



- ★ 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
- ★ Washington Area Bicyclist Association



Gabe Klein, Co-founder, CityFi;
former director, DDOT

Susan Shaheen, Director, Innovative
Mobility Research, UC Berkeley

Dear Chairpersons Mendelson, Cheh, and Evans and members of the Council:

The above group of organizations, companies, and experts have come together to provide suggestions to you regarding the District's 2019 budget as it pertains to transportation and ride-hailing, including the proposed increase in the tax on ride-hailing services which provide shared or private rides that can be requested by an app.

We ask that you (1) apply any tax increase on ride-hailing only to single passenger private rides (as opposed to pooled rides); (2) initiate a study to evaluate structures for public space management and/or funding that advance mobility goals and anticipate future technology; and (3) ensure sufficient funding for enforcing the current pilot pick-up & drop-off zone and allow for expansion.

(1) Encourage shared rides by multiple passengers in tax policy

We support a robust transportation network in Washington including a healthy and high-functioning Metro system. The District is considering raising the tax on ride-hailing as one source of revenue. If you decide to do so, **we encourage you to increase the tax only on private bookings and to keep “pooled” options** (which aim to get multiple passengers into each vehicle) **at the existing 1% Gross Receipts Tax.**

Compared to single passenger private rides or people driving their own cars alone, pooled options help reduce traffic and pollution. In addition, they are the most affordable ride-hailing option. By taxing only single passenger options, you would help keep pooled rides affordable for low- and middle-income DC residents who may not be able to always pay for more expensive private rides.

This policy would also be consistent with the views of national environmental groups, transportation and urban mobility experts, and companies which recently stated that “every city ... should clearly incentivize multi-passenger pooling options” in its tax structure. Finally, it would be an initial step towards helping the District prepare for autonomous vehicles, which experts agree will have to be deployed on a shared basis in our cities if we are to realize their full benefits.

(2) Fund a study on public space management, revenue, and data sharing related to ride-hailing and future technology

Ultimately, we believe that it will be necessary for the District to establish a system in which every vehicle pays for its fair share for road use, congestion, and pollution. As traffic grows and we move into a future of automation, DC will have to implement policies to replace lost revenue, strongly incentivize shared trips, and discourage empty vehicles from circling our streets.

How best to address these issues is complicated and will require balancing various factors, but the work should begin now. **We encourage the Council to appropriate funds in the budget for the District Department of Transportation and DC Sustainable Transportation to study and recommend options** for public space management and tax policies that address the District’s goals to efficiently use the road network for the movement of people and delivery of goods; provide equitable transportation mobility and access; and minimize traffic congestion.

The study could further make recommendations for data which could be shared between private companies and government agencies or nonprofits which participate in planning activities. In order to make informed transportation decisions, the District would benefit from additional data from ride-hailing companies, future autonomous vehicle companies, and others. Companies have an interest in keeping confidential business information from competitors, and it is important that individuals’ privacy be protected. One promising avenue being piloted is to create a neutral data storehouse that can accept data, and provide government officials or researchers with the ability to analyze the data, with personally identifying information and information specific to one company, removed.

The study should consult stakeholders from business organizations, advocacy groups, transportation providers, academia, and government.

(3) Fund enforcement of the current and future pick-up/drop-off zone

The District is currently piloting a “no parking” zone on Connecticut Avenue in the Golden Triangle during late nights. This zone allows ride-hailing, taxis, and other vehicles to pull up to the curb to pick up or discharge passengers rather than double- or triple-parking in Connecticut Avenue, as had been widespread.

Already there is anecdotal evidence of success at reducing congestion as a result, and DDOT is working to formally evaluate this. We are eager to see this succeed and expand to many additional Business Improvement Districts and other neighborhoods around the District (and nearby jurisdictions).

Currently, some private drivers are parking in the zone despite the restriction, and ticketing has not been effective at deterring the practice. We are working with DDOT to support solutions including better signage, but we and DDOT believe that it is necessary to pilot towing as a part of this solution. As this is happening outside DPW's normal towing hours, it requires additional funds.

DDOT is looking to pilot this in FY2018 with existing funds, but **we ask that the FY2019 budget include funds to ensure this towing can continue**, if deemed appropriate, and further suggest **assigning funding to allow for the expansion to three or more new such zones** and including adequate enforcement as necessary.

If you have any questions about any of these issues, please contact David Alpert, Executive Director, DC Sustainable Transportation, at alpert@dcstcoalition.org.