



Council of the District of Columbia

John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1

November 1, 2022

Everett Lott
Director, District Department of Transportation
250 M Street SE, Washington DC 20003

Dear Director Lott,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for DDOT's preferred concept #1, with the added modification of concept #6 (see attachments), for the Columbia Road bus priority project, as presented to ANC 1C on July 20, 2022.¹

Columbia Road is a vibrant street serving many different types of users. However, as it is currently configured it does not serve any user very well at all. As we proceed with a redesign, it's important to acknowledge that meeting every single travel need on Columbia Road is not possible, or even preferable, due to the width of the road.

DDOT's preferred concept appropriately prioritizes people traveling by transit, on sidewalks and in bike lanes; I believe it also addresses the poor allocation of curbside space by elevating the need for commercial loading and pick-up/drop-off space. I strongly believe that any issues related to parking availability can and should be addressed by looking at overall parking policy in the area rather than any scaling back of ambition on Columbia Road. DDOT's recent report to Council on "Innovative Parking Practices on Residential Streets", which looks at part of the ANC 1C area, includes several such proposals.²

¹ While I understand there are many details to be worked out as this project moves forward, such as parking regulations and safety improvements, I want to respect that DDOT is currently seeking feedback at the concept level only. It is my hope that many objections to the preferred concept are resolved as the concept is being refined.

² "Innovative Parking Practices on Residential Streets", District Department of Transportation, August 2022.
https://ddot.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddot/Innovative%20Parking_10-27-22-compressed.pdf.

I would also like to demonstrate my support of measures that ANC 1C has passed unanimously on three occasions: resolutions in 2019 and 2020 supporting protected bike lanes on Columbia Road (even if installing protected bike lanes would require “remov[ing] street parking as necessary”³), and a September 2022 resolution supporting DDOT’s preferred concept and “urg[ing] DDOT to modify [it] as little as possible, preserving the protected bike lanes and the bus priority lane.”⁴ While my views closely align with ANC 1C’s, my positions, as described in this letter and elsewhere, should not be construed as those of the ANC or of individual commissioners.

Additionally, I support the southbound segment between 19th Street and Connecticut Avenue as envisioned in concept #6, which includes both a dedicated bus lane and a protected bike lane rather than a shared bus/bike lane. While a bus/bike lane is an improvement over the status quo, it is not considered an all-ages facility and does not follow DDOT’s own stated guidance for minor arterials such as Columbia Road, as outlined in MoveDC and supported by NACTO and FHWA.⁵

The “Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2020” includes an installation requirement for protected bicycle facilities wherever planned for in the Multimodal Long-Range Transportation Plan (MoveDC), *and* a similar requirement for transit priority. It was a deliberate decision to make those two provisions distinct.⁶⁺ Columbia Road may in fact be the perfect use case for that legislative action. It is included in both the transit and bike priority networks, making it governed by both requirements. Notably, the allowable exemptions from these requirements do not include the preservation of parking.⁷

³ “Resolution on study and design of Columbia Road to accommodate protected bicycle lanes from 16th Street NW to Connecticut Avenue.” ANC 1C. February 21, 2020. <https://www.anc1c.org/index.php/pzt/category/355-columbia-road-study-request#>.

⁴ “Resolution on proposed Columbia Rd Bus Priority Lanes Concepts.” ANC 1C. October 22, 2022. <https://www.anc1c.org/index.php/pzt/category/390-columbia-rd-nw-bus-priority-lane>.

⁵ MoveDC Bicycle Priority Network. <https://movedc-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/pages/bicycles>.

⁶ “Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2020”, approved January 15, 2021 (D.C. Official Code § 50-1608.01).

⁺ Note: this section of the bill is still subject to appropriations, pending dedicated funding from additional automated traffic enforcement revenue. I still encourage DDOT to comply with statute that will soon be in effect, especially considering it is already reflected in the agency’s guidance and best practices.

⁷ *Ibid.*, D.C. Official Code § 50-1608.01, subsection (d).

Concept #6 is the only concept that meets all standards the District has established for bicycle and transit facility design. A shared bus/bike lane may be an acceptable option when space is constrained, as it is on 14th Street NW in Columbia Heights, but that is not the case here. It is certainly true that on-street parking is constrained in this area, as it has been for many years, with more RPP-permitted vehicles than there are spaces. But fear of opposition to the removal of parking does not exempt the agency from design standards, requirements, and best practices. These are not opposing viewpoints for which compromise can be sought. As mentioned above, neighborhood parking constraints for those who most need it should not, and ultimately cannot, be resolved by safeguarding on-street parking on specific blocks; it will need to be addressed holistically by better aligning curbside regulations with needs across the entire neighborhood.

Presuming that this concept for the Columbia Road bus priority project is selected for further refinement, my feedback on refinement to the concept is as follows:

- I support an extensive look at the one-way network that feeds into Columbia Road and any conversions to one-way that would improve operations and possibly create additional space for multimodal facilities.
- I support the pursuit of effective bus stop relocation, with stops located on the far side of intersections in as many places as possible. A stop on the southeast corner of 18th and Columbia may be difficult to accommodate but is important to get right; the central intersection of Adams Morgan should feel more like a “transit center,” given the distance from Metrorail stations. A new bus island in front of 1782-1790 Columbia Road might also serve the purpose of hardening the turn angle at the intersection of Columbia and Euclid, which currently enables turns onto Euclid at high speed. Given the intensity of use on Columbia Road, I recommend concrete bus islands over any tactical alternatives.
- Signal re-timings in tandem with this project should seek to improve pedestrian safety and comfort as much as possible. The intersection of 18th and Columbia, despite being in a very walkable area, is hostile to pedestrians due to its width and priority for vehicle throughput. I have received regular requests for an all-way diagonal crossing or Barnes dance at this intersection. I understand that the width would present a challenge, but I believe it is at the very least worthy of an all-pedestrian signal

phase. A traffic study commissioned by the Adams Morgan Partnership BID regarding the 18th Street Pedestrian Zone noted that the pedestrian zone could in fact improve vehicle level of service at many intersections nearby so long as signals are retimed appropriately.⁸ I'd encourage your team to take those recommendations into account and design the Columbia Road bus priority project to ensure compatibility with the pedestrian zone.

- Ensure that bike facilities connect: As of February 2022, DDOT's FY20-24 Proposed Protected Bikeway Map⁹ shows a bike facility on Columbia Road that extends past the stated scope of this project, inclusive of the blocks from 16th Street to 14th Street NW. This makes sense, as a gold standard bike facility ending at 16th Street wouldn't be a very coherent contribution to the overall network. I would appreciate more clarity on what is intended for these blocks, and whether it is an extension of the bus priority project scope or coordination with another part of the agency. I encourage the additional use of Harvard Street to connect new bike facilities to 14th Street, mirroring the existing one-way pair that Columbia and Harvard diverge into.

Bus service and reliability on Columbia Road must be improved; ensuring that is one of my top priorities. Per DDOT's mid-March 2022 needs assessment presentation¹⁰, Columbia Road is the second-slowest bus corridor in the District, with an average speed of less than six miles per hour. This is an abysmal statistic that's frequently confirmed to me anecdotally; I hear too many stories of riders giving up and walking on Columbia Road instead, easily moving faster than the bus they were on.

Eighty-four percent of Metrobus riders are nonwhite, 50 percent are considered low-income, and 57 percent have no car.¹¹ In Adams Morgan specifically, at least half of all households do not own a single vehicle.¹² Making bus service more frequent and reliable across the District is critical to making our transportation system more equitable, and to meeting our climate and transportation goals. To meet our

⁸ "18th Street Pedestrian Zone Traffic Impact Analysis." Wells + Associates. June 17, 2022. Study available upon request.

⁹ [FY20-24 Proposed Protected Bikeway Map](#)

¹⁰ Presentation to ANC 1C Planning, Zoning, and Transportation Committee, March 16, 2022. <https://bus-priority-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/documents/70fe87d8342b4913be1711ce71bb1b28/explore>.

¹¹ Data from WMATA briefing on Bus Network Redesign, October 2022.

¹² DC Health Matters indicators: Households without a vehicle.

<https://www.dchealthmatters.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=281&periodId=6955&comparisonId=6871&localeId=9409>.

goals, more of the District's roads must look like the version of Columbia Road that DDOT's bus priority team presented to ANC 1C in July 2022.

Further, Adams Morgan and Ward 1 as a whole are more than ready for better and safer bicycle infrastructure. By virtue of their existing transportation patterns, residents are already showing up to ask for, and support, protected bike lanes: Trips by bike in Ward 1 increased by an astounding *53 percent* from 2019 to 2022.¹³ Residents and visitors of all backgrounds are traveling by bike for many kinds of trips: service workers headed home after a late shift when Metrorail is closed or buses are arriving too infrequently, families taking their kids to school, people visiting Adams Morgan's many restaurants and retail businesses. They deserve to be safe. I was surprised to learn that, on Columbia Road, crashes in which cyclists are injured outnumber crashes in which pedestrians are injured, a dynamic that is astoundingly rare simply due to relative volumes of pedestrians and cyclists on any given roadway.¹⁴ Because of the irregular grid in this part of the District, there is truly no alternative to Columbia Road for many trips – improving nearby streets does not solve the same problem.¹⁵

Even though cyclists on Columbia Road are more frequently injured in crashes than pedestrians, injuries or fatalities of any sort are unacceptable. I am submitting this letter very close to the one-year anniversary of Nina Larson's death after being hit by a driver at Columbia Road and Biltmore Street NW. While I thank DDOT for fulfilling our request for flex post crosswalk daylighting at all crosswalks on Columbia, I only made that smaller request knowing that we were approaching a full-corridor redesign, giving us the opportunity to meet the highest standards of pedestrian safety. I understand that specific treatments for pedestrian crossings can't be considered until a concept is selected – making it all the more important that we move forward with the preferred concept without any further delay.

I want to thank you and your team for their incredible work thus far. I am strongly in support of executing the Bus Priority Plan and look forward to seeing, on DDOT's envisioned timeline, a re-

¹³ "DC Travel Trends Report", Greater Greater Washington and Nelson/Nygaard Associates (forthcoming).

¹⁴ Presentation to ANC 1C Planning, Zoning, and Transportation Committee, March 16, 2022. <https://bus-priority-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/documents/70fe87d8342b4913be1711ce71bb1b28/explore>.

¹⁵ I was glad to assist ANC 1C in supporting the installation of contraflow bicycle lanes on Argonne Street and Lanier Place NW to provide a contiguous bicycle route through Lanier Heights. As ANC 1C was very clear in stating, those improvements should by no means be considered a substitute to improving safety for cyclists on Columbia Road. As we have seen, bicycle volumes on Columbia have not substantively changed because of those contraflow lanes.

imagined Columbia Road that protects vulnerable road users and works better for more people. My staff and I are available for any further questions.

Sincerely,



Brianne K. Nadeau
Councilmember, Ward 1

cc:

Megan Kanagy, Mass Transit Branch Manager, DDOT

Kevin Harrison, Transportation Planner, DDOT

Fiona Clem, 1C08, ANC 1C Chair

Meghan Faulkner, 1C04, ANC 1C Planning, Zoning, and Transportation Committee Chair

Jake Faleschini, 1C07, ANC 1C Planning, Zoning and Transportation Committee Member

Howard Bauleke, 1C01, ANC 1C Planning, Zoning and Transportation Committee Member

Kristen Barden, Executive Director, Adams Morgan Partnership BID

Attachment 1: DDOT Preferred Concept #1

DDOT-Preferred Concept (#1)

- PBL through whole corridor except southwest-bound (downhill) approach to Connecticut Ave.
- 24/7 southwest-bound bus-bike lane from Kalorama to Connecticut Ave.
- 24/7 northeast-bound bus and left-turn lane onto "little" Harvard St
- Parking and loading zones accommodated where possible



Attachment 2: Concept #6 (Compatible with Concept #1)

Bus Lane approaching Connecticut Ave (#6)

- Positive**
- Protected bike lanes provide highest level of comfort for on-street bike facility.
 - Reduces bus travel time in congested segment
- Negative**
- Removes all parking from a large block with limited alley and side street access

Note: Compatible with other concepts north of 18th St

Connecticut to 19th

