



DCST

DC SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Adams Morgan BID ★ Capitol Hill BID ★ Capitol Riverfront BID ★ Coalition for Smarter Growth
Destination DC ★ Downtown BID ★ Events DC ★ Federal City Council ★ Georgetown BID ★ Golden Triangle BID
Greater Greater Washington ★ Greater Washington Partnership ★ Mt. Vernon Triangle CID ★ NoMa BID
Rosslyn BID ★ Sierra Club DC Chapter ★ Southwest BID ★ Washington Area Bicyclist Association
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Testimony by David Alpert, Executive Director, DC Sustainable Transportation
District Department of Transportation performance oversight hearing
February 27, 2018

Dear Chairperson Cheh and members of the committee,

DC Sustainable Transportation (DCST) is a nonprofit organization which works to make DC a global leader with frequent, rapid, safe, affordable, and reliable transportation to, from, and around DC job centers. DCST brings together business, advocacy, and government entities around shared priorities for DC transportation.

Members include nine of DC's Business Improvement Districts; Events DC and Destination DC; business groups including the Federal City Council and Greater Washington Partnership; and advocacy groups like the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Sierra Club DC chapter, and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association.

DCST believes in providing all residents and workers with options to travel by transit, walking, and biking; to mitigate congestion and better manage curb space; and to prepare for mobility changes in the future with advancing technology.

We have been working closely with DDOT and its director, Jeff Marootian, and appreciate their efforts in these areas.

I wanted to take the opportunity today to discuss some of the big picture transportation issues that we see facing the District in the coming years:

1. Metro
2. Bus service
3. Curbside management
4. Autonomous vehicles and other future technology

Transit

Ridership has been declining on Metrorail, and the system is struggling with financial solvency. The finances of WMATA are not part of this committee nor this hearing, but clearly stabilizing Metro is a top priority for the District.

The loss of late night Metro service has been a burden for our commercial districts, and we hope to see Metro reach a point in the future with its financing and maintenance practices where it can begin to restore some of the late night hours.

Regardless, Metro is not going to be the solution to all transportation issues and certainly is not about to be expanded. There is not yet a clear next big vision for improving mobility.

I believe it lies in a strong commitment to fast, frequent, and reliable bus service. DCST is recommending a network of high-quality bus corridors, in all eight wards, which can run express-type service, two way all day, at ten minute headways or better, and offer a 30 minute ride from the edge of the District, in any direction, to the center as well as opportunities to easily transfer to other lines to reach any other part of the District.

We appreciate DDOT's efforts to pursue bus lanes and other treatments on 16th Street NW and H Street NW and hope to see those projects continue. Further, there should be a larger, comprehensive network of high-quality bus services all throughout the city.

Curbside management

The ways we use our streets is changing. No longer are streets only about private cars and buses. Now, we have more and more demands on the verges of the streets.

- Multiplying ride hailing services require space to pick up and drop off, and often have to stop in the middle of the street, which blocks traffic.
- Increased use of e-commerce services for durable goods, groceries, restaurant deliveries, and much more mean more and more package transportation requiring vehicles to stop in our commercial areas for pickups and neighborhoods for deliveries.
- Adequate bicycle parking requires identifying some curb spaces for racks and corrals.
- We want to add parklets, stormwater-collecting rain gardens, and wider sidewalks in many areas.

Meeting the needs of our residents and businesses will require rethinking the ways we use curb spaces and a willingness to question the old-fashioned status quo that storing a personal vehicle for long periods of time is the best use of virtually all curb spaces. The city simply cannot function without more creative and efficient allocations of space.

We also must demand useful data from these services to understand the needs and utilizations of our curbsides. When this council legalized ride hailing services, it did not follow the lead of some

other cities like New York and San Francisco to demand confidential data for government planning purposes about the volume and distribution of demand.

I hope this council will examine that issue in the near future so that we can make decisions about allocating public funding and space with a genuine understanding of what our residents and businesses need.

Autonomous vehicles

Like it or not, autonomous vehicles will be a part of within ten to twenty years, and eventually will make up virtually all vehicle trips.

This will solve some current problems, such as substantially increasing road safety and access for seniors and persons with disabilities. However, it would be naive to assume that they will be an unalloyed good without public policy intervention.

To the contrary, as transportation expert and Zipcar founder Robin Chase now explains in speeches and videos, the future looks like “heaven” or “hell,” and cities can only reach the “heaven” future by steering there deliberately.

“Heaven” means that fleets of shared vehicles - basically, autonomous shared vans or buses, perhaps operated by the transit authority or perhaps by private companies - serve most trips. The need for car ownership and parking space declines, and mobility improves by having an on-demand, shared, electric vehicle at one’s fingertips at any time.

“Hell,” on the other hand, is what we will get if people simply trade their current personal cars for autonomous ones that are not electric and not shared. People may be motivated to live even further out in the country, to have a farm and simply work in one’s “mobile office” for two hours each way every day. After all, you can get a lot of emails done!

Once reaching a meeting or shopping, the car owner simply asks the vehicle to circle the block, empty, until needed again. This is a recipe for massive increases in congestion and pollution.

It’s not just fanciful. An analysis by Fehr & Peers using COG transportation modeling systems estimated that without sharing, vehicle miles traveled would increase by 47% and transit trip growth decrease by 26%. Even with sharing, VMT increases 27% and transit trips drop by 20%. The relevant slides are below.

Cumulative Effect (Private) ²⁸

MWCOG TESTING

- Test – run 6 sensitivity tests together, no auto occupancy test
- Expectation – big increase to auto trips and VMT; transit mode shift

PRIVATE OWNERSHIP TESTING RESULTS

Measure	MWCOG	Mountain State Regional Model	Bay Area Model	California Central Valley Model	Southern California Model	Puget Sound Regional Council AB Model	Atlanta Regional Commission Model
VMT	46.9%	16.5%	45.8%	67.6%	12.0%	19.6%	23.9%
Vehicle Trip Growth	24.6%	15.0%	19.4%	26.4%	16.0%	2.5%	2.6%
Transit Trip Growth	-26.0%	-38.9%	15.8%	-42.9%	5.0%	-7.7%	-42.4%

Cumulative Effect (Shared) ²⁹

MWCOG TESTING

- Test – run all 7 sensitivity tests together
- Expectation – less increase in VMT and auto trips compared to 6 test run

SUBSCRIPTION/SHARED TESTING RESULTS

Measure	MWCOG	Mountain State Regional Model	Bay Area Model	California Central Valley Model	Southern California Model	Puget Sound Regional Council AB Model	Atlanta Regional Commission Model
VMT	26.7%	3.6%	16.3%	42.6%	-	-	-
Vehicle Trip Growth	5.2%	0.9%	-6.6%	-1.7%	-	-	-
Transit Trip Growth	-19.8%	-38.9%	15.8%	-42.9%	-	-	-

Further, municipal transportation revenue will decline as parking meters become unnecessary and, if fleets are electrified as they should be, gas tax revenue will drop. DC and other cities must replace this with a fee system which prices road use and discourages the wasteful zero-passenger

vehicle trip by charging higher fees for such uses while encouraging shared, multi-passenger travel.

In addition, blue collar jobs such as bus driving, truck driving, and taxi or ride hail driving will disappear, and the District must invest in its residents to help them transition to new types of good-paying employment.

We can get to “heaven.” We simply must plan now to do that, and DCST is working with DDOT and other city officials as well as council staff to do so. We are very excited about the opportunities to demonstrate much of this through an RFI the mayor recently announced with the Southwest BID to pilot autonomous vehicle systems on the extremely underutilized 10th Street SW, aka the L’Enfant Promenade, connecting the Smithsonian to the future Spy Museum and the Wharf.

Dockless bikes

In the nearer future, technology such as dockless bikeshare is already changing our transportation landscape. DCST members would like to see these technologies encouraged and helped to thrive while managing specific impacts.

There have been some legitimate concerns raised thus far. Some bikes have been falling over in heavy wind. Some have been occasionally left on curb ramps or blocking sidewalks. And a few people seem to delight in throwing them into the C&O canal. These are matters which need to be addressed, and we are working with operators and DDOT to do so.

Some people have simply been unaccustomed to seeing bicycles more frequently about, and this is not such a problem. Also, a few people have complained about young black men riding these bicycles. We are extremely pleased that dockless bikeshare, at least anecdotally, has been reaching communities traditionally less well served by Capital Bikeshare or private bicycling and we hope to see that continue.

We look forward to working with DDOT and the council on regulations or legislation following the current pilot period.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Alpert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Alpert" clearly distinguishable.

David Alpert
Executive Director
DC Sustainable Transportation