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Single Member District 1E06
Chair of 1E Transportation and Public Spaces Committee

Testimony before the Committee on Facilities and Family Services
Oversight Hearing on DC Department of General Services
February 28, 2023

Chairperson Allen and members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Josh Jacobson, and I am the ANC representing SMD 1E06, located in Pleasant Plains.

I will discuss my concerns about Pickup Dropoff (PUDO) zone implementation for buses near school zones and the lack of proactive planning with an example of what School without Walls - Francis Stevens experienced. This school moved to the swing space at the old Banneker High School in Fall of 2022. I share this in the hopes that DDOT will take a more proactive role in planning the PUDO zones needed for buses for our swing spaces, and in the hopes that we can protect children from injury and potential death in our school zones.

On March 15th, 2023, I organized a meeting with DDOT and the school to implement a PUDO zone for the young children at the school. This school is less than a block away from a corridor on the high injury network, Georgia Ave. There was an existing PUDO before the school moved in, but it did not meet the needs of the school. We discussed where we wanted the updated PUDO to be located to most effectively and safely meet the needs for children. The existing situation also made it difficult for fire trucks to leave the fire station on Sherman to go out to Georgia Ave.

On March 22nd, ANC 1E passed a resolution asking for the PUDO to be implemented due to the potential danger to children. We also asked that flex posts be implemented where people were illegally parking their cars and making it difficult to see small children cross a crosswalk. On May 9th, DDOT shared that a work order was submitted to install the PUDO zone with an estimated installation of 15 - 30 days and that I would need to submit a TSI for a flex post installation.

On August 25th, I noticed that signs were installed but they did not meet the discussed specifications with DDOT and put in our ANC resolution. This meant that buses were still parked in the middle of the road and children were needing to weave between parked cars to get to their buses. On September 3, ANC 1E passed a resolution asking for the PUDO to be modified to the original agreement.

After several months of asking for updates and not receiving any answers, I became frustrated and submitted a FOIA request to DDOT. On January 28th, I received a response. Within the hundreds of pages of documents, I found a screenshot indicating that the final adjustment was waiting on adjusting a commercial loading zone and meter parking. And on January 29th, the PUDO zone was finally implemented.

I share this story to illustrate how frustrating it can be at times to interact with our government agencies. For something as important as getting our children to school safely, DDOT should be able to act more nimbly in implementing sign adjustments and proactively partnering with schools. It also should not take months of follow up emails and a FOIA request in order to get the information I need to serve my constituents. I know that FOIAs are not always quick to respond to, and it would have been much more efficient for DDOT to just be communicative throughout this process.

On a more positive note, I want to flag that requesting bike racks is one of the best experiences I have with DDOT. That team is a great example of what good service can look like in DDOT. I know that if I request a bike rack and need a quick answer on feasibility, they will respond in a timely manner with a well thought out response. It doesn't feel like a black hole like the rest of DDOT.

Josh Jacobson