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**Testimony to the Transportation and the Environment/Judiciary and Public Safety  
Joint Public Roundtable on Vision Zero**

by Alex Baca on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth

September 27, 2018, 1:30 p.m.

John A. Wilson Building, Room 500

My name is Alex Baca, and I am testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, where I serve as engagement director. CSG promotes walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities in the D.C. region.

It is not difficult to connect the dots between CSG's priorities and Vision Zero. If people live in the types of places that we encourage them to live—which we do because dense, walkable neighborhoods promote affordability, equity, and environmental resilience—they are likely to bike, walk, or take transit.

I was urged by my colleagues to begin today by telling the council that drivers in D.C. have hit a third of our small staff. I, personally, have crashed my bike in D.C., resulting in a broken jaw and over \$20,000 in medical expenses. It's a privilege for me to say that I don't care about the cost, because I'm grateful to be alive.

Because, evidently, it took the deaths of two people to call this hearing, and in the time that it took to convene it, two more people have been killed on our streets. That's an indictment on you all as stewards of this city—stewards who could implement physically protected bike lanes, or signal priority for buses, or cordon pricing, but haven't. You could have chosen to implement the kind of infrastructure that would have prevented the deaths of four people in less than that many months. But you haven't. So, today, D.C. residents and organizational representatives like me will have to excoriate themselves publicly to attempt to convince you that safe streets are not a privilege for a class of newcomers but a right to be granted to all citizens without doubt.

Fundamentally, what comprises Vision Zero—evaluation, engineering, enforcement, education, and encouragement—is not technically difficult. It is politically difficult, because it changes the environment for, or takes away from, a constituency of people who drive and park in D.C. You may not state it publicly, but your actions as a council and as a city demonstrate that your allegiance is to that constituency, not to the people who walk, bike, or take transit on the roads that you control.

You have continually stalled on implementing CSG's proposed parking cashout program—I believe that Allen Greenberg has a detailed testimony for you on how this proposal, considered to be unfriendly to businesses, would save on average 1.6 lives per year. Since building out the 2005 bike master plan, you have not meaningfully implemented any protected bike infrastructure. Notable proposed projects like the

6th Street NW bike lane are in political limbo, while the 16th Street bus lane plans are laughable, given DDOT's, and your, shying away from removing enough parking to truly create dedicated lanes.

Both MoveDC and the city's sustainability plan call for a bump to 25 percent in modeshare for pedestrians and bicyclists. So far, the District seems unwilling to achieve this target through any means other than asking people to bike or walk out of the goodness of their hearts. Induced demand doesn't just apply to highways; women and people of color are more likely to ride bikes when there are protected bike lanes. Bike lanes slow down car traffic, which in turn creates streets that are safer for people who walk.

Though this is an organizational testimony, I began my statement with personal anecdotes, and I would be remiss if I did not reinforce that the city's failure to take the hard steps to make Vision Zero, or something close to it, puts my life on the line. I began riding a bike for transportation in D.C., and doing so now cuts my costs substantially enough that I am able to afford to live here, on a nonprofit salary, and contribute to your tax base. Breaking my jaw on a D.C. street didn't stop me from riding a bike. You can't scare me. But your negligence is no doubt scaring others from making the same choice.

I should also note that I'm the person who sets up the action alerts with clickable form letters that result in what I've heard called "spam" in your inboxes. I'm the person who sends the emails to member lists encouraging people to contact you, our elected officials, and the administrators that you appoint, with pleas to take away space from cars, to slow down vehicular traffic, to dedicate space to bus lanes, to build more protected bike infrastructure rather than studying all of the above to death when national best practices for safe streets have long been established.

Maybe the deaths of four people in two months can do what no public input seems to have done, and convince you that you can no longer equivocate on this topic. Road space is limited, and making our streets safe for people who walk, bike, and take transit necessitates that you take space away from cars and their drivers. Cities own their streets: D.C.'s streets belong to you, Council, and to Mayor Bowser. That you won't—not that you can't, but that you have repeatedly demonstrated that you won't—make the streets that you are in charge of safer for people who aren't driving has left blood on your hands.

This region is growing; we can't stop people from coming here, one of the few places in the country where you can reliably count on economic mobility in a world that is becoming increasingly stratified. More people will mean more injuries and more deaths unless you intervene. That you must convene a hearing to establish the way to do so is an opportunity that I'm grateful for, and I thank you for this time. But doing this, instead of moving to take space away from cars and their drivers to create dedicated, safe infrastructure for vulnerable road users—the thing that you know you must do—verges on negligence.

I don't want to compel my organization's supporters to send you any more emails. I don't want to use our limited organizational capacity to stage demonstrations agitating over what you already know: That the blood on your hands is a choice. It's within your capacity to choose a different future.

The Coalition for Smarter Growth has, and will continue to, freely and willingly provided suggestions for dedicated bike and bus infrastructure, transportation demand management, and pedestrian safety. We reliably and consistently turn out people to public meetings and encourage our supporters to submit

public comment, in part to give you the political cover you often say you need to make decisions that are perceived as conventionally unpopular.

It is difficult for me to conclude this testimony with anything other than a plea to you. People who move about D.C. in ways other than driving should not be forced to swim across a river to prove that they need a bridge.

Thank you for your time. I hope that in the next few months, I will be thanking you for the implementation of safer street infrastructure rather than calling you to the carpet once again for your fearfulness of doing the right thing.

Thank you again.