

Transportation

Community Input by Formal Submission Ideas and Recommendations for Moving Forward

The following information is a collection of formally submitted recommendations to the District Department of the Environment and the Office of Planning by local organizations. The information was reviewed and pertinent comments, suggestions and ideas for the transportation working group are included in this document. Much effort by concerned citizens went into the creation of those documents and a lot of relevant material has been compiled. Please review these ideas and concerns to enhance participation in the working group process.

1. Becoming Greenest

Recommendations for a More Sustainable Washington, D.C. Submitted by the American Society of Landscape Architects

Transportation infrastructure accounts for 20–40 percent of all urban land. Even in Washington, D.C., which has invested in a range of sustainable transportation options, streets, intersections, and alleys accounts for 22 percent of all land, and once you include parking spaces, that number easily reaches 30 percent. These systems have also enabled the growth of transportation-related GHGs, which now account for 30 percent of all U.S. emissions.

A study by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) found that if all conditions that accompany densely populated communities were present, such as good transit, proximity to shopping, and recreational activities and a walkable environment, families in that community could reduce vehicle use by 25–30 percent. As a result, comprehensive transportation planning must incorporate community-focused accessibility strategies. Walkable and bikeable communities inspire residents to leave their cars at home.

D.C. should systematically survey and address barriers to walkability (narrow sidewalks, difficult crosswalks, and dangerous intersections) across the city through redesign programs. D.C. should significantly expand its network of bicycle infrastructure and successful bike-share program.

Washington D.C. has some of the highest number of mass transit commuters in the country. However, in comparison with the top biking cities, the total percentage of bike commuters remains low at 3.9 percent, despite the explosive growth of the District’s highly successful bike share program. To encourage increased bicycle use, the District needs to make the bicycle infrastructure appear safer and integrate Metro and bicycle infrastructure.

As one ASLA member wrote, “Please incorporate bike lanes where the cyclists are protected by parked cars, as opposed to the parked cars being protected by the cyclists.” Another ASLA member saw an opportunity to create one network between Metro and bikeshare: “Integrate the Metro and bicycle networks. This is the only way to really go car-free. Install bike racks in Metro cars in the underused end spaces of the cars, lift the ban on bikes during rush-hour and implement an education program to make people aware of bike etiquette. This could substantially improve sustainable mobility.” District government should also ensure bike-share stations are co-located with Metro stations and accept payment via smart cards and also enable commuters to load SmartTrip benefits. In addition, the District should require ample and secure bike parking within offices and large residential buildings.

Lastly, to help generate demand for bicycle infrastructure, local businesses should be recognized through “Best Places to Work” programs for giving employees a bicycle or walking benefit or paying for the purchasing of bikes and bike equipment or walking shoes.

Create safe bicycle infrastructure. Connect the Metro system with bike infrastructure and bikeshare stations. Require secure bike parking within office and residential buildings. The District’s bike-share program should accept SmartTrip cards and offer benefit payments as well. The city should encourage businesses to offer bicycle and walking commuter benefits.

New York, San Francisco, and other cities have pioneered programs to transform streets and parking spaces into open pedestrian plaza. New York City just turned parts of Broadway into permanent pedestrian-only spaces. Also, in a new program, New York City is finding old parking lots and other under-used areas in communities with low per capita open space and turning them into plazas.

On the smaller scale, parklets are safe, people-friendly environments that offer inviting café-style chairs and tables, benches, and trees and plants. These spaces, which can be created for less than \$20,000, encourage people to get out of their cars, walk, and interact, which helps build the local economy. In San Francisco, one new parklet increased pedestrian foot traffic by 37 percent.

Like leading cities such as Vancouver, San Francisco, and New York, Washington, D.C., should implement a set of temporary or permanent pedestrian-only spaces where transportation infrastructure exists. A set of parklet pilot projects could be also initiated. Possible locations for pedestrian-only zones and parklets: Georgetown, Adam’s Morgan, Dupont Circle, or Chinatown.

2. Sustainable DC Recommendations and Resources Submitted by the Congress for the New Urbanism DC Chapter

PART ONE: OPERATING PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE DC

(Select comments applicable to the transportation working group)

20. The design of streets and the entire right-of-way shall be directed at the positive shaping of the public realm in order to encourage shared pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular use.

21. The pattern of blocks and streets shall be compact and designed in a well-connected network for easy, safe, and secure walkability. This will reduce overall vehicular usage by decreasing travel time and trip length. Design shall strive to minimize material and utility infrastructure.

22. The positive shaping of the public realm shall focus on creating thermally comfortable spaces through passive techniques such as low albedo and shading with landscape and buildings. The techniques shall be consistent with local climate.

23. The design of the streets, blocks, platting, landscape, and building typologies shall all be configured for reduced overall energy usage and an enhanced quality of life in the public realm.

24. Roadway materials shall be nontoxic, and shall be permeable everywhere that conditions allow. Rights of way shall provide for rainwater management through percolation, retention, and detention. Green streets integrate sustainable drainage with the role of the street as defined public space. Their design shall maintain the importance of the building frontage and access to the sidewalk and roadway, balancing the desirability of surface drainage with the need for street connectivity and hierarchy.

40. The physical organization of the region shall promote transit, pedestrian, and bicycle systems to maximize access and mobility while reducing dependence on automobiles and trucks.

41. The spatial balance of jobs and housing is enabled at the regional scale by extensive transit systems. Development shall be primarily organized around transit lines and hubs.

PART TWO: SPECIFIC IDEAS, POLICY SUGGESTIONS, AND DESIGN CONCEPTS

2. That MWCOC prioritize/rank transportation investments according to a set of sustainability indicators...that is, to what extent would each proposed transportation project reduce VMT, encourage use of alternative transportation modes, and/or promote compact land use/urban form? A checklist could be developed and tested against each project in the region's long-range transportation plan. This could be applied to any MPO and be a very useful tool. (Sirota)

3. The idea is to repurpose below-grade expressways in DC for stormwater detention. I was thinking of I-395 just east of downtown. It could be decked over in places, and then used to store excess stormwater. Is this too crazy? (Firestone)

4. The District of Columbia should prioritize and pursue a program of citywide traffic signal coordination. This would have several sustainability benefits. It would encourage steady, moderate-speed auto traffic, instead of jackrabbit dashes to the next intersection. It would reduce waiting and idling at signals and the pollution that results. Since it would help reduce aggravating congestion, it would be popular with the public and with Congress, and could have a good chance of receiving funding. Most importantly for transit, it could support a coordinated system of signal priority for streetcar, rapid bus, and regular bus service. This would help prevent transit vehicles from getting stuck in traffic, while at the same time maintaining a reasonable level of service for private autos.

Here is an example of exciting work being done in the industry:

“Adaptive Traffic Lights Could Achieve ‘The Green Wave’ ”

<http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2010/09/traffic-lights-adapt/>

(Aurbach)

5. When creating new city fabric, it is important to design compact, well-connected street networks. However, we should also acknowledge that in much of DC, the issue is not designing a network, but reallocating the space within the existing (and well-connected) rights of way. So, for example, we can be widening sidewalks, installing cycle tracks, and inserting dedicated transit ways. Parking and pricing. We've only begun to explore the possibilities of using prices to manage demand for curbside parking in DC. This applies to both the RPP program (where we could use prices to discourage multiple-car households and get residents to pay closer to the market value of the space we use) and metered parking, which we should price to encourage rapid turnover for short-term retail customers and better utilization of existing garage capacity.

6. A dense network of bicycle lanes should be implemented throughout Washington DC. By dense I mean every third or fourth street. On every sixth or seventh street, the bike lane should be fully separated from car traffic through median strips or other means. This network would transform commuting and the character of the city. Washington DC would be a model for other U.S. cities. (Herre)

8. To accomplish a more Sustainable DC, my suggestion mainly involves the creation of pedestrian-only streets and the adoption of a zero-waste plan. I am using Adams Morgan as my case study (18th St. between Columbia and Kalorama). This neighborhood is known its vibrant nightlife. We could increase the lively environment during the day by doing the following:

- Close the street to vehicular access from Columbia Street to Kalorama Street. Change paving materials and adopt pervious ones.
- Add trees in the middle to provide shade and cool on summer days. Increase urban furniture (benches, lamps, and trash devices).
- Rehabilitate the tennis courts and other areas surrounding the Community Center to add greenery and drop-off areas for pedestrians. Bike racks and other urban elements to be incorporated.
- Rehabilitate the park at the corner of Champlain St. and California St.
- Restore historic buildings on 18th St. to bring back the character of the place. Currently all stores/restaurants are painted in different colors and fight among themselves to get the attention of the consumer.
- Adopt green roofs and ways for buildings to store rainwater. The collected water to be used for irrigation purposes.
- Install water filtration systems that could clean gray water and that could be reused for sanitary purposes.
- For the street network, particular vehicular transportation elements will have to be adjusted. Allow emergency traffic on the pedestrian-only 18th Street. Create underground parking under the existing tennis courts for extra parking. Adams Morgan has a good mix of uses within walking distance and accessible to all users. A central gathering place is missing in this neighborhood. Closing a portion of 18th Street will give the community a place to enjoy and connect. This will also improve the sense of identity for the region. The new public space will have definite boundaries and the surrounding areas will promote the environment and livelihood of the place. (Molina)

3. Sustainability Recommendations

Submitted by **DC Sierra Club**

ACTION ITEM	PURPOSE	RESPONSIBILITY
(1) Build DC's 37-mile street car plan.	Increase mass transit use and transit-oriented development.	DDOT, taxpayers, user fees.

ACTION ITEM	PURPOSE	RESPONSIBILITY
(2) EXPAND BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING BIKE SHARE.	INCREASE BICYCLE USAGE IN THE DISTRICT; DECREASE MOTORIZED VEHICLE USAGE IN THE DISTRICT.	DDOT, TAXPAYERS, BIKE SHARE FEES.
(3) ENFORCE CAR/BUS IDLING LAW	REDUCE AIR POLLUTION	DDOT, MPD
(4) REQUIRE OR INCENTIVIZE TAXIS TO BE HYBRIDS		
(5) INCREASE THE DMV REGISTRATION FEE FOR SUVs		

4. Sustainable DC Submitted by **Just Economics**

(Selected items relevant for review by the transportation working group)

There are economic incentives that discourage sustainability. These “upside-down” incentives can be turned “right-side-up” so that they encourage sustainability. Here are some examples:

Performance-based parking pricing. This reduces traffic congestion and enhances transit use. It has been implemented as a pilot program in a few neighborhoods. It should be expanded citywide.

Mileage-based congestion pricing for roads. This encourages transit use. It also encourages more compact land use decisions as individuals can reduce roadway charges by locating homes and businesses closer to the destinations that they frequent. DC cannot implement this alone for two reasons.

1. Create a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis the suburbs
2. Likely Congressional interference.

Need to work through the Council of Governments to implement this on a regional basis to avoid both these problems.

5. UDC Ward 3 Input

Submitted by the **University of the District of Columbia**

(Only items relevant for review by the transportation working group are listed)

On 28 September, UDC held a meeting as part of 'Start in September' under Mayor Gray's [Sustainable DC](#) initiative. Office of Planning staff, UDC staff, and concerned citizens gathered to discuss ideas about the attributes of a sustainable city in an effort to break down high-level concepts and bring them into our local context.

This open discussion at UDC allowed participants to share their own visions and aspirations for the city and gave them an opportunity to listen to other residents with different perspectives. In small tables of 4-5 people, we discussed three guiding questions:

- 1) What are the attributes of a sustainable city?
- 2) How does DC measure up to that vision of a sustainable city?
- 3) How can we engage and energize the whole city around this sustainability plan?

Question 1: What are the attributes of a sustainable city?

The city is in sync with natural systems and all resources are valued.

- Design is informed by nature/works with nature
- Holistic thinking is present in all planning efforts
- Climate, energy, and water are protected
- People are connected to nature
- People are weaned off of fossil fuel for transport

Question 2: How does DC measure up to that vision of a sustainable city?

Strengths

- Lots of bikes/participation in bike-share program

Weaknesses

- Low equity in access to transport/still difficult to rely solely on public transport to get around
- Traffic problems
- City systems are not in sync with natural systems

From the conversation came the following suggestions for building on our strengths and addressing our weaknesses:

Local Goals –

- Reduced/renewable energy for transit
- Fewer cars on the road
- Better, more reliable transit options

Potential Action –

- Transition all city vehicle fleets to clean power
- Cordon off car-free pedestrian zone downtown
- Start lateral bus routes
- Provide more express buses
- Make dedicated bus lanes
- Experiment with new bus routes
- Make more bike lanes
- Increase bike education and awareness

Question 3: How can we engage and energize the whole city around this sustainability plan?

Social Media Strategy

- Twitter meetings – Q&A between city officials and Tweeps
- Tweet ups
- Sustainable DC Foursquare Badge

Mobile meetings

- Bike rides
- Experimental circulator bus routes

Paid/incentivized participation

- Give rebate for bottle recycling (5-10 cents)
- Make it FUN
- iPod giveaway at planning meetings
- Take the money we would have used to hire a consultant and instead pay businesses directly to participate.

Go to existing meetings and groups

- Churches/Religious networks/GWIPL/Creation Care
- ANC meetings – Mobilize the ANCs
- Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts
- Unions
- Rotary Club
- Lions Club
- Business orgs like AOBA
- Parents at playgrounds on Saturday mornings

Go to existing events

- Local sports venues
- Music/concerts
- Comedy shows

Get schools engaged

- Universities
- Clubs (UDC Sustainability Club, UDC Garden Club)
- Put in school curriculum /better education on environmental issues

Showcase and encourage good examples

- Create competitions between schools
- Incentivize local business participation by holding competitions, giving awards for green practices
- Competitions between employees of small/large firms
- Action is motivating – bring the results of your own actions to the next meeting to share back with the group
- Shame bad behavior
- Lead by example, especially for city leadership

Reach all community members

- Have meetings whenever it makes sense in your community. Don't rush it based on this planning process.
- Switch target demographic and recognize that kids are change agents
- Reach pockets, but also have a central place to bring ideas back together/find out about new events
- Everybody must bring 2 new people to next meeting – if we keep doing this, we'll eventually reach a critical mass