

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of Transportation



Fiscal Year 2021 Performance Oversight Hearing

Testimony of

Everett Lott

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

Friday, February 18, 2022

12 P.M.

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment. My name is Everett Lott and I am the Director of the District Department of Transportation, commonly referred to as DDOT. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser in today's hearing on DDOT's performance in Fiscal Year 2021.

Throughout 2021, the District moved through the continued challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and toward recovery. Across District government, we were challenged to reinvent how we offered services, support our staff who faced continued impacts from the disease and encourage life-saving vaccinations. Fortunately, by the end of the year, we courageously returned to the workplace, students returned to schools, and for the first time, in a long while, we feel a renewed sense of hope for a bigger, brighter, healthier future.

In the midst of this time of tremendous challenges, DDOT facilitated an unprecedented level of community engagement to shape a full update of moveDC. In January 2022, Mayor Muriel Bowser approved the update, which establishes DDOT's 25-year vision for multimodal transportation through a goals-based strategic plan. MoveDC was originally developed in 2014, and this is DDOT's first update to the plan. We encourage residents to review this plan at

www.moveDC.dc.gov. After a year of notable accomplishments and meaningful milestones, nothing better highlights our agency's achievements in 2021 than the goals set out by this plan.

moveDC Goals

moveDC sets forth the following goals: (1) safety; (2) equity; (3) mobility; (4) Project Delivery; (5) Management and Operations; and (6) Sustainability and (7) Enjoyable Spaces. These goals inform and shape our policies and strategies and provide an overarching vision of what DDOT desires to achieve through the implementation of moveDC.

Safety

Our first goal in moveDC is intentionally safety. Our goal in every project we complete – be it small area paving, street design, or even major capital construction projects – is to focus on improving the safety of all roadway users. In 2021, we demonstrated this commitment through significant investments in safety, totaling more than \$39 million in safety-related mobility initiatives and streetscape redesigns. These projects included streets sign improvements, Vision Zero quick build installations, and design and construction of bike lanes and trails. We were

also able to improve our systems to respond to safety requests from our neighborhoods and businesses.

Nationwide we are experiencing the highest increase in traffic deaths since the 1940's. We were not insulated from this phenomenon in 2021, when 40 individuals tragically lost their lives in crashes on District streets. DDOT will continue our relentless pursuit of the Vision Zero goal - to reach zero fatalities and serious injuries to travelers of our transportation system through more effective use of data, education, enforcement, and engineering.

As we prepared for the 2021-2022 school year, DDOT conducted 36 comprehensive safety assessments around schools in all eight wards as part of our Safe Routes to School Program. More than 300 work orders were completed for safety improvements, with 50% located in Wards 7 and 8, where we see the greatest concentration of pedestrian injuries. Our plan is to continue these assessments each spring in preparation for the following school year.

Last summer, as part of the Vision Zero Summer Safety campaign, DDOT began rapid deployment of multi-modal safety improvements at more than 100 intersections across the District. These improvements included installing pedestrian flashers at 20 high pedestrian-risk intersections, driver feedback signs at more than 30 locations, and improvements at 25 of our High Crash Locations. DDOT will

continue this program to deploy rapid safety improvements at 100 intersections each year moving forward. Leading Pedestrian Intervals (or LPIs) are when signal timing is adjusted to allow pedestrians a head start compared to vehicle traffic when crossing an intersection. Our team has deployed LPIs at more than 900 intersections over the past four years, bringing the District-wide total to more than 1,100 intersections, approximately 80% of all eligible signals. Additionally, in response to feedback from the Multimodal Accessibility Advisory Council, we have also implemented 42 new modified signal timing treatments over the last year, bringing us to a total of 135 such treatments near senior centers across the District. These treatments extend the length of time pedestrians have to cross at an intersection—a small but important part of our commitment to making crossings safe for people of all ages and abilities.

DDOT recently streamlined the process for requesting traffic safety interventions and made an infusion of resources and system level changes in order to significantly improve our Traffic Safety Investigation (TSI) program. We can now more rapidly investigate, design, and deliver traffic safety improvements such as 347 speed humps and speed tables on local streets, and provide to the public a new public facing TSI Dashboard. Last year, the improved process allowed for the complete resolution of our TSI backlog – or requests that were outside of their 130-day service level agreement. DDOT closed 781 service requests that were

initiated in FY2017 through FY2020 and implemented 634 related work orders, in addition to the 2,400 TSIs that were received and closed during FY2021 and FY2022. This process has been supported by a realignment of engineering staff and contracting resources.

Notably, in our demonstrated commitment to safety, DDOT has continued to grow the Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) program by adding red light, speed, and stop sign cameras at more than 30 intersections since last summer. We now maintain a total of 132 ATE devices, including 41 red-light cameras, 83 speed cameras, 6 stop sign cameras, and 2 truck enforcement cameras. These newly deployed cameras issued 200,000 tickets in FY2021. This is an important tool for reminding drivers to obey the law, take responsibility for unsafe driving behavior, and improve roadway safety. Since these initial deployments we have continued to improve our ATE program. Today, every camera deployment includes a 30-day educational phase. During this period, violators receive warning citations before DDOT begins issuing notices of infraction with fines. We are also moving forward with a Request for Proposals for ATE that will align us with a best-in-class vendor to introduce bus lane enforcement and school-bus stop-arm enforcement. This partnership will also include upgrades using the latest technology for red light, speed, stop sign and truck enforcement.

Equity

The next goal of moveDC is equity. DDOT defines transportation equity as the shared and just distribution of benefits and burdens when planning for and investing in transportation infrastructure and services. In our comprehensive update to moveDC, DDOT made a public commitment to the principles of equity, establishing it as one of our seven goals. We have supported this goal by developing an equity statement and including equity in our mission statement. We recognize that in order to overcome existing disparities and achieve transportation equity, focused attention must be given to historically under-resourced communities. More importantly, we understand that our commitment to equity will not be measured in words, but in deeds.

Last fall, DDOT implemented an Equity Assessment Tool as part of our FY2023 budget formulation process to prioritize and score projects that promote transportation equity within the District. The assessment tool is a first step toward changing our agency's culture. It is our commitment that equity will be considered across our full portfolio by examining every project's proximity to frequent transit, access to jobs and destinations, safety risks, community engagement strategy, and environmental impact. As part of this assessment, all staff submitting budget requests were required to use our Equity Assessment Tool and provide the resulting equity score. This culture change will also be reinforced by a continued

commitment to recruit, hire and retain a diverse workforce and offer routine trainings about equity, cultural and linguistic competence, inclusive community engagement, and implicit bias.

DDOT also promotes equity with our On-the-Job Training and Disadvantage Business Enterprise (DBE) Programming. Last fall, DDOT hosted its annual DBE Summit and was able to connect with more than 400 DBE firms, providing them tools and resources to better access DDOT project opportunities. DDOT also promotes equity and diversity by conducting internal diversity and inclusion programming. In FY2021, the agency hired a new Equity and Accessibility Program Analyst to support the Agency's equity commitment and to enhance DDOT's American with Disabilities Act program.

It is essential that DDOT also commits to equity in how we engage DC residents and ensure all voices are heard. Last month, for example, I participated in a meeting organized by residents who wished to express their concerns about DDOT's process for selecting and installing bike lanes. To ensure that all views are considered, our staff work diligently to give all District residents the opportunity to express their thoughts about our projects. We incorporate this feedback to help reach our equity goals.

Mobility

Our next goal of mobility focuses on increased system reliability, improved accessibility, congestion management, and safe, affordable travel options—all factors in keeping our residents on the go.

In December 2021, we released the Bus Priority Plan. This plan outlines DDOT’s vision for bus priority and the importance of transit to District residents, workers, and visitors. The plan also provides an overview of the bus priority corridor network and project pipeline, which is DDOT’s plan for delivery of up to 51 bus priority projects, steered by the public input received through community engagement and the moveDC update process. In 2021, our teams constructed an upgraded design for the H and I Street NW bus lanes to further improve performance and operations; it is now substantially completed. We also completed construction of the shared protected bus and bike lanes on 14th Street NW and made refinements to the northbound Irving Street NW bus stop to improve access to the curb for buses. Studies of these projects have demonstrated improved average travel times of up to 10%, and on H and I Streets NW, improvements to delays over 2 minutes by 39% overall. These lanes are just the beginning of our work to install these 51 transformative projects to improve service and access.

Creating a connected and protected bike lane network is also an essential part of providing varied mobility options to District residents and the means to use them comfortably and consistently. In FY2021, DDOT constructed 7.5 miles of protected bike lanes and 2.5 miles of standard bike lanes as part of our “20x22” pledge to improve safety for all roadway users by building 20 miles of new protected bike lanes by the end of 2022. These bike lanes were constructed on routes that significantly contributed to the overall connectivity of the network, including 20th Street NW, 15th Street SW and Irving Street NW. There are currently 103 miles of bike lanes in the District, 24 of which are protected. Two important projects were also announced in 2021 to help support our mobility goal: the two-way cycle track on 9th Street NW which adds 1.6 miles of protected bike lanes, and the selection of a preferred redesign concept for Connecticut Avenue NW that removes the reversible rush hour lanes and adds protected bike lanes.

During 2021, DDOT also celebrated the 10th anniversary of goDCgo, a popular DDOT program focused on increasing awareness and building support for sustainable travel options. Since its launch, goDCgo has helped 313,000 people shift to a clean commute, decreased traffic by cutting 120 million single-occupancy vehicle trips, eliminated 357,000 tons of carbon dioxide from the air, and saved 82 million gallons of gasoline.

Project Delivery

Project delivery is the fourth goal of moveDC. Since the moveDC plan's inception in 2014, it has shaped DDOT's allocation of resources to advance the District's mobility goals. Advancing the District's mobility goals means delivering over twenty projects prioritized by the MoveDC plan which include L Street NW, 4th Street NE and Malcolm X Avenue SE. DDOT built upon this momentum in FY21, delivering projects like the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge, Irving Street NW, and the dedication of the first of three pedestrian bridge projects in Ward 7. It was truly a capstone year for DDOT and the District's pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.

Most notably, it was my pleasure to join Mayor Bowser and several Councilmembers for a two-day dedication event of the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge which brought more than 4,000 residents from across the District into a fully activated public space event. The bridge is part of the South Capitol Street Corridor Project, with work continuing to deconstruct the original bridge, complete traffic ovals at the base of the bridge and reconstruct the Suitland Parkway and Interstate 295 Interchange.

Last summer, DDOT announced plans to improve pedestrian accessibility across DC 295 in Ward 7, and in October 2021, we completed the new Parkside

Bridge; the first of a three-bridge construction effort that creates new, and rehabilitates existing, pedestrian bridges on the corridor. Construction of the Douglas Street Pedestrian Bridge has already started. Over the next three years, DDOT will complete this project and the replacement for the Lane Place Pedestrian Bridge, in order to improve connectivity and pedestrian access for residents in Mayfair, Parkside, Eastland Gardens, and the surrounding communities of Deanwood and Kenilworth.

Last year, we made significant progress on the Oregon Avenue NW Reconstruction project, which will improve roadways for multimodal transportation and create a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists. This project will be completed in the coming months, and includes a new bridge over Pinehurst Run, new sidewalks and new streetlights.

In FY2021, DDOT also began construction for the rehabilitation of the Rock Creek Park Trail and new pedestrian bridge. DDOT in collaboration with National Park Service will rehabilitate and construct more than 3.7 miles of the paved, multi-use trail. A key feature of the project is a new 110-foot pedestrian bridge just south of the existing Beach Drive tunnel near the Smithsonian National Zoo. Stages 1, 4, 6, 7a, and 7b of the Rock Creek Park Multi-Use Rehabilitation Project are complete and open to the public. We anticipate completing the remaining stages in Spring 2023.

Management & Operations

The next goal of moveDC is management and operations. Maintaining a state of good repair is an essential part of DDOT's daily operations. In 2021, we repaired more than 15,000 different streetlights. As a part of our PaveDC plan, DDOT repaved 88 miles of roadway, 30 miles of sidewalks, and refreshed 30 miles of roadway markings, including those near 23 schools. Our teams also resurfaced 171 alleys, the most in one year since DDOT's Alleypalooza program kicked off in 2015, and this coming year we will surpass 1,000 total alleys resurfaced. In fact, our Asset Management team was recently recognized as a 2021 Cafritz Foundation Award winner for the innovations and sustainable impact that our PaveDC plan has had on the quality of our roadways.

2022 is going to be a landmark year for DDOT, as we'll be celebrating our 20th anniversary. Last year, two of DDOT's most visible services also celebrated meaningful anniversaries. The DC Streetcar celebrated its fifth year in operation, having carried more than 4.4 million passengers to destinations between Union Station and Langston Golf Course and the Fields at RFK since opening in 2016. The Benning Road Streetcar Extension and Reconstruction Project reached the 90% design phase, with construction anticipated to begin next year, bringing DC Streetcar connectivity to even more District residents.

In 2021, the DC Circulator celebrated 16 years of service, and based on feedback from the community, a new proposed route was selected for the return of service to Ward 7. The new fourteen-and-a-half-mile route, which will launch in 2023, will supplement the essential east/west connection between Ward 6 and Ward 7. The route will serve Deanwood, Benning Road, Stadium Armory, and Union Station Metrorail stations.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the sixth goal of moveDC. Much of DDOT's work focuses on increasing and improving ways of getting around the District that are more sustainable. The DC Streetcar, DC Circulator, and Capital Bikeshare provide transportation alternatives to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips and emissions. Since 2015, DDOT has upgraded over half of the Circulator fleet to state-of-the-art 100% electric vehicles, and by 2030 the full fleet will consist entirely of buses that run solely on clean energy. Capital Bikeshare now has a fleet of 1,000 e-bikes, which help riders replace longer trips that they may have otherwise completed using a vehicle. The growing network of bike lanes also makes these trips safer and more convenient.

The District's tree canopy is also an essential part of DDOT's sustainability goals. Last year, the Urban Forestry Division planted more than 8,300 new trees across the District, concentrating its efforts in specific areas of Wards 4, 5, 7 and 8. At the conclusion of the 2021 planting season, the total number of trees in the District grew to more than 172,000 and 98% of treeboxes are now filled. This is the greatest stocking level to date for the District's planting spaces, a historic achievement that ensures enjoyable and sustainable public spaces.

DDOT capital improvement projects often include green infrastructure to meet stormwater regulations. The amount of green infrastructure within a project varies depending on site conditions and the size of project. Example projects with large green infrastructure components include the South Capitol Street Bridge, I-295/Malcolm X Interchange, and the reconstruction of Oregon Avenue.

DDOT has a variety of other initiatives that incorporate green infrastructure. To date, DDOT has installed more than 50,000 square feet of green alleys, and we are developing Green Alley Standardized Designs that will provide a standard approach to reduce costs and decrease construction time. We have also completed more than 55,000 square feet in additional retrofit projects to replace standard streetscapes with green infrastructure facilities in the last four years.

Enjoyable Spaces

The final goal of moveDC is enjoyable spaces. Throughout 2021, DDOT continued to improve and reimagine the public space to make it more enjoyable for the District's residents and visitors.

DDOT completed construction of Phase 1 of the District's permanent Black Lives Matter Plaza monument at 16th Street between K Street and H Street NW. The project includes: colorful pavers used for the roadway surface instead of traditional asphalt; a bright yellow "BLACK LIVES MATTER" mural; and a fourteen-foot Center Pedestrian Plaza with cobble stone pavement, lighted bollards and refreshed crosswalk markings. Phase 2 will create a more cohesive public space around the monument by reconstructing nearby sidewalks, installing commemorative works, and adding new benches, lighting, signage, and street trees in the coming months.

Open Streets returned to Georgia Avenue NW on October 2nd, 2021– the first in a series of Open Streets events across all eight wards to be held through 2022. During the event, the District closed three miles of Georgia Avenue, between Barry Place NW and Missouri Avenue NW, to cars. The corridor was open to thousands of residents and visitors to walk, bike, run, and scooter through, with opportunities to support local businesses and participate in a range of activities.

Our Arts in the Right-of-Way (AROW) program facilitates art in the public right-of-way, such as bike racks, utility boxes, and pedestrian areas. In FY2021, AROW developed a strategic plan to guide its growth and streamline the public space permitting process. In addition, we successfully piloted a partnership with the Commission on the Arts and Humanities to install curb extension murals by five District artists. DDOT installed three rainbow intersection treatments on 17th Street NW and seven curb extension murals as part of the Near Northwest III Safety and Mobility Study. We also approved permits for six arts projects in partnership with neighborhood Business Improvement Districts and community associations.

DDOT also continued its successful streatory program, allowing businesses to expand their service in the public space to allow for a safe and enjoyable outdoor dining experience, benefiting both local businesses and their patrons. DDOT has played an important role in the District's reopening, having permitted 158 streateries in Fiscal Year 2021. A survey of restaurants that participated in the program showed that respondents reported an average increase in revenue of 34%, and 89% expressed overwhelming support for a permanent DDOT streatory program, demonstrating the success and popularity of this innovative reimagining of the public space.

Conclusion

Going into 2022, DDOT's 20th anniversary year, we have much to celebrate. DC Streetcar has provided millions of rides and will see millions more as we extend it eastward. We have plans to expand DC Circulator and Capital Bikeshare, two mobility options that District residents and visitors love. We have completed historic projects in the last year, like the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge and an unprecedented number of protected bike lanes. We also have much to look forward to, such as improvements to the intersection of Florida and New York Avenues NE and more pedestrian bridges coming to DC 295, both of which will help better connect the District's vibrant communities.

Throughout these past two decades, our agency served the residents of the District daily, providing programs and services that deliver a safe, sustainable, and reliable multimodal transportation network. We are positioning our communities for the future and supporting our return to work, school and play. In the same way, the goals of moveDC reflect the work that we do at DDOT every day to prioritize Safety, Equity, Mobility, Project Delivery, Management and Operations, Sustainability, and Enjoyable Spaces. This year, and in the full 25 years envisioned by the moveDC strategic plan, DDOT will continue to make progress towards these important goals.

I would like to end my testimony today by recognizing Chairperson Cheh, who has recently announced she will be departing from Council. Your commitment to public service, transportation issues, and the residents of Ward 3 has helped DDOT and the District achieve a great deal during your tenure. I would like to personally wish you the very best in your next endeavors. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the work DDOT has done, and I look forward to answering any questions.