridge in question. I want to be clear in this regard; a bridge receiving a four (4) during its regular inspection is still safe for pedestrians and vehicles to traverse. A grade of four (4), moreover, signals to DDOT that we must begin considering long-term solutions to replace the bridge.

As of today, only four (4) bridges—or just two percent (2%)—of the two hundred and thirty eight (238) vehicle and pedestrian bridges in the District's inventory have received a rating of four (4); no bridge in our inventory has a score lower. Upon completion of the new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge Project on October 1st, and the subsequent demolition of the old bridge, that number will be reduced to three (3), each slated for replacement or rehabilitation in the near



future. Those three remaining bridges are: 1) the ramp from Benning Road to Kenilworth Avenue NE, which will be replaced as part of the Benning Road Streetcar extension, 2) the H Street NE “Hopscotch” Bridge which DDOT is replacing and plans to solicit a contractor this summer for its design and construction, and 3) the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge whose rehabilitation is currently under design.

The Lane Place pedestrian bridge was inspected in April 2019 and received a rating of five (5). During its regular biennial inspection on May 25th of this year, the bridge received a rating of 4. As such, DDOT initiated the process for replacing the bridge and, two days later, on May 27th, DDOT implemented near-term safety recommendations included in the most recent inspection.

DDOT recognizes that this infrastructure serves as a vital connection for the residents of Kenilworth to the Deanwood Metro station and the District at-large. Therefore, we are committed to replacing the bridge as quickly as possible. The challenge, however, is that the bridge cannot be replaced in the same location and remain compliant with current standards. The Lane Place Bridge was built in 1956 and, therefore, had not met modern standards with regard to ADA accessibility and vertical clearances. The bridge also did not span the service roads, forcing pedestrians to cross the high-speed Kenilworth Avenue at a crosswalk. The bridge was grandfathered into compliance according to standards set by the Federal



Highway Administration until it was time to be replaced, as is the case for many of our nation's older bridges.

Replacing the bridge at the same location as the span that was struck on June 23, while complying with modern federal standards presents a host of challenges. These include the need to acquire additional land in order to accommodate a longer span and greater accessibility. Mayor Bowser, per her recent announcement, has expedited one and a half million dollars (\$1.5 Million) for DDOT to advance the design process for the new pedestrian bridge to replace the Lane Place Bridge. Mayor Bowser has also signed an emergency declaration as a necessary first step toward applying for federal emergency funds to support the replacement. DDOT is committed to working with the community to determine a strategy for replacing the bridge and restoring connectivity that will best serve Eastland Gardens and the surrounding communities in Deanwood and along Minnesota Avenue.

While we fast-track the design and construction for the replacement of the pedestrian bridge, we encourage residents to use the pedestrian bridge at Nash Street which is less than 1,000 feet north of the Lane Place bridge—as an alternative. At the direction of the Mayor, funding for the new Parkside Pedestrian Bridge near Hayes Street NE has been expedited allowing the bridge to open in September 2021 —two months ahead of schedule—which will provide a direct connection between the Minnesota Avenue Metro station and the Parkside/Mayfair



neighborhoods. DDOT will soon replace the existing Douglas Street Pedestrian Bridge, which is heavily used and provides access to the Deanwood Metro Station, with a brand new bridge. The project is in procurement, and DDOT plans to complete construction by Winter 2022. We appreciate the patience and support of the community as we work to improve and restore connectivity in this neighborhood.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter and I am happy to answer any question you may have.

