



District of Columbia Government  
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A  
PO Box 15020  
Washington, DC 20003



## **Testimony for the DDOT Performance Oversight Hearing**

Members of the Council and representatives of DDOT, my name is Roberta Shapiro. I represent Single Member District 6A03. Today I am testifying on behalf of ANC 6A, which extends from Florida Avenue to East Capitol Street between 7th and 15th Streets Northeast.

We thank you for this opportunity. Also, we would like to acknowledge a positive shift in DDOT's culture, including responding to ANC commissioners in a more timely and collaborative fashion.

Today, I am going to focus on the issue of sidewalk safety.

In order for a community to be successfully walkable, the sidewalks themselves must be safe.

At the June 2023 6A Transportation and Public Space Committee, our ANC reviewed the 473 responses to a resident survey about sidewalk conditions and maintenance in our community. <https://anc6a.org/wp-content/uploads/TPSA0623.pdf>

- 305 respondents said they or a household member had fallen on DC sidewalks, some multiple times, over the last 2 years.
- One-third of those falling were under age 40.
- The preponderance of people fell on brick sidewalks.
- 263 people reported injuries.
- 114 needed medical care including surgeries and hospitalizations.
- There were 77 periods of disability, 6 were permanent.
- In more than 400 free narrative comments, 184 cited brick-related issues.

In addition, a recent Washington Post article on this topic generated more than 300 written comments, several letters to the editor and a number of emails and phone calls to me, and, I am told, to DDOT. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2024/01/13/dc-sidewalk-pedestrian-safety/>

Laudably, over the last few years DDOT has reduced, by two-thirds, the number of open requests for sidewalk repairs. Still, approximately 6,500 remain open.

This failure to maintain sidewalks is not only costly in terms of human injury and disability but recently cost DC approximately \$1.9 million in annual payouts for sidewalk injuries. And DDOT's most recent report shows more than thirty "trip and fall" claims pending worth tens of millions of dollars. (See Appendix 1 of DDOT's Feb. 2024 pre-hearing response to the questions p. 251-259, <https://lms.dccouncil.gov/Hearings/hearings/248>)

These payouts and pending claims are in spite of the fact, DC Office of Risk Management (ORM) requires a claimant to prove that the City had **prior notice** of the sidewalk defect and failed to repair it in a "reasonable timeframe." However, DDOT has up to 270 **business** days to repair the defect, contrasted with 3 days for a pothole. Remarkably, this ORM policy relieves DDOT of responsibility for proactive monitoring of sidewalk hazards, putting the burden on residents instead. Is this "reasonable"?

We believe that the City Council and DDOT should rethink sidewalk construction requirements. Capitol Hill is one of a few neighborhoods required by a 1983 statute (DC MUNICIPAL Regulations, <http://dcrules.elaws.us/dcmr/24-1200-24-12>) to have brick sidewalks installed despite the fact that:

- According to Federal Highway Administration "...brick or pavers... are often tripping hazards" and "These bricks or pavers need to be set in concrete pad for maximum life and stability." Notably, however, DC requires brick residential sidewalks to be set in sand.  
<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/pedbike/05085/chapt9.cfm>
- The material costs for brick is 61% to 81% higher than for Portland Concrete, and, with installation added, presumably even more costly. (Cost information provided by Brian Holub, DDOT)
- Finally, brick generally IS NOT historic in ANC 6A, having been mandated only in 1983. Portland Concrete was the primary sidewalk material used when the majority of area residences were built. Furthermore, even if brick were historic, DDOT is using this material well outside the officially designated "historic districts" in 6A.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1983/10/27/dc-to-use-bricks-to-fix-old-sidewalks/b9f8ccde-c10c-4694-83fe-2ec4d2c6dbe7/>

George Bernard Shaw stated, "Only fools repeat the same things over and over, expecting to obtain different results." Therefore, we ask DDOT and the Council to rethink the procedures and standards for sidewalks in various DC neighborhoods, and to allow DDOT and communities greater flexibility in sidewalk construction methods. Absent a large, and probably very unrealistic increase in DDOT's budget, DDOT faces a Sisyphean task in maintaining ANC 6A's brick sidewalks in a safe and timely manner.

We believe that transition away from brick to alternative materials would free up, perhaps double, the financial and labor resources available to DDOT for more systematic monitoring and more timely and durable maintenance of currently dangerous sidewalks. In the interim, we ask DDOT to redouble its efforts to address sidewalk safety in a more timely manner, prioritizing the most dangerous areas.

There will be some who protest any replacement of brick with other material based on aesthetic preferences. However, it is hard to justify aesthetics when the cost in human suffering and limited City financial resources is so high.

Thank you for giving great weight to the recommendations of this Commission.

This testimony was reviewed and voted upon at a regularly scheduled and properly noticed meeting on January 11, 2024, our Commission voted 6-0-0 (with 4 Commissioners required for quorum) to authorize Commissioners Shapiro and Gove to draft the above testimony.

If you wish to discuss this testimony with the Commission, please feel free to reach out to me at [6A04@anc.dc.gov](mailto:6A04@anc.dc.gov), Commissioner Shapiro at [6A03@anc.dc.gov](mailto:6A03@anc.dc.gov), and Shaun Lynch, ANC 6A Transportation and Public Space Chair at [6ATPSChair@gmail.com](mailto:6ATPSChair@gmail.com).



Amber Gove  
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A



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Testimony for the DDOT Performance Oversight Hearing  
February 9, 2024

Members of the Council and representatives of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), my name is Amber Gove and I represent Single Member District 6A04. Today I am testifying on behalf of ANC 6A, whose area extends from Florida Avenue Northeast to East Capitol Street between 7th and 15th Streets Northeast.

We thank you for this opportunity. We are grateful for several recent or ongoing safety improvements, including the:

- C Street and North Carolina Avenue NE projects
- 8<sup>th</sup> Street NE Bus Priority Project
- Various raised crosswalks and speed tables
- Lowered speed limits on several neighborhood streets, and
- An all-way stop at 11<sup>th</sup> and F Street NE.

Our testimony today consists of three requests. In your oversight of DDOT, we ask that you seek: 1) improved preventive and corrective responses to rising traffic violence, 2) increased transparency in the traffic safety input (TSI) process, 3) more rapid and innovative responses to sidewalk safety, 4) and effective and timely implementation of the provisions of the STEER, the No Right Turn on Red and Safe Routes to School laws.

Finally we look forward to periodic public reports from DDOT on progress toward or achievement of these goals.

### **1. Traffic Violence**

Despite the much-publicized Vision Zero initiative, traffic fatalities remain a tragic problem in DC. Since 2017, traffic fatality rates in the District have almost doubled, from a rate of 4 per 100,000 to almost 8 per 100,000. Remarkably, almost half (46%) of the victims were not in a motor vehicle, but rather were pedestrians, bicyclists, and scooter riders (“non-drivers”).

Zeroing in on our ANC 6A community:

- H Street NE and Florida Ave NE remain extremely dangerous parts of DC’s high-injury network.
- For automobile drivers and passengers, there has been a general, if somewhat erratic downward trend in major injuries and fatalities.
- However, major injuries and fatalities for pedestrians and bikers have not decreased and represent from one-third to one-half of all serious outcomes in ANC6A.

DC residents should enjoy all the individual and communal health, economic, public safety, and environmental benefits of walkability. DC’s executive, legislative, and administrative leadership must shift their priorities and resource allocations to support safe mobility for people other than just drivers and passengers in private vehicles. This is particularly relevant in communities such as ANC6A where much of our population (e.g. seniors, young professionals, children, people with disabilities) depend on walking, biking, scooting, and public transportation.

Accordingly, we request improved attention to and resources, for the following strategies as a routine part of:

- Planning major new projects
- Pre-implementation review of previously approved but pending DDOT projects (e.g. Florida Ave, 8<sup>th</sup> and H St bus priority projects)
- Implementing focused site-specific improvement or corrective projects (e.g. 11<sup>th</sup> and East Capitol).

These strategies should include:

- Automated Traffic Enforcement, including red-light and speed cameras, specifically at the locations requested by our Commission on two prior occasions (August 2020 and February 2023<sup>1</sup>)
- Structural elements designed to protect non-drivers including:
  - Adequate crosswalks (e.g. Florida Avenue near Gallaudet and at M St., near the Metro)
  - Elimination of other hazard points (such as the triangle at 12th and Florida Ave where bicyclist Dave Salovesh was killed.)
  - Additional traffic calming devices such as raised crosswalks and speed humps, especially at sites of prior traffic fatalities or serious injuries, and near schools and parks, including Lincoln Park
  - Hardening of additional locations beyond the two pilot locations identified for ANC 6A (11th and East Capitol Street)
- Lowering speed limits to 20 mph on all collector streets, as requested by our Commission in November 2021 (to date only three of the eight requested have been notified for installation);
- Installation of more Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) traffic signals even where it requires installation of additional signal controllers, for example all along Florida Ave NE and at 7<sup>th</sup> and Independence SE (Note: While not located in 6A, many 6A residents use this intersection to reach Eastern Market and Barracks Row areas).
- Installation of all-way stop signs at all local-local intersections, including those previously requested at 13th and I Street, A Street at 14th Street<sup>2</sup> and 15th Street<sup>3</sup> NE<sup>4</sup> (the practice route for

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<sup>1</sup> <https://anc6a.org/wp-content/uploads/ANC6A-Automated-Camera-Enforcement.pdf>  
<https://anc6a.org/wp-content/uploads/ANC6A-Automated-Camera-Enforcement-Renewed-Request-with-SRs.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://anc6a.org/wp-content/uploads/ANC6A-to-DDOT-Local-Local-All-Way-Stops.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://anc6a.org/wp-content/uploads/TSA-15th-St-and-Constitution-Ave-NE.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://anc6a.org/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-DDOT-re-traffic-calming-at-15th-and-A-St-NE.pdf>

Eastern High School's Blue and White Marching Machine) and Constitution Avenue at 15th Street NE, Tennessee Avenue NE at 14th, 15th, E and F Streets<sup>5</sup> and Corbin at 13th Street NE.

- More protected bike lanes, such as along Maryland Ave NE and the 800 block of West Virginia Ave NE.
- Completion and expansion of bus priority lanes on 8th and H Streets and consideration of bus bulb-outs on other key routes including 14th and 15th Streets.

When these traffic calming and control strategies are not employed, tragedies such as the pedestrian death on the 900 block of K St NE will continue to occur. We urge DDOT to redouble their efforts on Vision Zero and, in the interim, again request that the crash response team intervene on the 900 block of K St NE.

## **2. Improved Systems for Reporting, Remediating and Tracking Traffic Safety Issues**

One year after implementing the revised TSI program, the mechanics of the program continue to lack accuracy and sufficient transparency. Residents filing a TSI via 311 receive an immediate notice that their request has been “completed.” In fact, no action has been taken other than transferring the request from 311 to DDOT. Understandably, this communication is confusing for residents.

Furthermore, beyond this point, the TSI dashboard is difficult to use and often inaccurate or missing data.

- Completed requests are sometimes listed as “pending.” Non-remediated requests are sometimes listed as “completed.”
- The specific nature of the request is unclear beyond a broad category.
- No rationale for the scoring, prioritization or denial of a TSI is provided to the resident filing the TSI, or on the dashboard.
- There is no clarity on how TSIs that represent imminent danger are flagged.
- Data are not available in a form that would allow residents, commissioners, etc. to tell how many TSIs have been filed at a location, how they have been scored and why, how long it took to respond to a TSI, and if a work order was approved, how long it took to complete.
- There is no field to indicate if the ANC, Commissioner or other City representative is submitting the TSI

In summary, as we testified last year,<sup>6</sup> the TSI process remains a frustrating and off-putting “black box” for residents and commissioners alike. Accordingly, we strongly urge DDOT to improve the transparency and responsiveness of this process, and the data related to it, during 2024.

## **3. STEER Act Provisions, Safe Routes to School and No Right on Red Laws**

We applaud the Council for addressing the issues of traffic violence through the provisions of the STEER Act and support timely final approval by Mayor. Thereafter, we ask DDOT, as well as MPD, DMV, the courts, and other appropriate entities to ensure timely and effective implementation of the Act to reduce the traffic violence caused by dangerous and impaired drivers.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://anc6a.org/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-DDOT-re-Tennessee-Ave-NE-and-14th-15th-F-and-E.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://anc6a.org/wp-content/uploads/6A-DDOT-Performance-Oversight-Testimony.docx.pdf>

Finally, we look forward to the implementation of no right on red across DC starting in 2025 and the implementation of the Safe Routes to School laws that were passed last year, and hope that DDOT will engage with ANCs for the local implementation of those laws.

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At a regularly scheduled and properly noticed meeting<sup>7</sup> on January 11, 2024 our Commission voted 6-0-0 (with 4 Commissioners required for quorum) to authorize Commissioners Shapiro and Gove to draft the above testimony.

Thank you for giving great weight to the recommendations of this Commission. Should you wish to discuss this testimony with the Commission, please feel free to reach out to me at 6A04@anc.dc.gov, Commissioner Shapiro at 6A03@anc.dc.gov, and our Transportation and Public Space Co-Chairs at 6ATPSChair@gmail.com.

On Behalf of the Commission,



Amber Gove  
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A

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<sup>7</sup> ANC 6A meetings are advertised electronically on, anc-6a@googlegroups.com, and newhilleast@groups.io, at www.anc6a.org, on Twitter (@ANC6A) and through print advertisements in the Hill Rag.