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ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G**

CHEVY CHASE, BARNABY WOODS, HAWTHORNE

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**ANC 3/4G Testimony Before the  
Committee on Transportation and the Environment  
Performance Oversight Hearing on the  
Department of Transportation  
February 25, 2019**

Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment, I am Randy Speck, Chair of ANC 3/4G (Chevy Chase), and I am testifying on behalf of our Commission, which authorized this testimony at its February 11, 2019 meeting by a vote of 7 to 0 (a quorum being 4).

Our ANC has far more interactions with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) than with any other District agency. Some of the many issues we've addressed with DDOT in FY 2018 include (1) assessments of hazardous intersections and implementation of safety improvements, (2) actions to mitigate the impact of diverted traffic as a result of Beach Drive and Oregon Avenue closures, (3) repairs of deteriorated streets and sidewalks, (4) installation of new sidewalks to improve pedestrian safety, (5) placement of bioretention cells on neighborhood streets to capture stormwater runoff, (6) the need for traffic calming measures to address speeding on neighborhood streets, (7)

reduction of safety hazards around Chevy Chase Circle, (8) the testing and rollout of dockless bikes and scooters, and (9) the use of public space, both for residences (e.g., driveway curb cuts) and restaurants (sidewalk cafes). While we have seen dramatic and much appreciated improvements in DDOT's responsiveness under Director Jeff Marootian, community outreach and engagement continue to be concerns.

As an initial matter, we commend Director Marootian and his team for their willingness to meet with the ANC both at its public meetings and on the streets of our neighborhood. Director Marootian has generously spent his time — including on weekends — to assess problems first-hand and to hear from those who are most affected by DDOT decisions. This contrasts sharply with prior directors who did not communicate directly with the ANC or residents. Director Marootian has also revitalized DDOT's Community Engagement team (Director Lee Goodall and Customer Service Specialist Donise Jackson) so that commissioners have single points of contact to address concerns. We've also come to rely on DDOT's skilled traffic engineers like Derek Voight and Wayne Wilson (managing the Oregon Avenue rehabilitation), though we will sorely miss Sam Zimbabwe's expertise and leadership. Finally, Director Marootian recently strengthened his team with the addition of Ian Maggard, who previously assisted our ANC when he was Ward 3 liaison for the Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services.

Nevertheless, there are areas that need improvement, particularly with respect to notice and communications. The most acute issue has been DDOT's "Oregon Avenue Watershed Green Streets" project (<http://bit.ly/2DecP3o>), which proposes to install 29

bioretention cells on neighborhood streets in our ANC. Recognizing the pushback that these cells would likely provoke, we advised DDOT in February 2017, that it was imperative that DDOT contact each household individually to explain the plans and to consider residents' legitimate concerns. DDOT never systematically conducted that outreach, and when it abruptly announced last Fall that it was going to begin installing the bioretention cells, it ignited a predictable firestorm of complaints. DDOT is now scrambling to address residents' issues that should have been considered from the beginning. To its credit, DDOT and Director Marootian are now working with residents, as it should have done months ago.

We are also concerned about DDOT's communication with the community about the upcoming 18-month closure for Oregon Avenue's complete reconstruction. The ANC and Oregon Avenue residents are grateful for DDOT's robust outreach program during the protracted design phase. The challenge now, however, will be to inform the public — both resident and commuters who use Oregon Avenue — about construction changes and progress as the project proceeds. Sections of the road will be closed or one-way at various points, and that information needs to be readily available. So far, the project website (<http://oregonaveddot.com>) has not been a reliable source for projected schedules or up-to-dates to the project's status. We have urged DDOT to create a one-stop source for all information about the project that the ANC, residents, and commuters can rely on as work begins, but we have yet to see that implementation, even though construction is projected to begin this Spring.

Another communication problem persists with late or missing notice about upcoming DDOT actions. The required 30-days notice from the Public Space Committee for public space permit applications is more often honored in the breach. Consequently, it is sometimes difficult for the Commission to conduct its investigation and hold a public meeting so that it can provide a timely review before the Committee's meeting. There does not seem to be a uniform procedure for ensuring that ANCs receive timely notice. Similarly, despite our repeated admonitions, DDOT often does not provide the required ten-day notice for work that it will perform within commissioners' Single Member Districts.

DDOT also needs to keep the ANC and residents better informed about realistic timetables for important neighborhood projects. We worked extensively with DDOT and residents to reach a consensus on a design for sidewalks on Chestnut Street only to see that project go dormant. We were told in February 2018, that money was earmarked, the design would be completed in a year, and construction would begin in the Spring of 2019. The last we heard in June 2018, however, was that the design consultant had not even been hired. Since then, it's been radio silence.

Similarly, we were assured in June 2018, that DDOT and the other affected jurisdictions had developed a long-overdue plan to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety for Chevy Chase Circle and that they would conduct a pilot study in the Fall of 2018. We've heard nothing further.

In perhaps the longest apparent dormancy, our ANC submitted comments on DDOT's draft Broad Branch Road Rehabilitation Environmental Assessment in

November 2013 (available at <http://bit.ly/2SgIIIno>). Other ANCs filed similar comments, but we heard nothing further, and in 2017, this project disappeared from DDOT's annual Statewide Transportation Improvement Program list of projects (<http://bit.ly/2DjsNcz>). DDOT assured us that a new Environmental Assessment would be issued in the Fall of 2018, but again, nothing has happened. We understand this project's challenges, but Board Branch Road continues to flood and erode after even moderate rains, and bicyclists and pedestrians take their lives in their hands whenever they try to traverse it. The original Environmental Assessment concluded correctly that "no action" was not a viable alternative, but that's what we've gotten by default.

Finally, our transportation infrastructure is badly deteriorated across the District. Streets, sidewalks, and alleys all need urgent repairs, but DDOT does not have the resources to fix everything as quickly as we — or other ANCs — would like. DDOT necessarily has to prioritize where it will spend scarce repair dollars. We would appreciate better communications about the criteria for those decisions and where and when particular projects are in DDOT's queue.

DDOT's plate is extremely full, and we appreciate the effort its current managers are making to address its myriad demands. Communications have improved exponentially. We hope these comments will be taken in the way that they are intended — as constructive criticism that will lead to even better performance.

Thanks you.