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March 30, 2023

Budget testimony: District Department of Transportation

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

We are pleased to see that the District Department of Transportation's bus priority and protected bike lane programs and plans are funded in FY24. We've also been glad to see signals from the administration that it is, perhaps, interested in releasing a report on road pricing, which the D.C. Council funded in FY2019 for release in July 2020. We're grateful to the council for continuing to ask the agency and the administration questions about the whereabouts of the report, and for discussing the environmental and fiscal benefits of charging drivers for the externalities that they inflict upon others. We look forward to working with DDOT and with the Committee on Transportation and the Environment to update the report to reflect post-covid travel patterns. We anticipate this will cost between \$50,000 and \$75,000, and take no longer than six months.

GGWash's top priority for the FY24 budget is to see Metro for D.C. funded. In future years, revenue from a road-pricing program, estimated to generate \$90 to \$500 million annually, could support Metrobus' operations and expansion. In the meantime, we support the committee in examining any and all options within its purview to fund Metro for D.C.

We are gravely disappointed that the executive chose to reallocate projected revenue from automated traffic cameras from funding road-safety and transportation improvements, per [D.C. Code § 50-921.20](#), to general revenue. Yes, it is true that the revenue from ATE cameras was not certified until FY22, and thus not *technically* in a special-purpose revenue fund—because the executive swept it before it could be. Using ATE revenue to close the District's budget gap, rather than transportation and road-safety improvements, confirms the popular notion about cameras: that they're a cash grab to be protested. Morally, this sucks, because the District is banking on people breaking its own laws to pay for the services it provides. I don't have an answer for how to disentangle ATE from general revenue at this point; perhaps what's done is done, at least for FY24. Nonetheless, we're happy to support the committee, and the full council, in ensuring that the road-safety and transportation improvements mandated by the Vision Zero omnibus and subsequent bills are funded, ideally with a special-purpose revenue fund.

Lastly, we would like DDOT to get its money's worth out of projects, which are, ostensibly, supposed to advance the District's own sustainability, mobility, and resiliency goals. Instead, the agency has added travel and parking lanes for cars and their drivers to plans for streets previously were designed as car-free (7th Street NW), has shrank bike lanes to a width that I

think is in violation of its own design standards (Connecticut Avenue NW), and is entertaining the possibility of replacing bike lanes with parking (K Street transitway). Its proposed streetscape reconstructions do not correspond with the high-injury network identified in the Vision Zero plan update. I cannot in good conscience support tearing up streets to build a more expensive version of what they already are.

To close, I spent a really pleasant evening last night at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, where, with the Dutch Cycling Embassy, we screened a film about the Netherlands' built environment, which enables cycling to the extent that it's utterly normal. This was scheduled in conjunction with a three-day workshop that DDOT employees are attending with international experts in roadway design. It was a really nice night: I got to see many friends of mine, and of GGWash; elected officials, including some Ward 3 ANC commissioners; and DDOT staff, who I know are truly committed to ensuring that it's safe, easy, and desirable for District residents to travel in ways other than driving, which is, at this point, a fiscal and environmental imperative. I am grateful for their work in a setting that often doesn't support it.

Thank you,
Alex

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For reference:

- [GGWash DDOT oversight testimony](#) (Feb. 27, 2023)