

**Testimony of J. I. Swiderski for the  
Council of DC Committee on Transportation & the Environment  
Public Hearing on 2019 Vision Zero Road Safety Legislation,  
B23-242, B23-257, B23-288, B23-292, B23-293, B23-412, B23-415  
October 24, 2019**

Councilmember Cheh and Members of the Committee,

My name is J. Swiderski and I am a resident of Ward 1, ANC 1C08, and a student in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program at Virginia Tech in Ballston, and for the record I use they/them pronouns. I am here in support generally of the bills on the agenda today, and in particular I want to speak to the Mandatory Protected Cycling Lane Amendment Act, B23-257, and the Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act, B23-288.

Last spring, I along with four other students did a study on e-scooter use and reactions in Rosslyn, just across the river in Arlington<sup>1</sup>. Among the other results from the study, I want to call this committee's attention in particular to the questions of where scooter users ride and where they would prefer to ride.

66% of survey respondents who ride e-scooters said they ride on the sidewalk "sometimes", "often", or "always"—only 6% said they "never" do. However, when e-scooter users were asked where they would *prefer* to ride if they had the choice, sidewalks were ranked fourth out of five options, only ahead of riding in the street in lanes shared with cars. Scooter users don't *want* to ride on sidewalks, they do it because they don't feel safe in the street.

It is clear: the way to get scooter riders off the sidewalk is to provide them more safe places to ride. In fact, in response to another question, several respondents indicated that they would ride more if they had safer places to ride, and several more respondents who don't ride currently said they would if they could do so safely.

The District's own experience on 15th Street NW has shown that providing protected bike lanes nearly solves the problem of people riding bikes on the sidewalks. The way to solve the problem of people riding e-scooters on sidewalks is the same: build more protected lanes. We need more protected lanes, faster, and current processes clearly aren't enough. I strongly urge this Council to do everything in your power to get DDOT to build more protected lanes, including but not limited to passing the Mandatory Protected Lane Act.

On the Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act, I want to speak particularly to the requirement for contractors to restore roadway markings within 24 hours. I strongly support this provision, but I also

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<sup>1</sup>Chowdhury, A., Hicks, J., James, O., Swiderski, J.I., Wilkerson, A., & Buehler, R. (2019). "Shared Mobility Devices in Arlington". Alexandria, VA: Virginia Tech Urban Affairs and Planning Studio. [https://ralphbu.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/working-draft-report\\_051419-1.pdf](https://ralphbu.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/working-draft-report_051419-1.pdf); James, O., Swiderski, J.I., Hicks, J., Teoman, D., & Buehler, R. (2019). "Pedestrians and E-Scooters: An Initial Look at E-Scooter Parking and Perceptions by Riders and Non-Riders". *Sustainability*, 11(20), 5591. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/20/5591>.

want to make sure that it is enforced not only on private construction and utility companies, but also on the District's own agencies. As we know from the Safe Accommodations policy passed by this body several years ago, DDOT often is not willing to make its own contractors abide by requirements to keep people safe while walking and biking past District projects. I therefore strongly urge this Council to make sure that this policy applies not only to private companies' work in the streets, but to work done by and on behalf of District agencies as well.

Finally, I want to close with a note about DPW's enforcement of parking restrictions in the District, and in particular *which ones*. Since I'm sure many people today will testify to the need for DPW to increase parking enforcement, I'd also like to point out: enforcement is a *last resort*. We cannot simply enforce our way to safe streets.

However, in the short term, before we're able to build safer, calmer places to walk, bike, and drive, I will say this: Others have noted that the majority of the Parking Enforcement team's time seems to be spent on neighborhood permit checks. 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**. Bike lane parking is not a mere matter of convenience, an annoying issue to be dodged and avoided like a pothole<sup>2</sup>—this is a life safety issue, and it is time DPW and other agencies start treating it like one. I support the BAC Expansion Act, B23-242, and hope hearing perspectives like this more often helps reinforce the need to refocus DPW's attention.

In 2016, Linda Bailey, then the Executive Director of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), wrote that “**Elected officials should be champions for safe street designs.**” The record and rising number of “lives lost is a wake-up call, yet we know how to stem this epidemic. Better design will save lives and make our streets safer.” Mayor Bowser hired her to be DDOT's Vision Zero Director, but as the Department's continuing record shows, on Safe Accommodations, on the Eastern Downtown Protected Lanes, and so many more projects and regulations collecting dust on shelves, the rest of us still need you on this Council to be our champions. Demand more.

Thank you for your time.

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<sup>2</sup>though potholes can cause plenty of safety hazards themselves...