

W3BA testimony

October 24, 2019

Hello and good afternoon. My name is Josh Rising; I am one of the founders of the Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates, or W3BA. W3BA seeks to make it possible for children who live in Ward 3 to bike to their local schools; for people who live in Ward 3 to commute to their jobs by bicycle if they want; and for people of all ages to be able to bike throughout the Ward. Thank you for having this hearing.



In numerous conversations that I and others have had with people throughout the Ward, it is clear just how far we have to go to reach this goal. People simply do not feel safe biking in the Ward--or in the city for that measure--given how we have prioritized travel by automobiles at the expense of people who walk, bike, scooter, take a bus or choose any other means to get around.

So how do we reach Vision Zero, and improve the safety of roads so that people feel safe enough to use a bicycle as a mode of transportation, at least some of the time? We must support policies that will:

- Increase the number of people cycling, using public transportation, and taking other methods to get around;
- Reduce the number of people driving;
- Improve road/transportation design to reduce/eliminate unnecessary risks (such as conflict points where pedestrian and car conflicts can occur); and
- Decrease the speed of cars.

There will be some pushback on these efforts, as people have become accustomed to the status quo. This is an opportunity for the Council to provide a vision and leadership. With the right leadership, things can be accomplished quickly. Seville, Spain, installed approximately 50 miles of bike lanes in a year and a half. Meanwhile, here in DC, we have to engage in pitched combat for six months to get two blocks of bike lanes on Woodley Place. Don't get me wrong—those

were an important two blocks—but they are symbolic of the slow pace of change...even when change is needed to save lives.

What is the Council's vision statement? Here are a few sample ones that you should feel free to steal:

- Within four years, every child has a protected lane to use to bike to his or her school;
- Within four years, 10% of all trips in the District are taken by bicycle; and
- Within four years, the District is recognized as the city in the United States that has taken the most innovative steps to make it easier for people to get around by foot, bike, and bus.

W3BA would like to make comments on a few specific elements of the legislation:

- We strongly support the Mandatory Protected Cycling Lane Amendment Act of 2019 (B23-257)
 - The fundamental question with any piece of bicycle infrastructure, is would you let your children bike there? Only protected bicycle lanes reach that mark.
- We strongly support the Curb Extensions Act of 2019 (B23-292)
 - This will both slow cars down and reduce the distance pedestrians need to cross—two key design elements.
- Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act (B23-0288)
 - W3BA strongly support all the design elements, especially the faster approval process
 - We strongly support lower speed limits
 - We support the need to plan for fewer car trips

There are some specific elements missing from the legislation that we would like to flag for the Council's attention. These include:

- Requiring DDOT to install a specific number of miles of protected bike lanes and bus-only lanes each year. This requirement is only effective, of course, if coupled with effective Council oversight;
- Studying congestion pricing in DC;

- Requiring DDOT to regularly report to the Council on the agency's progress in meeting the legislative goals and achieving the Council's vision.

Legislation, of course, is just one way that the Council can help the city reach its Vision Zero goal. I encourage the Council members to use the other tools at their disposal. This includes:

- First, conducting rigorous oversight of DDOT and other agencies
- Second, using the budget to ensure DDOT acts on Council priorities, such as by allocating funds to specific projects like a protected bicycle lane on Connecticut Avenue. Other Ward 3 projects I would highlight include proposals by DDOT for protected bike lanes on Western Avenue, Arizona, Nebraska, Loughboro, New Mexico, Tunlaw, and 37th, and Dalecarlia, and Broad Branch Road. The proposals are there. The Council has an opportunity to make sure they happen.
- And third, laying out your vision as often as you can in order to bring along other local officials who look to you for leadership.

Thank you to the Council for introducing these bills and holding this hearing. We look forward to working with you to make Ward 3--and all of DC--a place where people of all ages feel safe bicycling to work, school and...because it is fun.