



**WASHINGTON AREA BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION**

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Dear Members of the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia:

I am writing to express the strong support of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association for the proposed changes to the District's parking regulations. These changes will allow the District to continue to evolve into a more walkable, bikeable, livable city without artificially high, costly requirements for vehicular parking. As advocates for safe, healthy, sustainable transportation alternatives in the nation's capital, we believe that these regulations make major strides toward rationally balancing the demand for competing modes of transportation within the District.

Our attached testimony focuses specifically on the bicycle-specific elements of the proposed changes, as that is our area a special expertise. But please note our strong support for the proposed changes to parking for both motor vehicles and bicycles.

Sincerely,

Shane Farthing  
Executive Director

**ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia**

CASE NO. 08-066  
EXHIBIT NO. 65

ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO. 08-06  
EXHIBIT NO. 65

**WABA supports the proposed amendments requiring additional bicycle parking and shower facilities, and recommends several improvements to appropriately respond to demand and ease implementation.**

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) appreciates the efforts of the Office of Planning to research and develop these proposed improvements to the District's bicycle parking zoning regulations. As the region's largest bicyclist membership association and advocacy organization we are pleased to state publicly our support for the direction of these proposed regulations and to offer a few comments and critiques that we hope will improve both the regulations and the delivery of their stated goal: Ensuring an adequate supply of safe and accessible bicycle parking with minimal negative impacts on the community or residents.

Fundamentally, WABA exists to support cycling in the District because cycling is an affordable, healthy, and sustainable means of transportation that provides mobility (and the personal, recreational, and economic opportunities that accompany increased mobility) while helping to minimize the communal problems of congestion and pollution and to improve both individual and public health.

In our role as advocates, we work to remove barriers to cycling. Here, the Zoning Commission has the opportunity to remove a fundamental barrier to cycling in the District by adopting zoning rules that recognize the bicycle as a legitimate, important part of the District's transportation infrastructure, and ensure that as land use patterns change, cycling is considered and integrated into our neighborhoods as a viable transportation option.

Lack of bicycle parking is a real problem in many parts of the District and, as the rate of bicycling increases, the problem will worsen unless regulations such as these provide clear mandates for improvement. The public sector's ability to respond to the increase in demand for bike parking is limited both by agency resources and by its access only to public space. So governmental action alone will not address even the current bike parking deficiency in many parts of the city, much less meet the needs of the future.

Overall, WABA supports the bike parking regulations and looks forward to their speedy adoption and implementation. However, there are several points on which we would like to see improvements or clarifications in order to better meet goals of these regulations.

- 1. The number of long-term spaces in the residential use category should be significantly increased.**

While the space-to-area conversions proposed in these regulations seem reasonable and their underlying assumptions reflect evidence and experience, WABA believes that the proposed "3 spaces for each 4 dwelling units," or 0.75 long-term spaces per residential unit, should be increased. According to the 2001 National Household Travel Survey, conducted by the US Department of Transportation, the average number of full-size bicycles per household is 0.86. Even without adjusting for the age of the survey (and the growth of cycling as transportation during the period) or the increased density and multi-modal focus within the District and region, the proposed 0.75 spaces per residential unit is deficient.

WABA encourages the Zoning Commission and Office of Planning to undertake an empirical analysis of the current rate of bicycle ownership per residential unit within the District and to set standards for long-term parking that will allow for adequate bike parking at residents' homes. WABA suspects that this further analysis would reveal a bicycle ownership rates in the District far higher than the 0.86 national figure from 2001.

In the absence of further empirical study, WABA would recommend a residential rate based on the District average of 2.08 residents per rental unit and 2.36 residents per resident-owned unit of 8 long-term bicycle parking spaces per 4 units. But based solely on the 2001 survey, in no case should the minimum long-term bike parking requirement fall below one space per dwelling unit.

**2. The exemptions must be clarified, and should not be allowed to undermine District priorities.**

- a. If ensuring adequate bike parking District-wide is the broader goal of the District and the purpose of these regulations, whether an individual use or structure will generate a requisite amount of demand for short-term bike parking is an inappropriate basis for determining exemption.

Because these regulations will apply only where land use changes or increases, these bike parking requirements will be applied on a rolling basis consistent with the market-driven timing of development. All buildings will not be required to comply simultaneously. Thus, while the occasional new (or changed/expanded use) building will be required to meet these enhanced standards, at the outset and well into the future, most of the surrounding neighborhood will be unaffected by the proposed regulations, and nearby buildings will be free to under-provide bike parking.

To address this continued underserving, and to contribute to the broader goals of the District, a demand analysis at the neighborhood level would be more appropriate as a determinant of exemption.<sup>1</sup> That is, the question that should be asked is not whether this particular "use or structure will generate demand for less bicycle parking than the minimum bicycle parking standards require," but rather, whether the neighborhood as a whole, appropriately defined, contains sufficient bicycle parking. Where a neighborhood is underserved in bike parking, no exemption from the generally applicable requirement to provide minimum short-term bike parking should be granted.

- b. The method of demonstrating a lack of bike parking demand must be clearly and appropriately defined, and the evaluator of such attempted demonstration must be sufficiently trained and qualified to make such a determination.

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<sup>1</sup> This comment applies only to short-term parking. Given the more direct usage of long-term parking by individual building residents or employees, a single-use/structure analysis is appropriate as drafted.

In § 1608.2 of the proposed regulations, “flexibility” is provided when meeting the general requirements is impractical, contrary to law, “*or when it is unnecessary due to a lack of demand for bicycle parking*” (emphasis added). First, WABA assumes that “flexibility” means that the requirements can be adjusted up or down incrementally to a practical or lawful level, or to appropriately meet demand and that “flexibility” does not imply any automatic exemption from the obligation to provide any bike facilities. But more importantly, WABA is concerned that the phrase “unnecessary due to a lack of demand for bicycle parking” is undefined such that no guidance is provided to exemption-seekers, nor is any standard of review provided for the implementing official(s).

It is of fundamental importance that exemptions from the requirement to provide bicycle parking not be granted based, in any part, on a present or historical failure to provide such parking. That is, no owner or operator of a property should be able to argue, in effect, that because no one bikes to a structure with no available parking, that there is therefore no demand for bike parking and that none should be required. Anyone arguing in favor of an exemption from such requirements should be required to show not just that no one bikes to the structure currently, but that no one would use the bike parking if provided. The demand analysis should be prospective, should account for induced demand, and (in the case of short-term parking) should not be limited in scope to visitors to the individual structure or use.<sup>2</sup>

- c. The relationship between these regulations and the public space permit regulations must be clear, and mere difficulty or delay in securing a public space permit should not contribute to any reduction in the minimum bicycle parking required for a use or structure.

These regulations will, in many cases, require the land owner/user to take private action on public space. This will require review by DDOT for conformance with public space regulations. Therefore, these regulations should be amended to clarify that the currently undefined “bicycle parking plan” of § 1600.3 must be a siteplan marking physical locations (as opposed to a narrative document) and that it must be approved by DDOT’s public space permitting authorities (in addition to the Zoning Administrator) prior to the issuance of any building permit or certificate of occupancy. Additionally, DDOT’s approval of the bicycle parking plan of § 1600.3 should be a sufficient demonstration of the bicycle parking’s compliance with the District’s public space regulations to serve in lieu of a public space permit for the shown bicycle parking facilities. Therefore, no separate and additional public space permit should be required for the installation of the bike parking facilities shown on the approved bicycle parking plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Under the same rationale as stated in § 2(a), *supra*.

Regardless, the inability to secure a DDOT-issued public space permit in a timely fashion should not contribute to any exemption from the general requirements of this chapter under § 1608.3.

**3. The provision of showers and changing facilities is vital to encouraging bicycling as transportation.**

While perhaps overshadowed by the discussion of bike parking, the issue of changing facilities and showers is also of fundamental importance to enabling bicycling to serve as primary transportation for much of the District's workforce. Given the professional nature of many jobs in the District, business attire is demanded and professional appearance is valued. Meanwhile, the regional draw contributes to some lengthy commutes and the District's varied climate makes professional dress for bicycle commuters difficult in the summer and winter months.

Regardless the quality of the infrastructure, it is not possible for many regional commuters to arrive at work looking suitable for the professional environment wearing the clothing in which they have biked. Beyond the very shortest commutes, changing clothes and showering is necessary to enable bicycling as a viable means of transportation. In a 2009 member survey, WABA asked: How influential, if at all, would access to a shower/changing area be in encouraging you to commute by bicycle? 44.9% of respondents indicated that access to such facilities would be "Very Influential" and an additional 33.2% stated that access would be "Somewhat Influential." Thus, in sum, 78.1% of respondents indicated that access to a shower/changing area would be influential in encouraging them to commute by bicycle.<sup>3</sup>

And again, it is important to recall the concept of induced demand in this context. *While, in some cases, tenant demand has been sufficient to encourage the provision of showers without additional regulation, this is the exception rather than the rule.* Here, the fact that so many respondents indicate that their behavior could be influenced by this facility change implies that the facility change must precede the demand. Because the presence of the changing facility enables the bicycle commuter in such great proportion, a requirement to provide such a facilities—even prior to expressed demand—is appropriate given existing data, logical given the effects of induced demand, and necessary to encourage many workers to commute by non-automotive means year-round.

Thank you for the opportunity to state our support for these regulations. The provision of safe, convenient bicycle parking is vital to enable more of our community members to forego the motor vehicle in favor of the bicycle. This update of the parking regulations to include bicycle parking and accompanying showers and changing facilities is a significant step in the right direction.

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<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the same survey also asked: "Which of the following factors, if any, plays a significant role in **discouraging** you from commuting by bicycle from your home to work or school?" 25% of respondents identified "No place to change/shower" as a **discouraging** factor.