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March 29, 2023

Budget testimony: Department of For-Hire Vehicles

Good morning. My name is Alex Baca and I am testifying on behalf of Greater Greater Washington, where I serve as D.C. policy director.

We feel that duties of the Department of For-Hire Vehicles are far too sprawling. Given the FY24 *austerity* budget, it's reasonable to consider some rightsizing for DFHV. More critical than budgetary woes, however, is that the programs DFHV administers don't fit well together.

While I think this is not so much the fault of the agency itself as it is circumstantial—the previous committee that had oversight of DFHV did not give it the dignity of oversight hearings!—it *does* mean that DFHV is not exactly “protect[ing] public interest by regulating the vehicle-for-hire industry to allow the residents and visitors of the District of Columbia to have safe, affordable, and accessible transportation options.”

I spoke to this in my oversight testimony on DFHV last month, when I requested that the District take on regulatory authority over transportation network companies, so that TNCs like Uber and Lyft can be subject to the same laws as D.C. taxis. I'm bringing this up today because I'd like the committee to consider instituting a surcharge for taxi and TNC trips when there is high demand, either during a particular time of day, in a certain geography, or a combination of both factors. This would necessarily require DFHV to have regulatory power over TNCs.

A surcharge would both raise revenue and begin to demonstrate the value of demand management for trips made by car into areas of high demand, or at times of peak travel. As you know, Councilmember Nadeau, GGWash has repeatedly asked the District to implement a road-pricing program; we are grateful for the attention that you've paid to this concept, and thank you for your questions of the executive at last Friday's Committee of the Whole meeting. Managing the demand for road space and charging those who travel by car for the temporal and environmental externalities they inflict upon others is critical to meeting the District's own goals,¹

¹ The 2014 moveDC plan states, “The moveDC vehicular network for the Downtown planning area includes a downtown congestion pricing cordon around the Central Employment Area;” the 2021 update to moveDC includes a recommendation to “implement congestion management tools to support accessible, reliable, sustainable, efficient, and affordable movement throughout the District.” A similar requirement is in the [2019 Resilient D.C. plan](#): “Study congestion dynamic mobility pricing and how that funding could be dedicated for new transportation infrastructure and subsidies.”

These plans also call, if not for an explicit reduction in single-occupancy vehicle trips, for goals that are incumbent upon fewer single-occupancy vehicle trips: “By 2032, increasing use of public transit to 50 percent of all commuter trips in all wards, from 40.5 percent; increasing use of biking and walking to 30

and even a small surcharge for taxi and TNC trips taken into high-demand areas, particularly at high-demand times, would advance the concept.

I understand that DFHV is already considering ways to manage and regulate curb space beyond taxi stands. Demand-management for taxi and TNC trips is a necessary extension of curb-space management, and GGWash is supportive of reallocating the time, energy, and funding that DFHV currently applies to specialized programs to such efforts.

Thank you,
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For reference:

- [GGWash's FY23 oversight testimony for DFHV and DPW \(Feb. 15, 2023\)](#)

percent of all commuter trips in all wards, from 16.8 percent, and *reducing commuter trips made by car to 25 percent*, from 42.7 percent ([Sustainable D.C. 2.0](#)); “make transportation cheaper, faster, and more convenient and people-centered” (Resilient D.C.); and zero traffic deaths by 2024, er, well, by some indeterminate point, now ([Vision Zero](#)).