

Testimony before the D.C. Zoning Commission regarding:

SUPPORT for Case No. 08-06-2 (Comprehensive Zoning Regulations Rewrite: Parking)

By David C Duxbury

July 31, 2008

Good evening and thank you for allowing me to speak briefly on my experience as a District resident; I hope my perspective will not only illuminate the benefits of ~~adopting~~ ^{language in a parking code which will} encouraging pedestrian and transit oriented activities within our city but also highlight the current challenges to those of us who chose to live without automobiles.

Almost every day I bike one and a half miles from my apartment in LeDroit Park to my office near Farragut Square. To commute by Metrorail takes 30 minutes; metrobus takes 40 minutes; walking takes 30 minutes; bicycling takes 10 minutes. Intentionally, I have never commuted by car to work. The upfront cost of purchasing a bicycle is far less than the amount I would spend on transit fare, let alone on parking fees and gasoline. Additionally, commuting by bicycle permits greater flexibility with my schedule since it takes far less time to reach most destinations within the District than it would by either mass transit or automobile. Furthermore, there are inherent health and environmental benefits that come with commuting by bike, mass transit or on foot.

When I first moved to the District, I brought my car as a means to travel from my apartment in LeDroit Park to more distant parts of the city which are underserved by public transit. Additionally, the car proved useful in making trips to visit family a few hours away from the city. On average I drove 250 miles per month. After a year and a half of car ownership, I calculated the cost to maintain, insure and operate the car, and concluded it would be more economic to sell the car and rely on bicycling combined with a variety of mass transit options to travel longer distances.

Removed From Verbal
TESTIMONY

Of course, being a committed bicyclist comes with inherent problems. During nighttime trips, cab drivers looking for fares and drivers searching for parking often drive erratically without paying attention to bicyclists. On multiple occasions I have had to take evasive maneuvers to avoid being hit by a car pulling out of a spot or a cab driver making a U-turn of questionable legality. Commuting on our busy avenues and arterial streets can be equally harrowing as drivers often stop to unload passengers and packages in the bike lane. When I must bike in a vehicular travel lane—a common practice due to the District's lack of bicycle lanes—cars often pass at a close distance or tailgate me. When I arrive at my destination, I rarely find a well marked bike rack; more often I must lock my bicycle to a street sign, parking meter or fence.

My own decision to develop a car-free lifestyle reflects a trend of local commuters decreasingly relying on automobiles for their daily commutes and increasingly relying on mass transit, bicycles or even their own two feet. The present scenario comes from a complex web of issues, most prominent of which are the recent sharp rise in the cost of oil and the regeneration of vibrant commercial and residential districts in our city. Increasingly, friends of mine from the suburbs come to enjoy the wealth of dining and entertainment opportunities the district has to offer. While many of them initially lamented the Herculean task of finding parking in the city on a Friday or Saturday night, they quickly discovered that mass transit often proved to be faster than circling for parking spots. From our experience, the primary problems stem partially from a lack of parking but primarily from a lack of transit opportunities—in particular, the poor and infrequent timing of busses which provide a vital supplement to Metrorail.

In conclusion, it seems many residents of the District and its suburbs—at least most of those I know—would gladly embrace transit and pedestrian oriented habits. Those who drive do so because it is the most convenient or economical option given their current options. I fully appreciate the movement to reduce the number of parking spots

required on new developments as it would discourage further increases of the number of cars traveling on our already congested streets. Furthermore, I applaud the idea of shifting resources away from providing vehicular parking towards providing an environment more conducive to pedestrian, transit and bicycle oriented living. In

particular, I am encouraged to see the District begin to expand on its network of bike lanes. However, if we are genuinely serious about creating a more pedestrian friendly

environment, I challenge ~~the District~~ and surrounding municipalities to ensure that their residents

have the transportation options necessary to ~~travel our region without relying on automobiles.~~
~~lifestyles.~~

Thank you and have a good evening.

I ~~am~~ ^{look} also ~~looking~~ FORWARD TO HEARING ABOUT OTHER ZONING AND TRANSIT INITIATIVES WHICH WILL ENCOURAGE THE USE OF MASS TRANSIT ~~AS WELL AS~~ ^{AS WELL AS} ~~THE~~ ^{THE} SORT OF MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT WHICH ~~ENRICHES~~ ENRICHES THE DISTRICT'S ALREADY PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOODS.

My only concern with the parking recommendations is the lack of standards regarding permeable and impermeable paving.