



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

Testimony before
the Honorable Tommy Wells, Chairman
Committee on Public Works and Transportation
of the District of Columbia, regarding:

DDOT Oversight Hearing

By Cheryl Cort, Policy Director
February 28, 2011

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a regional nonprofit organization focused on ensuring transportation and development decisions accommodate growth while revitalizing communities, providing more housing and travel choices, and conserving our natural and historic areas.

Over the last few years, DDOT has tremendously progressed as an agency. Beginning with the formation of DDOT under Dan Tangherlini in the Williams Administration, the Department is evolving into a 21st century agency addressing the problems and needs of a growing, multimodal city. Rather than being stuck in an old mindset that focused on speeding cars in and out of downtown and through our neighborhoods, DDOT has worked to build a more robust, multimodal transportation network that includes not only motor vehicles, but better transit, safer walking, innovative bicycle facilities, carsharing, and Capital Bikeshare in all 8 wards of the city. DDOT has also made advances in transportation demand management (TDM) and parking management. Over the last few years, we have made great progress towards a city that offers better and safer transportation choices, and travel options that reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. We applaud this progress and look forward to working with the Gray Administration and this Council to take our transportation system to sustain these gains and advance to the next level.

In recently years, DDOT has significantly improved its performance on pedestrian issues. The 2009 Pedestrian Master Plan is a benchmark of that progress. We urge continued and increased attention in all transportation decisions to increase pedestrian access and safety. The city has also greatly expanded its attention to the important mode of bicycling. Bicycling is a fast, convenient, affordable, and healthy way to travel. It holds great promise for many D.C. residents, especially moderate and low income residents. A key challenge that DDOT has begun to work on is getting better bicycling opportunities into neighborhoods outside the core and into Wards 7, 8, 5, 4, and 3.

DDOT's neighborhood livability studies, especially the Far North East study, can offer an important blueprint to creating great neighborhoods with better transportation choices and less dangerous traffic. We also look forward to full implementation of the Great Streets plans for key commercial streets such as Minnesota Avenue, Pennsylvania SE, and Georgia Avenue. Much more needs to be done, but we believe the next DDOT Director can build on the momentum of the last two administrations to use innovative approaches to transportation to spur increased economic development, improved safety and access, and enhanced neighborhood livability.

We are encouraged by DDOT's collaboration with WMATA on bus priority corridors but believe that DDOT needs to do more to prioritize bus movements on major transit corridors. We urge the city to move to a new level of commitment in providing efficient, high-quality bus service by implementing an enforced dedicated bus lane during rush hour on 16th Street, and downtown rush period bus lanes proposed for the Benning-H Street bus corridor. Given WMATA's funding challenges, making more efficient use of high ridership bus corridors should be a priority. This means creating enforceable bus lanes, queue jumpers, signal priority and sped-up passenger boarding. D.C. has a great opportunity to lead the region in dedicated transit-lanes that can speed up bus service, delivering better service for more people for less cost.

Improving neighborhood bus service also remains critical, especially in areas where residents rely most heavily on bus service. In parts of Wards 8 and 7, residents depend on bus service more than many other areas and deserve added attention. A set of neighborhood bus line improvements have been outlined for Ward 7 and should be considered for additional funding as funds become available.

WMATA's current operating budget shortfall requires strong commitment by all its member jurisdictions. We ask that D.C. commit to doing its part to avoid devastating service cuts by providing the funds needed to balance the WMATA budget. We recognize these are difficult budgetary times, but transit service is an essential service that supports the economy and is important to the success of D.C. businesses, workers, along with our many residents with limited access to private vehicles. We ask that D.C. budget the estimated \$23.5 million needed for its share of an additional contribution to ensure that WMATA can avoid harmful service cuts, including reductions to late night service. Saving transit service should be a top priority of the transportation budget.

Thank you for your consideration.