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Feb. 16, 2023

Oversight testimony: Office of the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure

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.

The witness list for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure today is short, and so is my testimony. GGWash would like the Committee on Transportation and the Environment to work with the agency to:

- Fund Metro for D.C. with growth in the District's ongoing revenue, as the Chief Financial Officer has confirmed is possible;
- Establish a memorandum of understanding with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority as soon as possible to execute Metro for D.C.;
- Heavily scrutinize the performance of the District Department of Transportation's leadership, which, while despite excellent work by agency's project teams, has reduced the scope of or changed the intent of projects touted by the mayor, including the Connecticut Avenue bike lane and the 7th Street bus priority lane;
- Move the Vision Zero team under DMOI, as its mandate of reducing fatal crashes to zero is too cross-cutting to be confined solely to DDOT;
- Increase DPW's booting and towing capacity, which, [as I stated](#) at yesterday's hearing for that agency, is the primary way in which the District is able to hold drivers who have repeatedly demonstrated dangerous behavior to account;
- Regulate curbside space to in a way that prioritizes public use over private needs;
- Regulate freight in a way that necessarily reduces the size of vehicles used for delivery; and,
- Release the road-pricing report, which the executive has shown no sign of making public despite the fact that the council, when it allocated \$450,000 for it in 2019, required it to be released in 2021. Road pricing is not GGWash's pet project. We simply want the

District to carry out a policy that it has included in a number of its own long-range plans.¹ There is nearly no research showing downsides of road pricing, and the report is written specifically to address concerns about its potential impacts on people who have been displaced from the District. A road pricing program is estimated to generate between \$90 and \$500 million in revenue per year; with prognostications of a fiscal downturn, it is foolish to leave buried a report on something that could generate that much money and waste taxpayer dollars to do so.

If the executive agency does not cooperate with the release of the report, we would like the committee to subpoena the executive for it.

I'm happy to provide further detail on any of these topics during this hearing, or at a later date.

Thank you,
Alex

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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 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](#)).

The District has sown a beautiful crop of carrots to meet these targets and goals, such as the bus priority program and Metro for D.C. But it is unfair to expect the carrots to change things alone. To meet our goals, we will have to disincentivize driving. Pricing something that people are currently doing for free—driving into the District, especially downtown—is not and will never be popular, but bus priority, Metro for D.C., and other carrot-like programs will not perform as well as they could without some sticks.