



Testimony by Laura Miller Brooks
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FY23 Transportation and Environment Budget Hearing
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Dear Chairperson Cheh and members of the committee,

My name is Laura Miller Brooks, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Federal City Council on the District Department of Transportation (DDOT)'s FY23 Budget.

As you know well, the challenges and opportunities of pandemic recovery are particularly pronounced in the realm of transportation. COVID's shock to transit ridership, and the impacts of telework on the District's commuter-centric economy have created an incredibly fragile environment. This is a critical moment for transportation, and the policies and investments we make today will have long-term implications to our competitiveness and economic health. The Federal City Council believes that the FY23 DDOT budget rises to the challenge at hand, and presents an opportunity to expedite recovery and progress towards achieving our policy goals, all while laying the groundwork for how we move about for decades to come.

The Federal City Council supports the FY23 budget's full funding of the H Street Bridge reconstruction, a project that is critical to enabling Union Station's next century transformation. This project will allow for the reconfiguration of the rail tracks below it for more efficient and modern train operations, will be leveraged as a local match for federal infrastructure funding, and will weave together the future air rights development above the railyard to create high-quality multimodal connections to the neighborhoods behind and around Union Station.

Throughout the pandemic, the bus proved just how essential it truly is as a lifeline to our residents and for our economy. The Federal City Council applauds the FY23 budget's historic funding for infrastructure and technology investments that truly transform our bus system, including the full funding of the DDOT Bus Priority Program, the K St Transitway, automated traffic enforcement, and electrification and modernization of the Circulator fleet. To ensure these funds are deployed effectively and efficiently, the Federal City Council wants to see more near-term investment in enforcement of dedicated bus infrastructure with funding for DPW, DDOT, MPD and a communications campaign to educate drivers. We also support more staff capacity to execute the incredible projects for bus, including longer-term staffing for DDOT's Bus Priority team, and more capacity for the Office of Procurement.

DDOT's FY23 budget also supports critical transportation investments vital for the economic recovery of Downtown DC, with investments in WMATA, multimodal infrastructure, and creative use of public space. We urge DDOT and Council to stay focused on updating and streamlining regulations, fees, and permitting processes to support a healthy and friendly business environment.

We also applaud the Mayor and Council for investments outside of DDOT's budget that help advance our transportation and environmental policy goals. A highlight for the Federal City Council are the investments in workforce training and jobs programs for District residents, such as the Infrastructure Academy. Workforce training programs like these will help ensure that District residents are the first in line for the good, green, infrastructure jobs that projects like Union Station will bring.

We hope this budget is a sign of the big and bold thinking that is needed to leverage and compete for federal funding opportunities in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. With more capital investment than ever, the District has the opportunity to accelerate priority infrastructure projects, and multiply the return of local investments.



Finally, Chairperson Cheh, on behalf of the Federal City Council and our trustees, I want to thank you for your service as Chair of the T&E Committee, and Ward 3 Councilmember. Because of your strong leadership, the District boasts some of the most aggressive policies in the country to combat the climate crisis, and create a more equitable, safe, and sustainable transportation system. Thank you for your service to our community, and all that you and your staff have given. I wish you well in this next chapter of your career.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I welcome any questions,

Laura Miller Brooks