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**Written Testimony by Caitlin Rogger, Executive Director  
Roundtable on Automated Enforcement  
November 15th, 2021**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Cheh, Councilmembers Pinto, Lewis George and Allen.

DC Sustainable Transportation (DCST) is a nonprofit organization which works to make DC a global leader with frequent, rapid, safe, affordable, and reliable transportation to, from, and around DC job centers.

Our members include ten of DC's Business Improvement Districts; Events DC; the Federal City Council and Greater Washington Partnership; and advocacy groups like the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Sierra Club DC chapter, Greater Greater Washington, the Transportation Equity Network, and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. DCST works with DDOT, WMATA, DMOI and other offices to increase use of sustainable modes of travel such as transit, bicycling, and walking and sustainable uses of public space.

**DCST strongly supports expansion of the automated traffic enforcement program in service of three major DC goals: safety, equity, and ensuring our investments in sustainable transportation work as intended.** I'll elaborate on why these entail camera enforcement below.

But first I'd like to frame my comments in the terms of my previous career in public health and specifically healthy cities: **curing traffic violence is part of our city's recovery from the Covid pandemic.** Serious illness often comes with comorbidities: symptoms, illnesses and even injuries that come about because of the original disease. Traffic violence has become a co-morbidity of Covid, as has distrust in spending time in public space. The fact that there are other patients, other cities, with the same condition doesn't mean we shrug our shoulders: it means the co-morbidity association is real and we have to get serious about treating it. **There's no record of traffic violence curing itself.**

A medical intervention will fail if it's not given the conditions to succeed: a human being bleeding out has no use for blood thinners. Enforcement is a critical part of how we slow down the crisis of traffic deaths, while work is done on longer-term approaches to the broader public health crisis.

I'll now turn to an issue that's closely tied with the success of the traffic camera program. At the moment, **the sheer quantity and extent of expired temporary, and in some cases clearly fake, license plates on vehicles in DC present a significant barrier to any enforcement.** Automated methods can't do anything about them: if it's a fake tag, the transgressor cannot be identified, and this in fact puts drivers with lawful plates at a disadvantage. But in practice it's apparent that actual enforcement officers are not in a position to get a handle on this problem either.

**DCST recommends that DDOT, DMV, DPW, Department of Health and MPD convene an executive-level task force to address the traffic violence crisis on DC's roads, with enforcement one of the focus areas.** The goal of this group should be to significantly reduce deaths and injuries from vehicles within the next 12 months, through a series of clear, time-bound strategies addressing specific elements, such as getting expired and fake-tagged vehicles off the roads. As most of these are partner agencies in the DMOI cluster, this multi-sector coordination should be easier to pull off than most. The enforcement piece would ideally complement a broader plan with Maryland and Virginia officials around ticket reciprocity, which will help ensure we can get the results for safety that we must see from automated enforcement.

In order for enforcement to reap dividends for safety and a generally more livable public realm, **penalty fines have to be swift, certain and fair.** Evidence from other settings suggests that drivers respond more effectively to fines when they receive them nearly immediately, connecting them more quickly to the moment of infraction, which they may better recall and feel responsibility for. It's unclear that higher fines lead to better driving, so keeping the fines relatively low but swift may have similar beneficial effects, without creating a system where some can afford to break the law and others not. For the same reason, it's important that the cameras are fair - that they capture actual infractions and aren't targeted at specific groups beyond dangerous drivers. That's where DDOT's careful monitoring and reporting on this program is crucially important and a process we will watch with great interest.

With my remaining time, I'll return to the three reasons for supporting cameras, starting with safety. Like many American cities, DC is experiencing a sharp uptick in unsafe driving, putting pedestrians, cyclists, and other drivers at risk. **In 2021, 37 people have lost their lives due to crashes and there have been four and a half thousand minor injuries and 329 major ones. Such injuries can end a person's life as they knew it, and present serious financial and social consequences, especially in lower-income households.** The public sector cannot throw up hands and say there's no answer. There are lots of answers, including re-orienting our streetscapes to prioritize bus, bike and walking over driving, and including automated enforcement.

The second reason is that cameras support equity goals. **Cameras provide an alternative, in some cases, to law enforcement officers' interactions with drivers. Data shows traffic stops can put drivers of color at a greater risk of escalation and negative interactions with law enforcement.** An

effective, probably ultimately less expensive alternative exists in the form of cameras, so we should adopt that alternative widely. Furthermore, **Black and Brown residents are more likely than white residents to die or be injured in vehicle crashes, whether they're in cars or out. That's a systematic health inequality in the clearest possible terms.** As the District makes efforts in other realms to improve health service disparities, we also need to look closely at the causes of those differential health outcomes.

Our third reason for supporting rapid, well-resourced, and well-monitored expansion of traffic cameras is to ensure that DC's significant investments in transit, bike, pedestrian infrastructure and also public space improvements pay off. **One of the biggest risks to the value of these improvements is unlawful driving and parking behaviors. For example, if drivers drive in bus lanes, bus speeds and reliability will not improve.** But in cities where the automated enforcement system is sufficiently widespread and resourced, such as London, these investments perform well.

Finally, we applaud this Committee's guidance to use camera revenues to support Vision Zero program implementation.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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

Caitlin Rogger  
Executive Director  
DC Sustainable Transportation