

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Transportation



Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Everett Lott
Director

Before the
Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Council of the District of Columbia
The Honorable Charles Allen, Chairperson

John A. Wilson Building
Room 123
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

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9:30 A.M.

Slide 1

- Chairperson Allen 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.
- I am joined by Kyle Scott, our acting Chief Administrative Officer.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser on DDOT's Fiscal Year 2024 "Fair Shot" budget.

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- I want to start with the District's award winning 25-year strategic plan, [moveDC](#).
- This budget is built on the framework of our moveDC goals, which are: safety, equity, mobility, project delivery, management and operations, sustainability, and enjoyable spaces.

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- As reported, the February CFO forecast showed a drop in revenues of more than \$390 million. With the District's resources shrinking and fixed costs increasing, Mayor Bowser has focused on building a sustainable and resilient budget.
- In order to execute this sustainable plan, DDOT reviewed its budget carefully and had to make difficult decisions. We ultimately ended up with reductions to our Circulator program, our staffing levels, and contractual spending.
- The budget reduces the size of our Circulator Program from six routes to three. The planned remaining three routes are:
 - Union Station to Georgetown, which was selected due it being our highest ridership route;
 - The Congress Heights to Union Station route will continue services east of the river; and
 - The National Mall Route due to our agreement with National Park Service.
 - In addition to the Circulator program change, DDOT eliminated 47.2 vacant FTEs, which were selected due to the following criteria: existing vacancy status; status of recruitment; and business need.
- I would also like to provide assurances to participants in the Adult Learners program. The program is not being eliminated. Mayor Bowser has only transferred the resources for the

program from DDOT's budget to the District's WMATA budget, where it can be absorbed in our Kids Ride Free program.

- Despite these reductions, DDOT's FY 24 operating budget continues our commitment to safety in the District's road network and expanding the availability of our transportation options by providing \$5.8M to Capital Bikeshare for system expansion costs.

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- The reduction of routes in our Circulator program was a difficult decision to make, but due to known increased costs to operate the program it was necessary.
- For the eliminated routes, we believe there are alternative transit options and some redundancy along these corridors.
- DDOT will continue to advance the South Capitol Street Facility for Circulator for construction.
- We will also stay the course with our fleet acquisition schedule to meet our 2030 electrification sustainability goal.
- It should be noted that a smaller operating fleet will allow DDOT to electrify its vehicles faster.

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Mayor Bowser is continuing investments of local resources in DDOT's capital program to address major transportation initiatives such as the completion of the H Street Bridge and Benning Road Streetcar Extension.

- Our capital budget makes a \$1.9 billion investment in our transportation infrastructure over the 6-year plan.
- The plan will continue to address our most dangerous corridors known as our High Injury Network.
- The budget also includes complementary safety investments such as our Traffic Safety Input Program (TSI) 2.0, Safety Infrastructure Around Schools, and vision zero asset hardening.

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- With forecasted local revenue reductions, it is critical that the District seek out other funding strategies to deliver our planned programs and activities.

- Since the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (commonly referred to as “The BIL”), was enacted, DDOT has proactively pursued discretionary grant opportunities that align with our long-range transportation plan, moveDC.
- To date the District has been awarded \$35 million in discretionary grant funds, including two RAISE grants for Benning Road Bridges and South Capitol Street Trail.
- We also have \$194.1 million in pending grant applications that we hope to win, including Safety and Mobility focused projects on Wheeler Road and East Capitol Street.
- Moving forward, we will continue to seek out and apply for discretionary opportunities as they become available.

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- The Mayor's budget continues to make historic investments allowing DDOT to take immediate action to address transportation safety issues.

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- Even in these uncertain financial times, the budget underscores our commitment to safety in the District’s transportation network and especially for our most vulnerable users-- children and pedestrians.
- The budget will allow DDOT to maintain its current School Crossing Guard and Traffic Safety Officer deployment levels.
- More specifically, DDOT will continue to be able to cover all schools that have submitted requests with at least one School Crossing Guard.

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- Something we have tried to communicate broadly is that speed is often the most significant factor in traffic deaths and serious injuries.
- One of the tools in our toolbox is to reduce speeds through enforcement.
- In recent years, the Mayor and Council have provided significant resources for traffic safety enforcement through the funding of DDOT’s Automated Traffic Enforcement program (the ATE program).
- This budget will sustain that investment and will create an expanded enforcement network and will ultimately improve driver behavior and safety outcomes.

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DDOT remains committed to delivering and maintaining our low-cost and high-impact safety improvements across the District.

The Mayor's budget includes:

- **\$9.7** million for Vision Zero quick build intersection safety improvements, asset hardening for curbs and medians in FY24;
- **\$30** million across the 6-year plan for dedicated funding for the Traffic Safety Inputs program.
- **\$36** million to expand the District's **bikeways** network by 10 miles a year over the next 6 years;
- And **\$22 million** for safety infrastructure around schools.

On top of these initiatives, the Mayor's budget also adds \$7 million in FY23 funding to make immediate investments in safety infrastructure around schools and delivering on Traffic Safety Inputs.

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- It is critical for DDOT to have resources for our quick-build, high-impact safety improvements.
- These treatments include flex-posts (or delineators) and pavement markings that have significant positive outcomes in managing user behaviors.
- The hardening and maintenance of these quick-build assets are vital to ensuring long-term safety outcomes for users of the public right-of-way.
- DDOT is committed to making permanent, many of those quick build projects that have shown to improve user safety.

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- Over the last year, DDOT has made considerable improvements to our Traffic Safety Inputs program, commonly referred to as our TSI 2.0 program.
- Most notably, we have delivered more safety improvements faster than ever.
- We have also made it easier for residents to submit and track inputs through our streamlined 311 form and public-facing dashboard.

- Despite these successes, DDOT has never had dedicated funding to support the execution of the TSI program. In order to deliver this improved program, DDOT has had to divert resources from other projects.
- The \$5 million a year in dedicated funding will allow DDOT to sustain our current progress and allow us to focus on high-crash locations with other planned resources.
- With dedicated funding and revised strategy for evaluating requests, DDOT will be able to provide greater equity to areas in the District that have greater safety needs.

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- As I have mentioned before, pedestrians and cyclists, especially children, are some of our most vulnerable users of our transportation network.
- This budget maintains the FY23 funding levels for the development of roughly 30 school action plans a year and provides the construction funding necessary to deliver corresponding recommendations.
- The budget also includes local and federal resources totaling \$4 million a year for sidewalk gap construction to provide safe routes to school.

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- Mayor Bowser remains committed to addressing our most dangerous intersections and corridors.
- In 2022, DDOT updated its methodology for the High Injury Network which expanded the number of corridors from 15 to 29.
- DDOT will deliver a variety of safety projects along portions of the HIN corridors within the six-year plan.
- The FY24-29 budget provides \$261M for streetscapes which represents a \$52M increase compared to the current budget.

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- Equity is a consideration in every project and program we have put forward today—only through a persistent focus on equity will we ensure our investments in transportation benefit all.

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- Historically, many transportation policies and projects did not consider equitable benefits and burdens.
- To ensure DDOT's projects, programs and services prioritize equity, DDOT developed an internal assessment tool to ensure equity is built into the decision-making process.
- DDOT implemented the first iteration of its Equity Assessment Tool during the FY23 budget formulation period.
- The Equity Assessment Tool was refined for the FY24 budget formulation period to encourage staff to consider how their project improved the safety, accessibility, and mobility of residents – especially those in areas with greater transportation need (shown on this slide).
- All budget requests in FY24 were required to have an equity score from the Equity Assessment Tool to ensure public investments in transportation justly benefit all residents.

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- DDOT is proud of our mobility goal to increase system reliability, improve accessibility, while providing safe and affordable travel choices for all users and trips.

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- Mayor Bowser's budget sustains the District's investments in improving bus service by investing \$114 million over six years to deliver on 51 bus priority projects across all eight wards.
- Seven of these projects were already funded and the balance—44 projects—are funded with the new budget.
- Bus Priority projects complement the District's investments in Metrobus service and will improve average speeds for 122 routes serving approximately 60% of bus riders and 79% of job locations in the District.
- Recent accomplishments include 16th Street NW, and Minnesota Avenue SE and DDOT is looking forward to the delivery of Pennsylvania Avenue SE among other projects.

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- Mayor Bowser's budget continues the momentum we have made in delivering bicycle lanes across the District, with a \$35.5 million investment over the new budget.

- In addition to completing new lanes and making critical connections, DDOT is also working on hardening existing facilities to make them safer.
- moveDC has set an annual goal of 5 new miles per year, but the Mayor and Council have challenged DDOT to deliver 10 miles of bikeways per year—this includes protected bike lines and trails. The Mayor’s budget supports this level of delivery.

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- The FY24 budget is making key investments in 12 trail projects across the District—especially for those projects that improve access to underserved neighborhoods and destinations.
- For example, the Mayor’s supplemental budget is adding construction funding to realize the new Arboretum Bridge and Trail project—connecting the Anacostia River Trail to the US National Arboretum.
- In FY24 and beyond, DDOT plans to make much needed connections to the Anacostia River Trail, Metropolitan Branch Trail, Capital Crescent Trail and rehabilitate the Suitland Parkway Trail among other investments.

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- Capital Bikeshare (CaBi) is DDOT’s most popular and cost-effective transit offering—in fact, we just had our third-highest ridership day on March 26th!
- Mayor Bowser’s budget supports CaBi by restoring a \$5.8 million cut to the program’s operating budget in FY23 and making an additional \$15 million investment in new bicycles and stations over the next six years.
- Among the investments, perhaps the most visible is the new fleet of e-bikes which—as you know from personal experience, Mr. Chairman, are both user friendly and safer for riders.

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- As a part of our Project Delivery Goals, DDOT is committed to completing projects on-time and on-budget while engaging and communicating with the community.

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- The rebuild and replacement of the H Street Bridge will better serve the transportation needs of the community as well as the region overall.

- DDOT and the District's Office of Contracting and Procurement are working closely to prepare the design-build solicitation. We have short-listed qualified teams to deliver this project.
- This project is the foundation of the modernization and redevelopment of the area around Union Station.

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- The Theodore Roosevelt Bridge project is currently in final design and we hope to advertise in FY23.
- As you may recall, in FY22, the bridge had load restrictions and lane closures while emergency repairs were performed.
- Due to the deteriorating condition of the bridge, the scope of the project has changed from replacing portions of the deck to replacing the entirety of the deck.
- We hope to advance the construction procurement in FY23.

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- Another one of DDOT's major projects is the building of the Benning Road Streetcar as part of the Benning Bridges and Transportation Improvements project.
- The project encapsulates all of DDOT's moveDC goals, especially equity and safety.
- Mayor Bowser's budget provides \$310 million for construction of this corridor-changing project.
- It's scheduled to be advertised for construction in early calendar year 2024.

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- Another signature project, the K Street Transitway, will reconfigure one of the District's major east-west corridors to include dedicated bus lanes, improve pedestrian circulation, and improving curbside access.
- This project is essential to the District's Comeback Plan as it represents a major change in a streetscape that goes through the heart of downtown.
- As the project has approached 100% design, DDOT has worked with stakeholders to deliver a project that provides significant improvements to all users:
 - Transit riders get improved average speeds on Metrobus and Circulator;

- Cyclists will benefit from a protected bike lane on L Street NW; and
- Businesses and property owners will have improved curbside access along the corridor.
- DDOT will work closely with our partners, including the Golden Triangle BID, Downtown BID, DC Sustainable Transportation, Washington Area Bicyclist Association, property owners, and the various advocates to update the design and advertise the project for construction in 2023.

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- Through our management and operations goal, DDOT will ensure a state of good repair for our existing assets.

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- Mayor Bowser is committed to improving all eligible roadways, alleys, and sidewalks in poor condition in Washington, DC by 2024 through the PaveDC initiative.
- This budget allocates over \$415.4 million over the six-year period to eliminate poor condition assets within the plan.

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- DDOT's sustainability goal includes funding to reduce emissions and strengthen resilience in the face of climate change, especially in historically under-resourced communities.

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- Mayor Bowser is ensuring the growth and maintenance of the District's tree canopy—now at over 185,000 street trees—with an investment of \$50.8 million over six years.
- With added funding from the Tree Fund and local sources, DDOT has been able to plant more than 8,000 street trees per year.
- Further, DDOT has been able to expand the planting program to parks and schools in a partnership with the Department of Energy and Environment.

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- Our moveDC goal for enjoyable spaces requires that DDOT-managed public spaces must be accessible, safe, and welcoming to residents and visitors.

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- The 11th Street Bridge Park project is a partnership with a local non-profit to build a new park on the piers of the old 11th Street Bridge crossing the Anacostia River.
- The Mayor's budget provides \$42.2 million to build another signature bridge and destination that spans the Anacostia River.
- The final design is complete, and DDOT is working with the organization Building Bridges Across the River to prepare the construction solicitation.

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- The budget demonstrates our commitment to reimagining and mobilizing our public space by continuing funding for the Open Streets program.
- The budget also provides funding to support community investments by allocating \$750 thousand for safety and aesthetic upgrades to streateries throughout the District.

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- Formulation of the FY24 budget represented a challenge for the District. As a government, we were forced to make more with less.
- Despite the difficult decisions that we had to make, DDOT is continuing to make historic investments in safety and is focused on achieving a state of good repair for the benefit of everyone in the District.
- Additionally, this budget allows DDOT to achieve our ambitious moveDC goals that put the District of Columbia in a league of its own when it comes to our innovative transportation network.
- I want to thank Mayor Bowser, the members of the Council and this committee for all the support you have provided DDOT.
- I am happy to answer any questions members of the committee may have.