



Testimony before the

Hon. Mary M. Cheh,  
Chair, Committee on the Environment and Transportation

Regarding the Performance Oversight Hearing of DDOT

By Cheryl Cort, Policy Director  
March 17, 2014

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG). The Coalition for Smarter Growth is the leading organization working locally in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

We want to commend the committee and the Mayor for the advances we are making in transportation to ensure that our streets, transit, walk and bicycling facilities help make our city a healthier, safer, more sustainable, and more attractive place to live and work. New services and improvements to offer better access and travel choices such as expanded Capital Bike Share, sped up limited-stop bus service, routine curb extensions in streetscape designs, extensive use of leading pedestrian intervals – demonstrate there is much to commend about the advances we have made in just a few years. Given the tremendous growth our city is experiencing, it's clear that we cannot accommodate this growth unless we continue to increase the attractiveness of alternatives to driving and car ownership. Our city's growth and vibrancy cannot be predicated on how many more cars it can jam onto its already congested roads.

### **MoveDC advances an exciting vision for a thriving city**

We are excited to move into the next phase of the MoveDC process, the effort to create our city's next long range transportation plan. I serve on the advisory committee and am impressed with the level of public outreach and engagement, and the thoughtful analysis and progressive vision that has gone into the process. The MoveDC effort has been going on for more than a year, and is now in the last phase of putting together a draft plan. We are eager to see the pieces put together and look forward to the discussion around it. We strongly support the role that the goals of Sustainable DC play in shaping our city's long range transportation plan.

While DDOT has been moving in the right direction, there is much left to do. We agree with our friends at WABA that the city needs to make good on its stated support for a **Vision Zero** policy – that no one is killed or seriously injured by traffic. This means reassessing everything about the design and operations of our transportation system, and prioritizing pedestrians and bicyclists, our most vulnerable users. We ask for full funding and policy commitment to implementing the backlog of needed sidewalk repairs and construction, and street and intersection redesigns to slow traffic and support safer crossing, as recommended in the Livability studies and the Pedestrian Master Plan.

## **Protected bicycle lanes offer a lifetime of healthy travel habits**

MoveDC's draft proposed expansion of protected bicycle lanes is a key component of a healthier, safer, and more accessible DC. Protected bicycle lanes mean that the most vulnerable and risk-averse users – like my toddler, and my 75 year old neighbor – are able to ride with comfort. Europe has made incredible strides in this area – starting from a similarly automobile-dominated transportation system – with the pedestrian and bicyclist deaths that go with it – to a broadly embraced cycling culture as a major form of transportation for all ages, including seniors. In the Netherlands, 24% of all trips by seniors are taken by bicycle. The phenomenon is due to policy and funding commitments for a safe bicycle infrastructure that allows riders of all ages to feel comfortable. With the rise of an intentional policy of investing in safe bicycling facilities, deaths and injuries steeply declined, and are a fraction of the rate for US cyclists. Given the quick rise in bicycling among DC residents (bicycling increased by 2.5 times over a decade to claim 3.5% of the overall commute share), we have the opportunity to invest in the bicycle infrastructure that can offer a lifetime of healthy travel habits for every stage of our lives.

## **Implement bus priority corridors now; Reconsider purpose of Circulator service**

MoveDC creates an exciting framework around critical bus priority corridor plans that have been in the works for several years. Following these priority corridor studies for the lines that carry the most riders, WMATA has made many improvements to its service including limited stop service, such as the new 79, X9, S9, 39 routes. WMATA improvement should be pursued is off-board fare collection and all door boarding given how much delay is caused by boarding.

We are still waiting for DDOT and the Council to support other limited stop service such as the proposed cross-town 99 route serving U St NW to Anacostia, and terminating at Dupont – a big missing link for the U Street/Howard University neighborhood. This limited stop service was proposed in the WMATA study of this line completed in 2010.

Progress on other key DDOT responsibilities for bus priority corridors is lagging. DDOT is implementing signal prioritization in the next two years, and started to implement the first dedicated bus lane/queue jump on Georgia Avenue, but many more priority improvements are waiting for the next step. The H & I transit lane study is complete, but waiting action. These major bus corridors, and others, should receive attention and funding. The need to run more articulated buses in the western part of the city calls for the need to modernize outdated bus garage facilities, especially the Northern bus garage.

We are increasingly concerned that the Circulator service is losing its purpose and becoming an expensive and duplicative way to provide bus service without fully considering how Metrobus does or could serve certain needs. Circulator was supposed to be a short run, all day service with 10 minute headways. We urge the Council to work with DDOT to clearly define what is Circulator service? What is its role? How is it different from Metrobus? And how are you spending money in the most effective way? We've witnessed the Circulator becoming something of a community favor rather than to deliver the most effective family of transit services to meet travel needs and community goals. While many bus service improvements languish, we are considering spending millions of dollars on redundant service that may not even offer the quality of service that generated interest in the service in the first place.

## **Implement the 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW bus lane**

We especially ask that DDOT implement the needed improvements on the 16<sup>th</sup> Street line. This major commuter route is at capacity, but implementing better bus service could deliver better travel options for more people. Since the S9 service was added in 2009, the 16<sup>th</sup> St line has grown in ridership from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> in the region with over 21,000 riders a day. During rush hour, buses carry more than half of all

travelers on 16<sup>th</sup> street, but compose only 3% of the vehicles. Yet 16<sup>th</sup> Street buses are impossibly crowded. Every day, would-be riders waiting at bus stops are left behind by multiple buses that do not stop because they are too full. Despite the improvements made to the line, demand continues to outstrip service. It's clear we need something more – the studies tell us it's time to implement a dedicated bus lane during rush hour to better serve the travelers of this corridor. The decision to pursue a rush hour bus lane requires the commitment of DDOT and support from council.

A bus lane for 16<sup>th</sup> St. line was recommended in the 2009 bus priority corridor study, and last year, a more detailed assessment for DDOT identified a 2.7 mile rush hour bus lane south of Arkansas Ave. as the preferred alternative. This study shows the line has the ridership and density of buses to take advantage of a dedicated bus lane. A bus lane would increase transit travel speeds by 30% and accommodate 10% more people traveling through the corridor. In addition, the 2013 study integrates local community concerns about pedestrian safety, recommending specific safety projects that should also move forward.

We urge that this committee ask DDOT to move forward and conduct the final phase of planning for a peak period, peak direction 16<sup>th</sup> Street bus lane south of Arkansas Ave. NW. We ask DDOT to provide an implementation plan, with a specific timeline for remaining analyses, additional studies, approvals, public outreach, design and operation of a rush hour bus lane. This should be the first of many dedicated bus lanes that will deliver significantly more efficient service to high demand travel corridors.

### **Towards a cohesive street parking management approach in residential areas**

Last, we ask that the committee continue to work with DDOT to allow for a more cohesive approach to reforming Residential Parking Permit (RPP) to provide parking availability that supports community goals. We have experienced a patchwork of tweaks to RPP that do not amount to a cohesive program and sometimes are contradictory. We ask that the committee work with DDOT to put together an overall strategy, and ensure implementation of a cohesive set of actions.

Thank you for your consideration.