

**Testimony of J.I. Swiderski for the
DC Council Transportation & the Environment and Judiciary & Public Safety Committees
Joint Public Roundtable on the Implementation of the Vision Zero Initiative and the
Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Amendment Act of 2016
September 27, 2018**

September 27 is my birthday. I am now 36 years old, the same age Jeffrey Hammond Long was when he was killed in a “protected” bike lane this summer, and I wonder sometimes if I will make it to 37, either.

As my friend Rachel Maisler said in her testimony,¹ I’m one of the lucky ones. I ride a bike nearly every day, and although I’ve come close a few times, I’ve never actually been hit. However, I hesitate to say this out loud or even type it, because it feels like tempting fate.

As recently as Thursday night, I had a driver speed past me on 11th St NW, in the section between Rhode Island and Florida Avenues where there is no bike lane.² I ride most days with a video camera that imprints a timestamp on the image, so I know that that driver arrived at the red light at Florida Avenue approximately five seconds before I did—before she would have if she had stayed behind me. Then, because 11th does have a bike lane north of Florida, I was able to catch up with this same driver at nearly *every single red light* until our paths diverged—I pulled up beside her at Euclid St, at Columbia Rd, at Park Rd, and I even, after a turn onto Monroe St, rolled up behind her at 13th St. Despite all her horsepower, it took us, within seconds, exactly the same amount of time to get from 11th and Florida to Monroe and 13th, a distance of nearly a mile. Risking my life saved her nothing.

Now, if 11th St NW had bike lanes between Rhode Island and Florida Avenues, I probably would never have noticed this person, because she would not have needed to speed into the opposing lane to get past me—unless, of course, that bike lane was blocked by a car parked in it.

Earlier this week, Nik Philipsen posted data from opendata.dc.gov showing that “DPW has cited an average of 216 vehicles a month for stopping in the bike lane in 2018.”³ This is an average of 7.2

¹<http://wonkpolicy.com/2018/09/27/testimony-to-dc-council-on-vision-zero-sept-27-2018/>

²Although I do ride in all four quadrants, all street references here are to NW.

³<https://twitter.com/nikphilipsen/status/1045288119258554368>

citations per day—or less than one for every ten miles of bike lane.⁴ On Wednesday, September 26, I rode approximately 8.5 miles from my home in Sixteenth Street Heights to the memorial ride for Carlos Sanchez-Martin in Dupont⁵ and back; of that distance, I spent nearly 6 miles on 14th St NW, and about 0.8 miles on other bike lanes. In less than seven miles that day, I saw at least nine vehicles parked in bike lanes.^{6 7}

Less than two months ago, Madison Jane Lyden was killed in New York City.⁸ An Uber driver pulled away from the curb into the unprotected bike lane she was riding in; as she tried to go around them, she was hit from behind by a garbage truck.⁹ Similarly, Patrick Bettens was hit and killed earlier this month while trying to pass a delivery truck parked in a Concord, NH, bike lane.¹⁰ Bike lane parking is not a mere matter of convenience, an annoying issue to be dodged and avoided like a pothole¹¹—this is a life safety issue, and it is time DPW and other agencies start treating it like one.

As this Roundtable heard from numerous others, DDOT must dramatically step up the creation and implementation of protected bike lanes and other infrastructure changes that don't just prohibit but *prevent* people from parking in dangerous areas, including, but not only, in bike lanes. As others have said, we cannot simply enforce our way to safe streets.

However, especially in the short term, DPW Parking Enforcement can and must dramatically step up enforcement of vehicles parked in bike lanes. Others have noted that the majority of the Parking Enforcement team's time seems to be spent on neighborhood parking-permit checks. However, if a person has parked inappropriately in a permit-regulated area, someone else may have a hard time parking their own vehicle when they get home—if a person has parked inappropriately in a bike lane, **someone else may not get home at all.**

Thank you for your time.

⁴<https://twitter.com/nikphilipsen/status/1045356543670198272>

⁵<https://www.facebook.com/events/384372998767299/>

⁶<https://twitter.com/infinitebuffalo/status/1045307852053794816>

⁷In fact, on September 27, on my way to attend the Vision Zero roundtable, I saw so many vehicles parked in the 3.5 miles of bike lane on 14th St NW that I lost count. In reviewing my camera footage, it was **15**, from private cars parked outside Logan Hardware to a series of box trucks unloading beer kegs in the bike lane—there more than seven vehicles blocking the bike lane just between U St and N St NW. <https://twitter.com/infinitebuffalo/status/1046787784135069706>

⁸<https://nyc.streetsblog.org/2018/08/11/private-trash-hauler-kills-madison-jane-lyden-23>

⁹<https://www.westsiderag.com/2018/08/10/bicyclist-killed-by-garbage-truck-on-central-park-west>

¹⁰<https://www.concordmonitor.com/Bicyclist-safety-20296746>

¹¹though potholes can cause plenty of safety hazards themselves...