

2018 All Walks DC Candidate Survey

1. What do you see as the top three obstacles to walking in DC, and what concrete actions do you plan to take to address them if elected?

RESPONSE: The top three obstacles to walking in DC are:

- 1) Infrastructure and maintenance: While DDOT added 1.2 miles of new sidewalk throughout the city in 2017, closing 20 percent of the gaps in the city's 1,500-mile sidewalk network, that doesn't address the miles of existing sidewalks in poor repair. In Ward 1, for example, many raised sidewalks that were trip hazards have been ground down to improve pedestrian safety. Yet east of 16th Street, raised sidewalks remain unaddressed and present a danger to public safety. Similarly, there are many streets and sidewalks that are too narrow to meet DDOT and ADA standards, often with street lights centered in the sidewalk further impeding walkability and safety. Many of these non-compliant blocks also lack street trees and are therefore hot and uninviting in the warm summer months. We need an inventory of these streets so that we can rebuild them with pedestrians in mind. Rather than use sparse sidewalk space for lamp poles, we need to include bulbouts in the street to contain street lights, street trees, and other greening measures.
- 2) Prioritization of automotive transportation over other modes, such as walking: As pedestrian mobility is the most flexible and individual, historically DDOT has considered it the mode of transportation needing the least thought. Even with heightened awareness today, it is clear to me that DDOT still prioritizes automotive transportation needs above those of other modes of transportation. We need to continue to change that mindset and remove this bias. Every form of transportation is equally important and must be safe. Every time DDOT renovates a street and replaces sidewalks, we need them to look for opportunities to improve walkability rather than merely replace in kind with no thought whatsoever.

One example in which I was personally involved in occurred in 2016 when DDOT replace sidewalks on the 600 and 700 blocks of Otis Place, NW. DDOT wanted to merely replace the sidewalks as they were. I intervened, halted the project, and convinced them to push the sidewalk further away from the street to accommodate eight new street trees where none previously existed. This was a reworking of space that increased pedestrian safety and comfort. However, DDOT could have done much more. The street is overly wide and street lights on the north side are in the middle of the sidewalks, creating challenges for those in wheelchairs and pushing strollers. With an appropriate plan, the street could have been narrowed with the lighting infrastructure moved to improve walkability and access. DDOT needs to be more thoughtful and creative, especially in our century old neighborhoods that were not constructed to meet today's demands.

3) Traffic speed & lax traffic enforcement: Surveys consistently show that unsafe and aggressive driving are among the top public safety concerns of DC residents. Speeding, failing to yield, and running red lights or STOP signs are some of the most common errors drivers make. A failure to design roads for lower speeds and to rigorously enforce compliance of traffic laws only make the problem worse. It doesn't matter if a pedestrian has the right-of-way or is in the right, in a contest between vehicles and pedestrians, pedestrians always lose. To improve pedestrian safety we need to enforce traffic laws, consider increasing fines, and invest in reconstructing streets to minimized vehicle/pedestrian conflicts and improve public safety for all. I advocated precisely for this in January 2018 when I requested that DDOT study a proposal to improve public safety at Park Place and Rock Creek Church Road. You can see the proposal at:
http://anc1a.org/Resolutions/2018/01_2018_Letter_Reservation%20321A%20Bulbo%20Study%20Request_FINAL.pdf

2. DC's Vision Zero Initiative aims to eliminate serious injuries and death for people traveling in DC by 2024. However, traffic deaths have grown for each of the past few years. Getting to zero deaths and injuries will require difficult political choices, such as reducing car speeds, parking, or travel lanes. Will you commit to prioritizing pedestrian safety over convenience?

RESPONSE: I am committed to making the difficult political decisions that are necessary for us to achieve the goals of DC's Vision Zero, especially in regards to pedestrian safety. Personally, I rely on three modes of transportation – I drive when I run errands that are hard to get to by other means, I rely on Metro to get me downtown for work, and for everything else, I walk. Of these three modes, I rely on walking the most. It is not just the healthiest, it is often the most convenient and hassle-free. Because of this, I am deeply attuned with broken sidewalks, poorly considered crosswalks, tree roots and limbs impacting pedestrian paths, narrow sidewalks, and drivers that don't obey stop signs or traffic signals, and a host of other conditions that prevent safe walking. In my neighborhood, Georgia Avenue is incredibly difficult to cross on foot and needs a higher priority on pedestrian safety, not the least for both the Ward 1 senior wellness center and E.L. Haynes elementary school. Walkable communities are healthy communities where neighbors know each other. For this reason, I definitely would prioritize pedestrian safety and traffic enforcement.

3. Studies have shown that allowing right turn on red increases pedestrian crashes, particularly in areas with high pedestrian volumes. Would you support banning right turn on red, either citywide or across downtown or in other neighborhoods?

RESPONSE: We need to rethink the right turn on red policy in the District. Rather than make this the rule, I'd like to make it the exception. This is an instance where we could learn from New York and have a no-right-turn-on-red policy, which would decrease not only vehicle/pedestrian crashes, but also vehicle/bicycle crashes. Multiple studies have

concluded that the number of pedestrian and bicycle crashes increased after adoption of the right turn on red, mostly due to right-turning drivers looking left for a clear chance to turn rather than paying attention pedestrians or cyclists that may be approaching from behind. I myself have been hit by a vehicle turning right on red when I clearly had the walk sign and was in the right-of-way. This is the only time I've ever been hit by a vehicle. A no-right-turn-on-red policy would prohibit right turn on red unless otherwise allowed with posted signs. With District neighborhoods touting walkability as a major benefit, and with a growing city including many more children, we must revisit how we manage traffic to increase safety for all transit options. While I support a reversal of right turn on red policies, just changing the law will not be enough. We will also need enforcement, as I observe cars rolling through stop signs on a daily basis.

4. DC uses a system of automated (camera) traffic enforcement. What is your opinion of this program and how would you improve it?

RESPONSE: I fully support this program as it does slow down vehicles and makes drivers more cautious where they exist – though I fully recognize that it only temporarily modifies driver behavior until they believe they are once again out of the camera's area. I would like to see the automated traffic camera program expanded with a more robust city-wide network of permanent cameras located specifically at high-risk intersections with high occurrences of accidents and injuries, and especially at intersections where DDOT concludes that they cannot improve public safety through engineering improvements. Speed cameras should also be located near schools and in areas with a high number of seniors (including buildings serving seniors). Lastly, as cameras generate a significant amount of money for the District, I would like to see the money received through camera fines specifically used to fund improvements to our traffic corridors to make them safer for pedestrians, cyclists, cars, and all forms of transportation.

5. Autonomous vehicles are on the horizon in DC. How do you think policies should shape the way AVs affect curb space, streets, and land use in DC, especially as it relates to walking?

RESPONSE: With good planning and policy, autonomous vehicles have tremendous potential to free up public space currently used for automobile parking. To get there, we need to map the intersections of public transportation, AVs, and other forms of transportation. The potential to improve neighborhoods is great. With a safe and reliable AV network, we could reduce the need for street parking by designating AV parking areas or garages strategically located throughout the Washington metropolitan area. This could reduce the demand for street parking which could then lead to wider sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and in neighborhoods like Park View, LeDroit Park, and Rosedale, additional room for street trees where none exist. Improving the tree canopy also improves walkability. Similarly, on major commercial corridors, reduced parking demand can translate into room for dedicated bus lanes leading to better reliability of public transportation and a more robust public transportation network. By reclaiming public

space for expanded sidewalks and tree space, we also create more walkable neighborhoods, promoting increased mobility and safety for everyone.

6. Not everyone has safe spaces to walk in their neighborhood, or amenities to walk to. How do you plan on addressing that issue when in office?

RESPONSE: Everyone deserves to be able to walk safely in their own neighborhood. To do this, we need sidewalks in good repair and ADA compliant, crosswalks that are safe, and walking paths and tracks on public parks and recreation centers. We also need to consider walkability and include amenities such as benches for seniors when we build or renovate public spaces. A good example of the later occurred when I worked with the community to renovate the Park View Recreation Center. One of the features we included was a walking path around the basketball court and soccer field, which creates a safe place to walk in the morning, especially for seniors. Where neighborhoods abut public park land, we need to improve walkable connections to those spaces as well as find ways to open up historic green space for low impact uses such as walking or cycling. There is no practical reason, for example, why a walking path can not be created around McMillan Reservoir. There is no path there today because no one has taken the initiative to have that conversation.

We also need to rethink how we use green space, or even what green space is? We have a number of cemeteries in DC, and most are surrounded by fences with limited access. These are often quiet, safe spaces that many residents like to visit, or would like to visit, if for no other reason than to walk and find some peace of mind. We must rethink these spaces and their connections to the community, just as Congressional Cemetery has done in a very successful way.

7. Currently DC policy calls for speed limits to be set according to how fast 85% of drivers drive on a given road, rather than finding a speed that is safe for that road's design. Given that speed is the factor that causes many fatalities and serious injuries, would you support changing DC law to set speeds based on safety standards?

RESPONSE: I support any effort that will reduce the overall speed limit in the District – especially in residential neighborhoods. However, I don't believe that legislating lower speed limits would lead to slower driving speeds and increased safety.

The main reason engineers give for setting speed limits to how fast 85% of the drivers' drive is because this is considered the "prevailing speed", and as such, considered the safest speed for automotive travel. Vehicles that go slower or faster than the prevailing speed introduce unpredictability, and thus decrease safety. The reason that speed limits are so high on many District roads is because the streets are overbuilt for residential purposes, and therefore encourage faster speeds that are not compatible for walkable neighborhoods, or cyclists, seniors, and children.

Because neighborhood streets have more intersections, and often more cyclists and pedestrians, with more people moving at different speeds in different directions, we need lower maximum speed limits, and the best long-term strategy to do this is to construct streets that result in lower prevailing speeds. This can be achieved by reducing lanes, narrowing streets, or including bulbouts at intersections and strategic locations so that drivers inherently reduce their speeds, resulting in safer streets.

8. The Safe Accommodations law is designed to keep sidewalks open around construction zones. Recently, though, we've seen more sidewalks closed across the city, even in areas with heavy foot traffic. What will you do to keep sidewalks open during construction?

RESPONSE: DDOT's Safe Accommodations regulations are some of the most progressive in the country, and making sure they fulfill their goal of keeping sidewalks and bike lanes open during construction is essential for public safety. As sidewalks and bike lanes are in public space, DDOT is the agency responsible for reviewing, approving, and enforcing traffic control plans to ensure that they accommodate pedestrians and are in compliance. Despite the law, sidewalks are frequently blocked during construction and in violation of the DDOT approved traffic control plan. As the goal is safety, I propose that the following steps be taken to achieve long-term compliance with the law.

- Every infraction must be reported, as DDOT will use the data to help identify recurring problems and repeat permit violators. This will help with developing systemic solutions— like trainings, permit guidance and targeted enforcement;
- Review penalties and fines and see if they are appropriate for those in non-compliance;
- Grant DCRA the authority to issue Stop Work Orders for projects DDOT determines to be in violation of their traffic control plan or who are blocking sidewalks with no plan at all. No project wants to be shut down and time is money.
- Authorize DDOT to require prepayment of a significant refundable deposit as part of the application process for repeat offenders.

Lastly, we need construction projects with approved traffic control plans to be on a regular inspection cycle. We want to catch and correct violations as quickly as possible. Our goal must prioritize safe, walkable communities whether they are under construction or not.