



November 4, 2019

TESTIMONY FROM DUPONT CIRCLE CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

RE: The Future of Micromobility in the District and B23-359, The Electric Mobility Devices Amendment Act of 2019

Good morning. Thank you Chair Cheh and Councilmembers for this opportunity to submit testimony.

I am Martha Logan, a member of the Board Director of the Dupont Circle Citizens Association, and I am speaking on behalf of the association today.

The Dupont Circle Citizens Association is a registered non-profit civic association formed in 1922 to protect the interests of residents in Dupont Circle and across the District. Membership in the association is open to all who share its objectives, which include charitable and educational activities, working for civil improvements in the Dupont Circle neighborhood, and presenting the association's views to government.

DCCA is pleased that the DC Council is considering this bill, which will afford some oversight through a democratic process of personal mobility devices, which have recently proliferated in the District and created a very chaotic situation. Other witnesses and councilmembers have, or will, address many of the specifics of the bill before you, on how best to integrate e-scooters into the District's existing transportation infrastructure. What we want to address are more general questions of 'Where are we heading with our transportation policies?' 'What is in the best interests of the constituents, commuters, visitors, and all others who depend on the transportation infrastructure we are legislating here?' By assuming e-scooters and other forms of transportation being dumped in increasing numbers on our public spaces by private companies is a given and to be 'dealt with and simply accommodated,' we are missing the forest for the trees.

DCCA agrees with many of the overall transportation goals for DC – to reduce congestion, discourage car commuting into the District, encourage use of public transportation, and enhance the use of some alternative means of transportation for the 'last mile,' including healthy walking – but there are some troubling trends in the wrong direction to accomplish these goals, which are making our streets and sidewalks more dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists alike. For example, Metro hours and some bus routes are being cut back by WMATA, even as DDOT has worked to increase the number of dedicated bus lanes. More germane to the bill at hand, scooters are being ridden on sidewalks, including in the downtown business district, and left parked in the middle of sidewalks all over town, which discourages walking. Yet scooters are also not safe to ride on many streets. They are too fast for sidewalks and unprotected pedestrians, and too slow and unprotected for our streets. Of course, drivers of cars and trucks need to proceed safely, but driving is becoming increasingly fraught, with fast moving scooters appearing out of nowhere from the sidewalks and riding the wrong direction on one-way streets.

What is going on to make our streets increasingly unsafe? Go back a couple decades when cars ruled the pavement and pedestrians owned the sidewalk, and the occasional bike was welcome on either in our city. Pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and deaths were few, and shocked all when they occurred. Fast forward to now, and we have chaos in our streets, in the roadway, on the sidewalk, everywhere – you name it. We’ve let competing transportation interests duke it out in the public space. Why? Some people have declared a ‘war on cars.’ Although reducing car use in the District is a laudable goal – indeed many of our members are car-free and avid cyclists – this goal cannot be accomplished by simply making the streets and sidewalks a free for all.

One of our board members manages several rental properties around the city. This necessitates her doing a lot of repairs and handywork herself. Is she expected to be pulling construction material in a wagon behind her bike? Yes, not all means of transportation are for everyone. Imagine a city without Metro buses, delivery trucks, contractor vans, or our board member in her pickup truck servicing the properties she manages. Motor vehicles are and will always be a key part of permitting this city to function for all its residents, commuters, and visitors. And that’s the perspective that’s missing if the Council lets the zealous advocates for cycling and scooters take the lead in promoting legislation for where this city is headed with its transportation systems.

When scooters speed along sidewalks, terrifying pedestrians out walking their dogs or pushing their children’s strollers, it’s clear that the ‘walk’ in sidewalk is something that needs to be taken seriously. Sidewalks are not for fast moving vehicles. Actually, they never were intended for any vehicles at all, until today when I hear you entertaining the suggestion that scooters can operate slowly and safely on the sidewalks. Seriously? Sidewalks are for walking. Period.

Our biggest enemy right now is chaos. Just allowing more and different means of transportation on to our roadways and sidewalks, each with its own rules, speeds, and inherent limitations and capabilities is just increasing the chaos in the public space. The problem is the conflicting interests of many groups and many users. It is the chaos that results when everyone is out fighting for that little bit of roadway and sidewalk real estate. Only you can correct the problem by taking hold of this process and owning it; by ensuring we have a transportation system in the District that serves all of us.

We need to be doing more to make DC’s streets safe for pedestrians by reducing speed limits, painting formal crosswalks, repairing damaged sidewalks, signaling crosswalks, and the like.

Please use this legislation as an opportunity to ban e-scooters of all types from the sidewalk, and more importantly make it a start for taking control of the process on how our public space is governed for the best and most efficient benefit of all. Please lead the way forward for us! Please do whatever it takes to get rid of the chaos in our streets and sidewalks. Even if that means banning rental electric scooters entirely. You wouldn’t be the first city council to do so.

Thank you