Re: Bicycle fatality on H Street NE

Dear Director Marootian,

On July 11, 2018, at a regularly scheduled and duly noticed public monthly meeting of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6C, with a quorum of six out of six commissioners and the public present, the above-mentioned item came before us. The commission voted unanimously (6-0) to relay the following concerns.

The Commission discussed the recent death of a 19-year-old bicyclist – Malik Habib – on H Street NE at the intersection of 3rd Street NE. Mr. Habib was riding along H Street NE when his bicycle tire got stuck in the Streetcar track, causing him to lose balance and fall off his bike in the middle of moving traffic. A charter bus then struck Mr. Habib as he lay on the roadway.

ANC 6C has expressed concern to DDOT on numerous occasions about safety conditions for cyclists on H Street following the installation of the DC Streetcar. Though the Streetcar is a valuable addition to the community, its tracks pose a substantial danger to cyclists who choose to use H Street to reach their destination. It is unacceptable for the status quo to continue amid the growing number of incidents along the H Street NE corridor that lead to injury and death.

The Commission therefore urges DDOT to conduct a rigorous assessment of potential safety solutions that would mitigate conflicts between the Streetcar tracks and cyclists – and to present the findings and recommendations of this assessment to ANC 6C and the general public. We also request that as part of this assessment, DDOT consider the installation of a “flange filler” such as rubber, flaps, or other materials on the tracks that could compress when the Streetcar moves through, but that otherwise provide an even surface for all other road users. Other municipalities around the world have experimented with flange fillers for streetcar systems, and the Commission requests that as part of its broader assessment, DDOT provide an explanation for why a flange filler will or will not work for our particular Streetcar system. Indeed, ANC 6C requested such an assessment, specifically with respect to flange fillers, several years ago when discussing bicycle safety concerns presented by the tracks during design of the bike lanes on neighboring G and I Streets, and did not receive a satisfactory response.

The Commission once again thanks DDOT for its work on issues of bicycle safety, and we look forward to working with you on safety solutions for the H Street NE corridor.

Thank you for considering these recommendations from ANC 6C.

On behalf of ANC 6C,

Karen J. Wirt
ANC 6C Chair

Cc: Mr. Sam Zimbabwe