

Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates

District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT)
and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Re. Broad Branch Road Environmental Assessment

November 16, 2020



Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Revised Draft Environmental Assessment, where DDOT has indicated its desire to proceed with a modified version of Candidate Alternative 3. We strongly disagree with this decision and have a number of suggestions as to how DDOT and FHWA can improve both the process and the outcome.

At the outset, we would note that each of the adjoining ANCs (3/4G, 3F and 3E) requested in 2013 that (DDOT) to adopt Alternative 4 because it included a designated bike lane on the northbound portion of the roadway. ANCs 3/4G and 3E have also, over this past couple of weeks, passed resolutions reiterating that position and urged DDOT to revisit its selection of modified Alternative 3 to instead install the preferred Alternative 4.

In the event that DDOT is unable to adopt Alternative 4, we request that it consider the following comments.

More Unsafe for Cyclists than Under Current Conditions: Modified Alternative 3 creates a more dangerous situation for cyclists who are already subjected to life-threatening conflicts with northbound car travel under the existing alignment. This is because it includes a curb that would prevent any safe refuge for cyclists along with a double yellow line that encourages cars to squeeze cyclists toward that curb as they try to pass them.

Failure to Use City-Owned Land within the Right of Way: While we understand the challenges of dealing with the State Department and sovereign nations to try and get access to DC property within its right of way, we are disappointed that DDOT has not been able to convince one of the six nations to provide access. We would have thought that DDOT would have been successful with at least one embassy, so we are left to wonder without more evidence how much effort was expended to elicit this compromise.

More disappointing is the fact that DDOT has not even attempted to include a bike lane along portions of the roadway where it has the right through eminent domain to use the right of way abutting private landowners. It does not appear that any effort was made to do so, perhaps because DDOT believed that it needed to install a bike lane along the entire stretch or install no bike lane at all. We disagree.

No Semblance of a Bike Lane Signals that Bikes Don't Belong: Our view is that physical clues are necessary on the northbound stretch of roadway that bikes are allowed on the roadway. Having partial bike lanes on stretches where DDOT can take more width must be explored to make this clear to drivers. We believe this should happen in each area that is abutted by private property, and north of 27th Street where there is plenty of room for two bike lanes, not just a northbound climbing lane.

Narrower Travel Lanes Could Permit More Alternative Uses: We are not clear on why DDOT has determined a 10-foot car travel lane is the best use of the available space, particularly along a stretch of road where cars already exceed the speed limit. Our view is that a narrower lane will cause cars to drive closer to the speed limit and could permit a further expansion of the sidewalk. It might also be possible then use the sidewalk for a shared use path, although we would clarify that our first choice would be to have a bike lane heading northbound.

No Indication of Speed Limit Reductions or Signage to Promote Safety for Cyclists: We understand these decisions are being left for future design iterations, but we believe DDOT must make it clear to road users of its intention during this part of the process to reassure them of its commitment to safety. For the entire length of the project, DDOT should:

- Mark the road clearly as having a 20 mph speed limit as an added measure of safety;
- Paint sharrows in the roadway every 500 feet where there is no bike lane;
- Include standard street signs every 1,000 feet stating “[Bike Symbol] MAY USE FULL LANE.

DDOT Should Commit to More Transparency Via a Public Meeting: It is frustrating that--after so many years of having this project languish--DDOT publishes its recommendations after midnight on a Friday and then requires the public to comment within a little more than 2 weeks later without holding a public hearing or community meeting on its recommendation.

DDOT should immediately announce a public meeting where it can answer resident questions and hear input from the community on the Alternative proposed. It should also leave open the public comment period until 2 weeks after that meeting is held.

Thank you very much for your attention to these comments.

Sincerely,

Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates