



## **ANC 6A Resolution 2-2023**

### **Call for Greater Transparency and Action to Address Sidewalk Repairs, Sidewalk Gaps, and Pedestrian Infrastructure**

**WHEREAS** Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A strongly supports Mayor Muriel Bowser’s Vision Zero efforts to ensure zero fatalities and serious injuries to users of the District’s transportation systems and has consistently acted to further these goals. Sidewalks are critical infrastructure for meeting the District’s Vision Zero goals: Pedestrian injuries and deaths are more than twice as likely to occur in places without sidewalks, and the presence of a sidewalk or pathway on both sides of the street corresponds to a reduction in “walking along road” pedestrian crashes of approximately 88%. Disabled individuals and seniors, among other groups, are at higher risk of injury when sidewalks are missing or are not maintained. Furthermore, dangerous and missing sidewalks are not accessible and discriminate against disabled individuals, despite the District’s commitments to sidewalk accessibility. We are all safer with robust sidewalk and pedestrian infrastructure.

**AND WHEREAS** in the time since Mayor Bowser launched Vision Zero, not only have traffic fatalities risen in the District, pedestrian fatalities as a share of the total have risen. In 2016, pedestrians were 32% of traffic fatalities, but by 2021, pedestrians were 42.5% of road deaths. In 2022, even as the total number of fatalities dropped by 12.5% and the number of drivers killed fell for the third year in a row, pedestrian deaths rose to 19, the highest in at least 12 years. Fifty-four percent of those killed by drivers in DC last year were walking, standing, or sitting beside the road.

**AND WHEREAS** the Commission has noticed that sidewalk and other pedestrian infrastructure is de-prioritized in the District’s Vision Zero efforts. For example, the service level agreement timelines for sidewalk and other pedestrian infrastructure are lengthy compared to other timelines – with the District Department of Transportation committing to repairing potholes within three business days (72 hours) of the time they are reported while sidewalk repairs “require a longer timeframe and depend upon funding availability” (DDOT’s performance objective is 270 days) and renewed crosswalk striping “could take 4-6 months to complete.” In addition, the Mayor’s 2022 Vision Zero Update does not mention the word “sidewalk” once and only refers to “pedestrians” in passing. Sidewalk safety is a particular problem on the Hill, where brick sidewalks are more susceptible to hazardous conditions and numerous residents of all ages

have fallen and suffered serious injuries. The vast number of unsafe brick sidewalk locations and the frequency with which remediated locations revert to dangerous status, present a huge challenge to effective, ongoing maintenance of safe sidewalks. The dangerous condition of City sidewalks also presents potentially significant risk management exposure for the City.

**AND WHEREAS** Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A has experienced this de-prioritization first-hand in its efforts to seek sidewalk and other pedestrian infrastructure improvements across the Commission area. Commissioners have submitted 311 requests, worked with residents in a constantly evolving petition / Traffic Safety Assessment / Traffic Safety Investigation / Traffic Safety Input process, submitted formal Commission Resolutions and letters, and advocated before the District Department of Transportation and the DC Council seeking sidewalk and other pedestrian infrastructure improvements. These efforts have had minimal success, with requests often ignored, closed, or delayed. In an effort to draw attention to the lack of action on sidewalk and other pedestrian infrastructure improvements, Commissioners and Commissioners across DC have organized events dedicated to submitting requests for improvements. But basic city services like sidewalk and other pedestrian infrastructure improvements should not require such intensive effort and coordinated action.

**AND WHEREAS** The Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2020 includes provisions expanding the installation of sidewalks on both sides of the street, connecting new sidewalks to existing sidewalks, and making crosswalks high-visibility crosswalks, as well as requiring publication of requests for all-way or signalized stops, raised crosswalks and/or automated traffic enforcement cameras at intersections and requiring the District Department of Transportation to explain its reasoning when a request is denied. Notably, the Act requires third-party restoration of crosswalks and bike lanes for specific projects — and penalties for failure to comply — within timelines that are stricter than the Department applies to itself. The Act is not fully funded, however, and implementation of these key provisions is lacking. Specifically, despite provisions dedicating revenue from Automated Traffic Enforcement cameras to funding the Act and despite specifications regarding each type of camera required, the District Department of Transportation has not met the camera requirement and it is unclear whether funds from cameras are being directed toward funding the Act.

**AND WHEREAS** Following public pressure due to slow response times and other challenges with regard to traffic safety infrastructure, on October 12, 2021, Mayor Muriel Bowser and the District Department of Transportation committed to accelerated pedestrian safety projects and a streamlined process for roadway safety improvements, including high visibility crosswalks and concrete curb extensions. Nevertheless, this Commission has not seen a broad or systematic improvement in the installation of high visibility crosswalks or concrete curb extensions to date and it appears based on available data that the vast majority of action taken was driver feedback signs.

**AND WHEREAS** Residents within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A have repeatedly expressed concern regarding speeding and reckless driving, and they have consistently requested traffic calming along neighborhood streets. These residents have submitted 311 service requests and petitions / Traffic Safety Assessments/ Traffic Safety Investigations / Traffic Safety Inputs, as well as worked with the Commission in support of Resolutions and letters to the District Department of Transportation. Sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure are central to protecting residents from and preventing speeding and reckless driving. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A has persistently advocated for improved sidewalk and pedestrian infrastructure, submitting hundreds of 311 sidewalk repair requests and participating in Sidewalkpalooza events to promote safe infrastructure for people walking.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** Neighborhood Commission 6A reiterates its calls for enhanced prioritization of pedestrian and sidewalk infrastructure to match the level of attention and service to roadway requests and improve pedestrian safety and accessibility, including the following:

– **Audit & Reassessment of Service Level Agreement Timelines.** In May 2021, Commissioners across DC sent a Letter to the District Department of Transportation requesting that the Department similarly assess its service level agreement timelines, noting “scheduled response times are swift for certain roadway services – 3 business days to address a pothole – but provide an extended timeline for other essential traffic safety measures – 130 business days for roadway signs, 270 business days for roadway striping/markings, 270 business days for sidewalk repair, and 130 business days for traffic safety investigations (plus an undetermined amount of time for potential implementation).”

Director Lott indicated at the Washington Area Bicyclist Association’s ANC Vision Zero Caucus meeting on October 18, 2021, and again at the City Council performance hearing on February 27, 2023, that these service level agreement timelines would be reconsidered, but no additional information has been provided. In addition, timeline information on the Department’s webpages has changed, but largely has moved to vague or undetermined timelines that do not require greater urgency. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the District Department of Transportation to consider and modify service level agreement timelines to best reflect citywide priorities and needs, including as to sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure. That information should include how timelines are calculated and what they include (inspection, implementation, etc.) and give consideration to the need for transparency and accountability as to completion of the work itself.

Advisory Commission 6A further requests that the Department create a mechanism to ensure equity in the provision of city services via 311 and communicate that mechanism to Advisory Neighborhood Commissions.

– **Sidewalk Gap Transparency & Urgency.** Commissioners are familiar with the poor condition of neighborhood sidewalks and the extended period of time needed for installation and repair (see above regarding service level agreement timelines). The District Department of Transportation’s performance oversight documents indicate an even bleaker state of affairs, with eight segments filled in Fiscal Year 2021. Part of the challenge is a lack of transparency: it is hard to understand the full scope of sidewalk gaps and what is needed to address those gaps in a timely fashion. In addition, there is no public information regarding the Department’s priority list for sidewalk gaps. The Commission appreciates that the Department is considering adding an equity component to its methodology for prioritizing sidewalk gaps, but clearly the need substantially outweighs capacity.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the District Department of Transportation to provide details confirming the full scope of sidewalk gaps, as well as the Department’s sidewalk gap priority list, including information regarding which sidewalk gaps are prioritized and why, as well as the anticipated cost to address all sidewalk gaps.

– **Proactive Sidewalk Condition Audit.** Similar to sidewalk gaps there is limited transparency regarding the District Department of Transportation’s assessment of sidewalk conditions. The Department indicated in their Fiscal Year 2014 and 2015 performance oversight documents that they were working on a survey to assess sidewalk conditions. While that survey was apparently completed in 2015 – as indicated in their Fiscal Year 2016 performance oversight documents – it has never been made public to the Commission’s knowledge. Therefore, there is no way to assess the process and methods used by the Department in conducting the assessment. Furthermore, the Department has continued to rely on that assessment – completed in 2015 – in their current assessment of sidewalk conditions. Relying on outdated and non-public information further places the burden on Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and residents to document sidewalk repairs needed via 311 requests, which heightens equity challenges because some communities and individuals have the capacity to more readily and voluminously submit requests. All city employees should be trained to identify and report sidewalk and crosswalk related infrastructure issues as they traverse the city in their daily routines.

As Commissioners know, fewer 311 requests does not inherently mean there is less need for city services in a specific neighborhood. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the District Department of Transportation to publish its 2015 assessment of sidewalk conditions, including its data and methodology, as well as to conduct a new assessment to accurately reflect sidewalk conditions.

– **Sidewalk Repair Strike Team.** Like all traffic safety infrastructure, there is a scale of sidewalk repair needs, with many requests relatively easily addressed through sidewalk grinding or patching (as opposed to sidewalk construction or reconstruction). As sidewalk infrastructure advocates have noted, “Given the broad impact and modest work for challenges we have categorized as light – and even medium – (not to mention the political value of delivering thousands of wins for communities) long response times seem like an incredible missed opportunity for the agency.” There may be opportunities with laser imaging, detection, and ranging to improve the speed and efficiency of sidewalk repairs.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the District Department of Transportation to consider and implement a scale of needed sidewalk repairs to streamline the agency’s work and quickly address simpler requests. The agency already has a clear model for this in their differentiation between smaller pothole and larger “roadway repair” requests, and an equivalent sidewalk repair strike team could quickly address these requests, proactively address requests in neighborhoods with need, and assist with sidewalk quality assessments.

– **Efficient Crosswalk Striping.** Annual pavement condition assessments of roadways should include crosswalk condition assessments to ensure equitable restriping and refinishing of deteriorated crosswalks. By no longer depending on constituent reports, the District Department of Transportation can prioritize areas based on deterioration and reduce the burden on under-resourced communities. In addition, the Department could be conducted by emerging automated technologies or through summer employment program teams. Accurate inventories would allow more targeted and efficient use of painting teams.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the District Department of Transportation to explore methods of systematizing and regularizing crosswalk and pavement marking assessments and conduct assessments on an annual basis.

– **Coordinating Paving & Pedestrian Infrastructure.** The District Department of Transportation has a proactive program for resurfacing streets on a cyclical basis, but streets are frequently repaved without adding long-requested traffic safety infrastructure, including sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure. Repaving projects should always include a review of open 311 requests and Traffic Safety Inputs (previously Traffic Safety Investigations and Traffic Safety Assessments) for the relevant location to include sidewalk repairs, curb extensions, high-visibility crosswalks, and vertical traffic calming (raised crosswalks, speed humps, and speed tables), when feasible – a principle embodied in the Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2020, which requires addressing sidewalk gaps during roadway resurfacing and reconstruction.

Research indicates that drivers increase speeds on newly paved roads; including improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and other traffic calming measures while repaving will help to reduce risk to pedestrians and other road users. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A encourages the District Department of Transportation to better integrate sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure into its PaveDC program, including through mandating review of open 311 requests and Traffic Safety Inputs when implementing road paving to better holistically address traffic safety infrastructure.

– **Safe Accommodations.** When construction occurs in or requires closing a sidewalk, Section 3 of the Bicycle Safety Amendment Act of 2013 requires the permittee to provide a “safe accommodation” allowing sidewalk users to get around the closure and specifically instructs the District Department of Transportation to issue rules that “[t]reat the blockage of a sidewalk ... the same as the closure of a lane of traffic, and ... apply similar regulations as that of a closure of a lane of traffic.”

The Department regularly approves permits that close sidewalks without safe accommodations, however, and holds itself exempt from permitting requirements, including the need to provide safe accommodations around its own sidewalk closures. The Department would not close a street for pothole repair or allow another agency to do so without a signed and noticed detour. As the Bicycle Safety Amendment Act of 2013 provides, similar requirements should apply for sidewalk closures. The Department must not make the District less accessible while it works to make the District more accessible.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the District Department of Transportation to provide safe accommodations around all sidewalk repair and restoration projects, as well as to require such accommodations from other public agencies, such as DC Water, which receive permits for construction in sidewalks.

– **A Plan & Funding to Meet Need.** The aforementioned requests highlight that sidewalk and other pedestrian infrastructure needs are often addressed on a piecemeal and incomplete basis, relying on resident requests and creating additional burdens and hurdles for under-resourced communities. The District Department of Transportation should holistically address need for a robust pedestrian infrastructure network and the full cost to meet need. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the District Department of Transportation to develop a multi-year pedestrian capital improvement plan that, if funded, will close sidewalk gaps and restore all pedestrian infrastructure to a state of good repair.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the District Department of Transportation to implement the above recommendations to prioritize pedestrian conditions through planning and implementation of improved service level agreement

timelines, better and more regular pedestrian condition assessments, and more regular repair and improvement of sidewalks and pavement markings.

That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A calls on the DC Council to require the District Department of Transportation to provide a multi-year pedestrian capital improvement plan that, if funded, will close sidewalk gaps and restore all pedestrian infrastructure to a state of good repair.

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Commission designates Commissioner Gove, ANC 6A04; Commissioner Chatterjee, ANC 6A01; and Commissioner Shapiro, ANC 6A03, to represent the Commission in all matters relating to this Resolution.

Attested by:



Amber Gove  
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A

March 10, 2023

This Resolution was approved by a vote of 6-0-0 on March 9, 2023 at a public meeting<sup>1</sup> of ANC6A at which a quorum was present.

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<sup>1</sup> ANC 6A meetings are advertised electronically on [anc-6a@googlegroups.com](mailto:anc-6a@googlegroups.com), and [newhilleast@groups.io](mailto:newhilleast@groups.io), at [www.anc6a.org](http://www.anc6a.org), on Twitter (@ANC6A) and through print advertisements in the Hill Rag.