

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
*District Department of Transportation*



Public Hearing on  
B25-0283, the “Trick or Streets Amendment Act of 2023”  
B25-0258, the “Access to Home Amendment Act of 2023” and  
B25-0296, the “Prioritizing People in Planning Amendment Act of 2023”

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

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

Good morning, Chairperson Allen, members of the Committee, staff, and District residents. My name is Sharon Kershbaum, Interim Director of the District Department of Transportation, commonly referred to as DDOT. I am here today to present testimony on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser regarding the following bills:

- B25-0283, the “Trick or Streets Amendment Act of 2023”;
- B25-0258, the “Access to Home Amendment Act of 2023”; and
- B25-0296, the “Prioritizing People in Planning Amendment Act of 2023”.

I will go through each of these bills individually, focusing on any implementation concerns through the lens of safety, equity, and sustainability—three key goals as stated in DDOT’s long-range transportation plan, moveDC.

### **B25-0283, the “Trick or Street Amendment Act of 2023”**

I will start by discussing the “Trick or Streets Amendment Act of 2023”, which aims to increase safety for vulnerable road users. The bill would create a separate application for residents to request a street closure on Halloween.

DDOT supports efforts to keep children safe on our roadways, including closing streets to vehicular traffic to enable wide-spread pedestrian use. Presently, residents can apply for block party permits to close off their streets, through a very similar application process. Through modest adjustments to the block party permit requirements, DDOT can meet the intent of the bill without the procedural adjustments necessary to introduce a new permit category. Moreover, the proposed

adjustments can improve the delivery of block party permits for all residents seeking such approvals.

For example, the bill outlines a 12-hour maximum time limit and sets the ending time of 11 p.m. on Halloween. DDOT recommends remaining consistent with the existing block party parameters and setting an end time of 10 p.m.

Second, DDOT is very supportive of incorporating endorsement from Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) for permit applications, but has concerns about requiring only 25% of resident consent. DDOT suggests maintaining 51% of resident consent as currently required in the block party permit application, while adding ANC support as an alternative. ANC support in lieu of the residential support requirement can provide greater flexibility to the residents seeking a permit.

Finally, DDOT strongly opposes any permitting structure that relies on passive approval. This has the potential to create unnecessary confusion for the public, potential safety concerns, and coordination issues with our agency partners including public safety and transit coordination. However, DDOT can support reducing the current review period from 30 business days to 10 business days to allow for agency coordination and any additionally required notifications.

Rather than creating a new permit program, we would happily work with the Council to align current code that regulates block party permitting structures with

the desired outcomes of this bill. We believe this will streamline the permitting process, creating less confusion for the public, a faster permitting experience, and a standard, safe way to close local streets for any block parties, not just on Halloween.

### **B25-0258, the “Access to Home Amendment Act of 2023”**

Next, I will discuss the “Access to Home Amendment Act of 2023”, which aims to improve DDOT’s Residential Disability Permit Parking (RDPP) program. This program allows residents who meet certain criteria to have a dedicated curbside space to accessibly park their vehicle.

DDOT supports the overarching goal of this bill to enhance the safety and accessibility of homes for residents with disabilities and senior citizens. It is essential that the District fosters an inclusive environment where residents can continue to live in their homes and travel safely. DDOT also supports the provision that would expand the types of adaptations that are eligible under the Safe at Home Program, as it would enable individuals with off-street parking to utilize District resources geared toward making their own property safer and more accessible. We encourage the Council to also consider our colleagues at the Department of Aging and Community Living as you explore additional considerations to expand the Safe at Home program.

However, DDOT proposes changes to the provision that would add accessibility as an eligibility consideration. We ask that the accessibility provision be moved to a different section of the DCMR that would make accessibility a consideration on appeal rather than an eligibility criterion. DDOT believes that any accessibility review should be conducted by a well-constituted RDPP Appeals Committee that can better determine what accessibility considerations may be made. Adding accessibility as an *eligibility* criterion would require RDPP program staff to receive extensive training in order to conduct an accessibility review for any off-street parking available to the applicant.

DDOT welcomes efforts to make the RDPP program more accessible for our residents. We believe that this proposed change to the bill will help move that effort forward.

### **B25-0286, the “Prioritizing People in Planning Amendment Act of 2023”**

Lastly, I will address the “Prioritizing People in Planning Amendment Act of 2023”, which would prohibit the use of automobile delay, as defined by level of service, as a metric for transportation projects. It would also direct the Mayor to establish alternative metrics, including person throughput, generation of new automobile trips, and change in vehicle miles traveled.

DDOT shares the Council's goal to prioritize multimodal transportation, with an emphasis on safety and sustainability, over private vehicles. In fact, DDOT has already for many years de-emphasized automobile delay as a primary measure for project decision making. Our practice is to advance multimodal projects and road diets in a way that minimizes unnecessary negative impacts to all modes. Our engineers are guided by our moveDC strategy to develop custom guidelines that reflect the context of the District's built environment as well as DDOT's overarching goals and objectives.

However, fully removing the ability to evaluate automobile delay as a metric would prevent us from:

- (1) calculating tradeoffs between alternatives while maintaining overall goals;
- (2) determining signal timing at intersections and the downstream effects of any changes;
- (3) assessing traffic plans for new development and determining any appropriate changes to our traffic infrastructure; and
- (4) communicating potential traffic impacts to the community and key stakeholders.

The specific proposed metrics do not adequately serve as alternatives to automobile delay in these cases.

Ultimately, the potential challenge with automobile delay is not its existence as a metric, but rather how it is prioritized. DDOT already actively prioritizes and advances projects that aim to repurpose single-occupancy-vehicle traffic capacity to build facilities for other modes, such as bike, bus, and pedestrian travel. Creating these networks is a large part of our moveDC plan, and we are working to undo decades of car-centric infrastructure and planning.

### **Conclusion**

DDOT applauds the Council's focus on safe, equitable, and sustainable transportation networks in our city, which is shared by those at DDOT working hard every day to make this vision a reality across the District. We look forward to collaborating with the Council to share information and determine how we can most effectively implement our shared vision.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today. I am available to answer any questions that you may have.