

May 31, 2022

Mayor Muriel Bowser  
Director Everett Lott, Department of Transportation



Dear Mayor Bowser and Director Lott:

The Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates (W3BA) is writing to convey our strong support for DDOT's proposed cycletrack along Arizona Ave., NW, from Loughboro Road to Carolina Place. This two-way, protected cycletrack will advance a network of bicycle lanes and facilities in the western part of Ward 3, which currently has only 0.2 miles of protected bicycle lanes. Among the connections it will facilitate are from MacArthur Blvd., the Capital Crescent Trail, and the Palisades Trolley Trail to American University, Tenleytown, and neighborhoods along the northern part of Massachusetts Avenue. It will also provide a much safer route for students to bicycle to and from Key Elementary School.

DDOT has spent six months presenting its proposal to ANC3D, ANC3D's Transportation Committee, and anyone who wished to participate in a meeting of the Palisades Community Association and a "town hall" hosted by ANC3D and DDOT, which was advertised with over 750 door hangers. All of this comes after several letters in support of the concept sent by ANC3D to DDOT in connection with MoveDC and the well-attended Rock Creek Far West Livability Study's two-year process. Moreover, the cycletrack is part of DDOT's 20x22 plan to install 20 miles of protected bike lanes by 2022. Only now, with the project in the final design stages, have objectors voiced their broad concerns.

In our view, the letter the neighbors have sent to both of you are mostly factually incorrect and misleading. The project would remove parking on one side of Arizona Avenue between Loughboro Rd. and MacArthur Blvd. and install a two-way protected cycletrack in its place. DDOT would make minor adjustments to lane widths, but otherwise would leave the two existing travel lanes in place, as well as turn lanes at either end of Arizona Avenue. For the portion between MacArthur Blvd. and Carolina Place, DDOT would not remove any parking, and modestly shorten a long left-turn lane approaching MacArthur Blvd.

The objectors' letter might lead a reader to conclude that the cycletrack would cause massive changes to traffic flows and delays. It would not. The lane configurations would remain nearly identical. DDOT's plans specifically follow its design guidelines for such issues as lane widths and buffer zones for protected bicycle lanes. (Indeed, DDOT has made some design compromises to the designs to accommodate buses and other vehicular traffic needs.) It would

thus have minimal effect on traffic flows, and any current delays and “cut through” traffic would be essentially the same. To the extent Arizona Ave. is already congested, that is a result of existing, failed, transportation policies that do not promote alternatives, such as cycling.

The cycletrack will enhance safety. The objectors’ claims that it will create a less safe road environment are illogical. The objectors suggest that drivers exiting driveways will not be able to see cyclists. Yet visibility will be better with a cycletrack than if there are parked cars. Moreover, cars pulling out of driveways now already must contend with traffic sufficiently over the speed limit that DDOT recently installed a speed camera. In any case, these claims ignore that cyclists on Arizona Ave. must contend with these issues now, but without the added safety of a protected bike lane. Indeed, a recent University of Colorado Denver and the University of New Mexico study of 13 years of crash data from 12 large U.S. cities with high-bicycling mode shares found that building protected bike lanes was the biggest factor in reducing serious injuries and deaths, not just for people on bikes, but for all users on the roads.

Parking losses are often a concern of neighbors when DDOT proposes a bike lane. In this case on Arizona Ave., however, parking is lightly used. This street is not zoned for residential parking permits. On most days, much of its length has, at most, a small number of cars parked, with the highest volume being day parkers avoiding the meters on MacArthur Blvd. while using the shops and offices at the corner of MacArthur Blvd. and Arizona Ave. Indeed, DDOT’s survey shows usage of less than 25% of spaces for most of the length of Arizona Ave.; the “200%” figure cited by objectors reflects an instance during one DDOT survey where two drivers had parked their cars illegally in addition to two legally parked cars on a short, 2-space block.

Concerns about access for delivery vehicles and yard crews are also misplaced. Every house on Arizona Ave. has a driveway that such vehicles can use for nannies, maids, service people, and even the occasional construction dumpster. Even so, nearly 50% of spaces will remain – it will require only that delivery drivers or service crews cross the street in some instances. Throughout D.C., delivery and service vehicles must contend with parking restrictions or the absence of legal parking. Surely, they can do the same on Arizona Ave. after installation of a bike lane.

Bicyclists are more than capable of using this lane going uphill. The objectors’ letter suggests few cyclists are able to handle the substantial uphill grades but fails to account for the rapid adoption of e-bikes, which can easily help even the most novice cyclist up hills. This hill is no steeper than the well-used 15th St. cycletrack adjacent to Meridian Hill Park in Ward 2. Further, virtually every road from MacArthur Blvd. to the higher plateau above it requires climbing 200+ feet; the objectors’ logic would suggest there should be no connections between MacArthur Blvd. and any part of the upper northwest portion of the city.

The objectors' complaint that DDOT failed to "evaluate parallel bikeway routes" rings hollow when they fail to identify a single potential alternative that is similarly direct, provides a close connection to the Capital Crescent Trail, would not have greater effects on traffic and parking, and would be safer. There are a limited number of direct routes from MacArthur to Loughboro, all with similar grades. Indeed, residents (including signatories to the letter sent you) of Chain Bridge Rd. and University Terrace - two possible alternative routes - have called for traffic calming on these two roads, citing unsafe vehicle speeds and traffic volumes. Moreover, residents of University Terrace have for years rejected DDOT's efforts to install sidewalks.

Finally, it is critical to note that of 50 houses on Arizona Ave., only about 8 have signed onto this letter (two appear to be couples). Most of the signatories are from streets nowhere near Arizona Ave., including Riggs Place, Surrey Lane, Foxhall Road, and Kenmore Drive. It is unclear what the basis for concern of these residents might be, especially when the design of the cycletrack will not affect traffic flows. Moreover, another large group of signatories appear to be on streets adjacent to Arizona Ave. While their specific concerns are not stated, to the extent drivers may use those streets to park instead, installation of residential parking permit restrictions should help ameliorate concerns.

We encourage you to support DDOT's ongoing development of plans to install the cycletrack on Arizona Ave. and reject the baseless objections from a small group of residents.

Sincerely,

Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates