



# DC TRANSPORTATION EQUITY NETWORK

## DC Council Transportation & Environment Committee WMATA & DMOI Performance Oversight Hearing February 16, 2024

Good afternoon, Chairperson Allen and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kai Hall and I'm the coordinator for the **DC Transportation Equity Network (DC TEN)**. The DC TEN is a cross-sector coalition of nonprofits committed to seeing a complete transportation system that ensures vulnerable residents are accounted for in the District. Our membership includes the Washington Area Bicyclist Association, DC Families for Safe Streets, MedStar Washington Hospital Center, Friends of the DC Streetcar, HIPS, Citizens Climate Lobby DC, the Washington Interfaith Network, Disability Rights DC, the DC Primary Care Association, and Greater Greater Washington.

I will be providing testimony on the performance of WMATA and DMOI today.

### WMATA

Thanks to the visionary leadership of WMATA's management and the diligence of the thousands of staff and operators at the agency, 2023 was the "year of the bus."

The DC TEN supports the following actions taken by WMATA over the last year and would like to see the agency continue to implement these types of changes:

- **Launching the Metro Lift program**, which offers 50% off Metrobus and Metrorail trips for riders enrolled in SNAP.
- Entering into an MOU with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to establish **24-hour bus service** on 14 high-ridership routes thanks to the Metro for DC Amendment Act of 2022. 24-hour service provides a reliable and affordable transportation option for third-shift workers and others who need to get around at late hours and have been overlooked by our transportation

systems for too long.

- Entering into an MOU with DDOT to establish the **ClearLanes program**, enforcing dedicated bus lanes and zones to disincentivize private vehicle drivers from obstructing transit riders and workers from getting to their destinations reliably and on-time. We highlight the fact that 47% of customers along ClearLanes routes have low incomes, and nearly 80% along these routes are also people of color.
- Moving forward from Phase 2 to Phase 3 with the **Better Bus Network Redesign**. We were encouraged with the way WMATA staff conducted outreach and engagement with community members across the District. Specifically, having pop-ups and events like the Better Bus Experience Launch Party at THEARC, which included entertainment, giveaways, visualization boards, and activities for all-ages of customers (especially children), are exactly the type of creative outreach riders want to see. By organizing activities for families, giveaways, and entertainment at engagement events like this, WMATA demonstrates the value it places on incentivizing riders to turn out to have their voices heard.

We would like the Committee to ask WMATA leadership the following questions:

- Given budgetary constraints, how does WMATA leadership see the Better Bus Network Redesign proceeding? Is it on-track to follow the original timeline shared with the region?
- How much did the District's Bus Priority projects save WMATA in Fiscal Year 2023 and 2024 in operating costs?
- What are the main challenges the agency has identified in bus operator recruitment and retention?
- How is the agency preparing for the upcoming wave of transit operator retirements?
- What percentage of bus operators who drive routes in the District live in the District?

## **DMOI**

We are disappointed that the District fell so far short of achieving its Vision Zero goal of zero traffic fatalities by 2024, with 52 people killed on our roads in 2023 alone. They were friends, siblings, parents, children, mentors, and acquaintances. The loss of the 52 lives were losses to 52 families and communities. Our testimony today will focus on the Vision Zero office.

We support the decision to move the Vision Zero office from DDOT to DMOI. We

believe interagency collaboration for traffic safety is necessary to take a holistic approach to make our streets safer. We also believe that the move to DMOI may help move the needle in the right direction in addressing some of the flaws identified in Vision Zero execution by the [DC Auditor's report on Vision Zero](#). But we would like to see a more energetic push from the executive to funnel resources and focus into Vision Zero coordination to deliver real, tangible results measured by fewer deaths and injuries on our streets.

With that said, we're left with many questions that we hope the Committee and leadership at the Vision Zero office may be able to answer:

- How has the move from DDOT to DMOI affected the Vision Zero office's ability to coordinate with other agencies? What challenges and opportunities has the director identified in inter-agency collaboration for implementation of projects and programs to eliminate traffic violence?
- What formal structures are in place for the Vision Zero office to collaborate with all other cluster agencies under DMOI? How are Vision Zero goals incorporated into decision making in each agency in the cluster?
- What mechanisms are in place for the Vision Zero office to coordinate with DC Health to gather high-quality public health data concerning trends, hot spots, and determinants of traffic injuries and deaths?
- How does DMOI coordinate the use of data from the High Injury Network to be used by each cluster agency?

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kai Hall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kai" and last name "Hall" clearly distinguishable.

Kai Hall  
Coordinator, DC Transportation Equity Network