



DC TRANSPORTATION EQUITY NETWORK

DC Council Transportation & Environment Committee DDOT Budget Oversight Hearing March 30, 2023

Good morning, Chair Allen and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kai Hall and I'm the coordinator of the **DC Transportation Equity Network (DC TEN)**. The DC TEN is a cross-sector coalition of organizations committed to seeing a complete transportation system that ensures vulnerable residents are accounted for in the District. We advocate for transportation policies that rectify historic disparities in access to jobs, schools, health care, recreation, and other destinations, and expand opportunity for those pushed to the margins in a thriving city. Our membership includes: DC Families for Safe Streets, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), Sierra Club DC, So Others May Eat (SOME), and House of Ruth – just to name a few.

We recognize that FY24 will be a tight budget year and that city leaders are going to have to make difficult choices this year and in the years ahead. However, cutting public transit services and street safety interventions are antithetical to the city's goal of revitalizing downtown and building back from the pandemic. If residents cannot safely get to their places of employment, their health clinics, their schools, and leisure activities because of a lack of reliable, dignified, and affordable transportation options, how are we, as a city, supposed to recover from the effects of the pandemic?

In challenging times like the one we find ourselves in right now, it is more important now, than ever, to invest in the mobility needs of the city's most vulnerable residents. Otherwise, those with means in the city will coast through these challenging times while the burden of this economic downturn will be disproportionately placed on the shoulders of residents with lower incomes and people of color.

I'd like to talk about five main points in our testimony today: funding for Metro for DC, support for funding Vision Zero, opposition to cutting Circulator routes, support for the

Bus Priority and Efficiency Initiative in the Capital Improvements Plan, and support for the I-295 Reconnecting Communities feasibility study.

Metro for DC

We strongly urge the Committee to fully fund Metro for DC. This ambitious law, when implemented, will transform how residents interact with public transit, ensuring cost is no barrier to entry for residents to commute to work, access necessary services, and reach recreational destinations. As one of the largest cities in the country to make fare-free buses law, we have an opportunity to demonstrate to DC residents and the rest of the nation that investing in our transit riders is a viable way to contribute to our city's economic recovery. This will remove the cost burden of one of the main ways residents move around the city at a time when the cost of essential goods and services.

Vision Zero

We are disappointed to see that the city is not on track to meet its Vision Zero goals by 2024, and would like to see it be fully funded. If the city isn't on track to meet the 2024 Vision Zero goals it set, I'd like the Committee to ask DDOT why the Project Delivery Administration's Vision Zero Division is seeing its budget being reduced by almost two percent. Vision Zero should be fully funded. We cannot afford to put our children and our neighbors at risk of being injured and killed by traffic violence.

Circulator Cuts

We oppose cutting service for the Circulator – especially if there is no alternative transportation option, like Metrobus, that could reasonably meet the mobility needs of residents who may lose transportation coverage. Furthermore, when forced to make a choice between electrification and service, the TEN urges the city to choose service. Getting residents and tourists out of cars and into buses reduces overall carbon emissions, regardless of how the bus is powered.

During times of economic hardship, reducing transportation options for residents and tourists alike will harm the city's economic recovery. Public transit can have a multiplier effect on economic output, so we should be investing in it, not cutting it. I'd urge the Committee to encourage DDOT officials to share which routes are proposed to be cut and what transportation alternatives are available to residents who may lose access to Circulator services.

Bus Priority

The TEN continues to support the city's investment in bus priority programs. By investing in infrastructure that increases the speed and reliability of buses, riders can

save valuable time while also ensuring they get to their destinations on-time. Investments in bus priority demonstrates to riders that city leaders value their time, their dignity, and their safety.

I-295 Reconnecting Communities Feasibility Study

We support funding the feasibility study for reconnecting communities in Wards 7 and 8 separated by the construction of I-295. The racist history of using infrastructure to divide and displace communities has to be justly rectified, and this study is a small step in the right direction. I-295 pollutes the air of Ward 7 and 8 residents, poses a dangerous threat to the safety and respiratory health of children and adults alike, all while serving as a throughput for Maryland residents to easily drive into our city. We look forward to seeing the results of this study.

On a final note, we'd also ask that the Council not delay the implementation of the Parking Cashout Law, an important step forward for the District's sustainability and ability to attract workers who do not rely on cars for transportation — a consistent characteristic of younger workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to work with you and answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kai Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kai Hall

Coordinator

DC Transportation Equity Network