To: DDOT

From: Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates

July 30, 2022

The Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates commend the Mayor on her decision this past winter to move forward with the protected bicycle lane on Connecticut Avenue. Steps such as these are needed first and foremost to improve the safety of Washington DC's roads. As of July 26, there had already been 22 traffic fatalities in the city, a number that is essentially unchanged from last year. The host of changes that DDOT is planning for Connecticut Avenue will improve safety for cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers and make the street more liveable for everyone who lives on and near it.

DDOT has done an impressive job engaging the community over the course of this project. This opportunity for feedback is merely the latest in a lengthy string of public meetings and discussion. Overall, we are very supportive of what is laid out in the plans. We have a number of comments on the design. We recognize that some of the comments regard issues that do not yet appear in the plans; we hope that these will be helpful as the agency moves to the next phase of its planning.

1. Width of the bike lane

The amount of space allocated to protected bike infrastructure varies along the length of Connecticut Avenue. The minimum amount shown on the plans is 5.5 feet on each side of the road (4 feet for the bike lane and 1.5 feet for the barrier), while the maximum amount is 9 feet (5 feet for the bike lane and 4 feet for the barrier). This variation occurs because–in addition to the four lanes (forty feet) of space devoted to vehicular traffic–at times there is additional space dedicated to cars for parking or dedicated turn lanes. Generally we support the rationale for narrower bike lanes in commercial areas.

We would point out, however, that 4 feet has not been the standard width for bike lanes for decades now. A bike lane that is only four or five feet wide means that there is no place where a faster cyclist could safely pass a slower cyclist. This means the faster cyclist may be tempted to filter out to the main roadway which could increase conflict with other vehicles–exactly the sort of thing that this protected bike lane is designed to avoid. It also precludes two cyclists (such as a parent and child) from ever riding side-by-side while using the bike lanes.

To address this, we encourage DDOT to modify the design throughout the corridor such that wherever there is 9 feet available for bike infrastructure, 7 feet are dedicated to the bike lane and 2 feet to the barrier. This will be enough space for cyclists to pass each other as needed. Ideally, these wider bike lanes should occur every few blocks, to facilitate such passes.

2. Bike boxes

Bike boxes are used at signalized intersections to let cyclists move to the front of the stopped traffic. Among other benefits, this can facilitate left-hand turns that cyclists may want to make. We are surprised not to see bike boxes appease more frequently in the Connecticut Avenue designs.

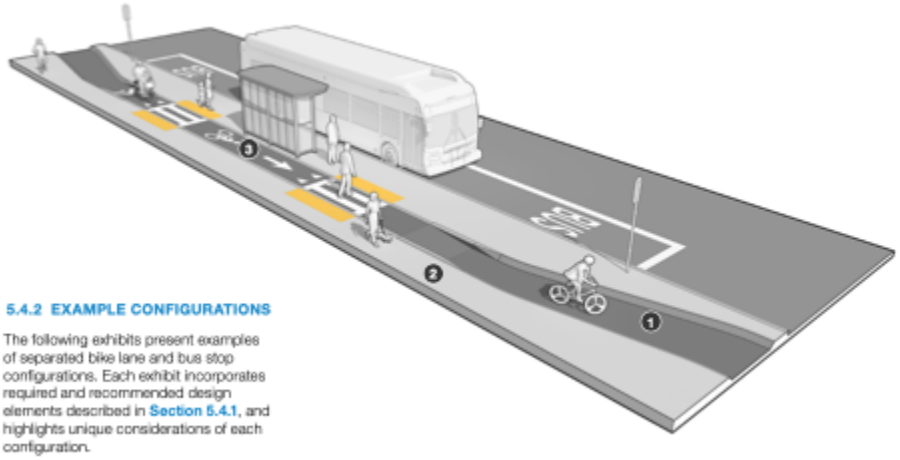
We would benefit from bike boxes on any signalized intersections where Left-hand turns are allowed, and encourage DDOT to use them throughout the corridor. In particular, we would identify these intersections–which connect to East/West cycle routes–as ones where the inclusion of bike boxes would be particularly beneficial:

- Tilden St. and Conn. Ave.
- Porter St. and Conn. Ave.
- Cathedral and Conn. Ave
- Calvert and Conn. Ave.
- Van Ness and Conn. Ave. (northbound)

3. Design of the Bus Stops

Conflict with buses has the potential to be hazardous for both cyclists and bus riders. We encourage the use of design features that will mitigate this potential hazard.

Wherever there is sufficient sidewalk space–and especially at high traffic bus stops–we encourage DDOT to use raised crossways going across the bike lane from the sidewalk to a pedestrian space so that bus passengers can queue on the space. This will also naturally slow down oncoming cyclists in these areas. The following diagram gives a sense of what we mean. It is diagram 5I in this Massachusetts DDOT planning book: https://www.mass.gov/doc/chapter-5-curbside-activity-design/download



5.4.2 EXAMPLE CONFIGURATIONS

The following exhibits present examples of separated bike lane and bus stop configurations. Each exhibit incorporates required and recommended design elements described in Section 5.4.1, and highlights unique considerations of each configuration.

Examples of areas that would benefit from something like this would be all of the top volume bus areas for passengers, which from DDOT's status report were largely in the area surrounding

UDC. Other areas would be by Cleveland Park and Woodley Park Metro entrances, and Nebraska and Conn Ave. headed southbound.

Where there is not sufficient sidewalk space to accommodate this design, we encourage DDOT to use 'Zikla'-style raised crossings in the bike lanes.

We support the shift of bus stops from the near side to the far side of intersections for improvement of flow of traffic; where this is not done, we strongly encourage it.

4. Right hand turns

We are very worried about intersections where cars will be making right hand turns across the protected bike lane. This is what killed Shawn O'Donnell at 21st and I street earlier this month. Addressing this is a difficult but important challenge.

First, we would suggest prohibiting right turns on red throughout the corridor and installing signs that clarify that cyclists may start across the intersection with the leading pedestrian interval.

Second, we encourage the hardening of intersections along Connecticut Avenue in order to ensure that cars must slow down when they are making right hand turns. The best ways to accomplish this are: 1) raised crosswalks on all the cross streets and 2) bulbouts. Slowing the speeds of vehicles making right-hand turns is essential to making sure that cyclists are not injured.

Third, there are two intersections with a particularly large number of right-hand turns where we have specific comments:

- **Nebraska and Connecticut** (the intersection with the largest number of SB right-hand turns)
  - SB: Move the near-side bus stop to the far side (by the Exxon, using space reclaimed from the removal of the Nebraska Eastbound RHT cutout).
  - SB: Restrict RHT of cars to a green arrow only. The design has a dedicated right-hand turning lane which will facilitate this change.
  - SB: Install bike-only green signal for continuation through Conn Ave.
  - NB: harden the intersection with an extension of the corner (by Comet Pizza) to bring the intersection closer to a 90-degree turn and/or consider a raised crosswalk here to slow down RHT traffic.
  - NB: Give a longer leading pedestrian interval to ensure that cyclists have cleared the intersection before cars start turning right.
- **Porter and Connecticut**
  - NB: Cars can take this turn at high speeds. We particularly recommend hardening this intersection, installing a bike box, and considering the addition of right turns with a green arrow only (which will be possible since there is a right-turn only lane in the new design).

5. Signaling at Critical Intersections

As previously discussed, right-hand turns can be a conflict point between drivers and cyclists when there is a bike lane on the right-hand side of the road. In particular, there can be confusion

as to when drivers are allowed to turn right and when cyclists are allowed to continue forward movement. Bike signaling, while expensive, would help to mitigate confusion.

We believe it would be useful to have bike-specific signaling present along the new bike lanes, especially at intersections with a significant number of right-hand turns (such as Calvert, Cathedral, Porter, Tilden, Nebraska, and Military Road).

6. Pickup-Dropoff (PUDO) Area Optimization

We encourage DDOT to work with other city agencies to reach out to businesses along Connecticut Avenue to encourage them to alter their sidewalk/curbside service routine and identify changes that would be helpful. An example of this would be providing a PUDO area or temporary parking signage to businesses that commit to having dedicated support for curb/sidewalk service. Examples in the area of this type of service are the Starbucks at Livingston & Connecticut or Surfside near Van Ness & Wisconsin (both have walk up windows).

Having these modifications would facilitate both increased traffic to these establishments by cyclists (who wouldn't need to chain/lock up to enter) and more rapid turnover of the PUDO/temporary parking signage areas.

Along Connecticut, there are many large apartment buildings that have driveways that can be used for PUDO. In order to optimize the scarce allocation of residential PUDO areas, we would encourage DDOT to reserve these for establishments like the Montessori school at Jocelyn St. or those apartment buildings which do not have driveways on Connecticut Avenue.

7. Miscellaneous

We request that DDOT consider the permanent closure of the intersection of 36th Street and Connecticut Avenue, rerouting traffic to Fessenden. For the Fessenden intersection with Connecticut, WB on Fessenden, we request a consideration for a raised crosswalk to slow traffic down after the immediate turn from 36th Street onto Fessenden.

We strongly encourage DDOT to consider a large raised pedestrian crosswalk at the Woodley Zoo. Additionally, we would value WB side (near the retail) strong material bollards to discourage drop offs on that side (and instead provide a cutout in front of the zoo for tour bus/metro bus/circulator bus and rideshare drop offs).

8. Extension to Chevy Chase Circle

We strongly support the potential expansion of the planned changes along Connecticut Avenue from Legation to Oliver St. (just south of Chevy Chase Circle). If the protected bike lane were to end at Legation, northbound cyclists would suddenly be forced to merge with fast-moving traffic. In contrast, continuing the lane to Oliver Street would let cyclists continue on Western Avenue, which is a low-stress road for people on bicycles.

Additionally, were southbound Connecticut Avenue to narrow from three lanes to two at Legation, there is a chance that this design would result in significant congestion and encourage cut-through traffic on the heavily residential side streets in that area, where there is substantial

foot traffic. Having Connecticut Avenue narrow to two lanes further north–essentially at Chevy Chase Circle–would reduce the cut-through traffic. Additionally, this expansion is supported by the Chevy Chase Small Area Plan.

Thank you again for all of your work to make Connecticut Avenue a safer and more inviting thoroughfare for those who live and commute along it.

Ward 3 Bicycle Advocates