

Robyn Jackson
Transportation Planner
District of Columbia Department of Transportation
55 M Street, SE, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20003
Phone: (202) 673-6813
robyn.jackson@dc.gov



December 5, 2018

Dear Ms. Jackson,

Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates (W3BA) is a group of Ward 3 residents who support and advocate for improvements to the bicycle infrastructure in our ward. Our goal is to make it both safer and easier for: people to commute to downtown Washington and ride within the neighborhoods of the Ward; children to bike to school; and for all cyclists to ride to and within the many parks and recreation sites in our region.

Our group enthusiastically supports resolutions recently passed by ANCs 3C, 3F and 3/4G calling for DDOT to undertake a comprehensive transportation study of Connecticut Avenue. The results of this study will guide the use and development of Connecticut Avenue for decades to come.

W3BA has the following comments on DDOT's draft Request For Proposals (RFP) for this study:

1) **Goals of the study**

The RFP would benefit from a more detailed explanation of both the agency's goals and rationale in undertaking this study for a redesigned Connecticut Avenue. Including this vision in the RFP is necessary to guide the work of the contractor and give the city government and residents a set of objectives and milestones by which to evaluate the proposed options and components as they are developed.

To that end, we believe the following elements should be included in the goals of the study:

- ***Vision Zero.*** The District has set a goal of zero deaths and serious injuries to travelers on D.C. streets by 2024. With 31 traffic deaths on District streets in 2018 alone, it is clear that much work remains to be done to attain this stated goal. The options, therefore, that

emerge from the RFP must advance Vision Zero for all users--pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

- ***Reducing carbon emissions.*** We live in a world where climate change can no longer be ignored. The District of Columbia's Sustainable DC plan sets a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% below 2006 levels by 2032. Transportation is a critical driver of carbon emissions; any plan for the redesign of Connecticut Avenue must provide a more efficient and safe space for both public transportation (buses) and bicyclists. Shifting trips away from single-occupancy automobiles will result in lower emissions for Ward 3 and the District as a whole. Redesigning Connecticut Avenue to make it more attractive to use bicycles and public transportation should be a priority of the city's work to reduce climate change.
- ***Strengthening neighborhoods.*** In addition to Ward 3, Connecticut Avenue passes through a number of neighborhoods, each with a unique mix of residential and commercial uses. During peak (i.e., rush hour) periods, however, Connecticut Avenue is transformed into a six lane highway, making the street both dangerous and unpleasant for bicyclists and pedestrians alike. Enhancing the experience for bicyclists, pedestrians, and others on Connecticut Avenue will help grow businesses and enhance the livability of the adjacent neighborhoods.

2) **Reversible lane on Connecticut Avenue**

The primary issue posed in the RFP is the feasibility of removing the reversible lane on Connecticut Avenue. Upon resolving this issue, the RFP then instructs the contractor to explore other issues, including the installation of a bike lane and improving pedestrian safety. Although the reversible lane question is important, W3BA believes that this should not be the primary focus of this proposed study. Structuring the RFP in this way will lead to an overemphasis on this one issue.

Instead, the focus of the RFP should be to provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential options in redesigning Connecticut Avenue in order to reach the goals we laid out earlier. By broadening the focus, several issues, some of which have been previously discussed, can be addressed.

In addition, framing the RFP along these lines would be consistent with the resolutions passed by the three ANCs, which all call for a comprehensive study of Connecticut Avenue along the lines of what we have articulated here.

3) **Scope of study**

As the draft of this RFP focuses on the reversible lane, the primary geographic study area is on the part of Connecticut Avenue where the reversible lane exists—from Legation to 24th Street. Consistent with our other comments regarding the comprehensive nature of the proposed study, we believe its scope should be expanded to the north to Western Avenue.

In addition, given that DDOT is currently studying a redesign of Connecticut Avenue from Dupont Circle north to Columbia Road, we also believe the primary area of focus of this study should extend south to Columbia Road. This will ensure that a gap will not be created in the transportation network, including over Taft Bridge for bicyclists.

4) Mode Shift

An important element of the study should be the assessment of the degree to which travelers on Connecticut Avenue would shift from automobile to other modes of transportation if a protected bike lane and bus rapid transit were installed. The results of this assessment could be used to assist the District in its efforts to reach the goal of reducing the use of single-occupancy vehicles and carbon emissions.

The Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates is excited that DDOT will reexamine Connecticut Ave for traffic safety improvements; we hope our concerns and suggestions will affect how the study will be developed and conducted. We look forward to working with DDOT and the Ward 3 community on this project to help make Connecticut Avenue safer, healthier, greener, more prosperous and more efficiently used by all.

Sincerely,

Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates

Steering committee members:

Josh Rising

Andrew Aurbach

Ed Carley

Talia Coutin

Paul DeMaio

Eric Rosenberg

Steve Seelig

Brett Young

cc: Councilmember Mary Cheh