

Statement of DCCA President at the July 14 ANC meeting.

I would like to address the 17th Street cycle track and redesign. Specifically, I'd like to address the process and lack of true community engagement, which has led to a lot of upset in the community, even from people who are neutral or in favor of the cycle track. DCCA advocated for a separate meeting to discuss the NOI for this last June, which the ANC arranged with DDOT. The ANC then approved the NOI with some reservations and requests for ongoing communication. DCCA submitted comments with some specific asks. DCCA requested that we be kept informed about the evolving plans and did see some preliminary curbside management plans last August. Both the NOI and these plans still called for two cycle tracks and had no accommodation for streateries, except as possibly occupying some parking areas. Last February, DCCA wrote to DDOT to ask about evolving plans, and for the first time, we saw a preliminary version of the current plan with streateries. Although we did not request a public meeting at that time, we expected to see some updated plans and would have asked for a meeting when they came. DDOT informed us to work with the ANC, but the ANC didn't seem to know anything more than we did. In the event, there was no further communication from DDOT until the construction plans were released in early June, with no user-friendly version such as DDOT usually uses for community engagement. Upon much clamor for a community meeting from other groups, the ANC, DDOT, and Councilmember Pinto hid behind the approval of the NOI more than a year previously, with a very different plan (2 cycle tracks, no streateries, and no specifics on the curbside management). A public meeting organized by the ANC should have happened this June so the community could be informed about the new plans, which may have also required a new NOI.

There seems to be trust by the ANC, Councilmember Pinto, and cycling organizations that DDOT knows what it's doing. But some of the same people who express this trust denigrate the 14th Street bicycle lanes and other DDOT bicycle projects. DDOT's history with the 15th Street cycle track is not good, either. The original plan for only a counterflow lane, which went through a full community engagement process, was, after a few months, changed to a two-way cycle track with no community engagement. DDOT now realizes that they should have put a separate northbound track on the east side, because left turns across the cycle track on the west side, with northbound traffic is very dangerous – I know this first-hand, because I need to make this turn into my alley from 15th Street. Furthermore, this ANC submitted a resolution to DDOT in 2015 to improve the signage on the 15th Street cycle track, and none of the requested changes have been made, even something as simple as to move warning signs about alleys down from 10 feet to 6 ft where they can be seen by cyclists. Most projects are better when more people are involved, and after community engagement, particularly with those with intimate knowledge of local conditions, we all have more leverage to hold DDOT's feet to the fire when adjustments to their plans are needed.