

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Public Works



Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Performance Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
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Before the
Committee on Public Works and Operations
Brienne Nadeau, Chairperson
Council of the District of Columbia

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John A. Wilson Building
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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairperson Nadeau, members of the Committee on Public Works and Operations, and staff. I am Timothy Spriggs, Acting Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW). I am joined today by Christine Davis, our General Counsel; Perry Fitzpatrick, our Agency Fiscal Officer; Blake Adams, Manager of our Office of Waste Diversion; and Danny McCoy, former Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).

First, I want to express my gratitude to Mayor Bowser for giving me the opportunity to lead DPW. I appreciate the support of City Administrator Kevin Donahue and Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure (DMOI) Lucinda Babers for our agency's work.

I also want to congratulate you on being appointed as the Chairperson of the new Committee on Public Works and Operations.

DPW touches every District resident, business, commuter and visitor. I am committed to ensuring effective and efficient service delivery across our three major business lines: solid waste management; parking enforcement and management; and fleet management. Our employees work tirelessly every day to provide the best service, and I am grateful for their commitment to serve.

Chairperson Nadeau, I am also grateful for your continuing support for the DPW workforce, as you expressed in previous hearings. We are fully committed to our mission to provide environmentally healthy municipal services that are both ecologically sound and cost-effective.

Now I will bring you up to date on the progress achieved by Mayor Bowser's Building Blocks DC (BBDC) program, now in its second year. This bold, first-in-the-nation, public health, wrap-around program supports at-risk individuals who choose public service. We are a second chance agency, which puts us in position to support this second chance program.

We employ 71 BBDC temporary or seasonal employees in term positions in our Solid Waste Management Administration (SWMA). Even better, seven term positions were converted to permanent positions, and one person was transferred to the Parking Enforcement Management Administration (PEMA). This program is an example of our commitment to embrace, guide and reinforce those who choose public service.

I will discuss how our clean streets, parking enforcement and environmental programs contribute to public health and safety but, first, I want to describe our most labor-intensive, interagency activity of FY 2022.

Trucker's Convoy

DPW joined other District government agencies to support the Metropolitan Police Department's (MPD's) effort to maintain normal traffic flow as truckers exercised their First Amendment rights to protest COVID-19 vaccine mandates and other issues between February and March 2022. DPW's primary role was to create secure barriers at I-695 and I-395 exit and entrance ramps to prevent protesters from causing major traffic disruptions within the District of Columbia. DPW staff supported this effort for 37 days, working 74 12-hour shifts, totaling 888 hours.

Staff performed whatever tasks were needed – road sweeping and debris removal, blocking vehicles, emergency liaison officers for management/administrative functions, sanitation worker, equipment manager, tire and tow operations, customer service/PEMA, fueling of vehicles, and vehicle repairs.

Now I will address our three major service clusters: clean streets; parking enforcement; and environmental stewardship. They are integrated to meet our objective of protecting public health and public safety.

Clean Streets

Attaining a higher level of cleanliness along our streets is a product of education, enforcement, and enthusiasm. DPW's Solid Waste Education and Enforcement Program (SWEEP) leads our effort, which includes inter-agency activities and community engagement. As you will hear, we have many programs to enhance our clean streets services, yet I want to assure you that we are working on additional means to increase our productivity.

Great Streets

Last September, Mayor Bowser directed agencies guided by DMOI to conduct a major clean-up encompassing our "Great Streets." We provided mowing, trash pick-up, tree pruning, and vacant property boarding of homes and businesses. During the course of this program, DPW removed more than 464 tons of bulk items, debris and trash from our Great Streets.

New MPD Multiagency Public Safety Task Forces

FY 2022 marked the beginning of our participation in two new multi-agency efforts led by MPD to reduce crime. Our role is to tackle sanitation and parking issues.

MPD's Multiagency Nightlife Task Force addresses violent crime, quality of life, nuisance activities and regulatory concerns along the U Street, N.W., H Street, N.E., and Connecticut Avenue, N.W. corridors. In FY 2022, we issued 5,409 parking tickets, performed 719 relocations, and impounded 248 vehicles.

The success of the Nightlife Task Force led MPD to stand up the Minnesota Avenue Multiagency Public Safety Task Force. DPW removes trash and debris and enforces parking violations. As of January 2023, we wrote 37 parking tickets and 20 sanitation tickets, impounded 29 vehicles with almost \$45,000 in unsatisfied parking tickets, and collected 11 tons of trash and debris. Much of that consisted of mattresses and box springs, furniture, and shopping carts.

For the seven events we participated in, our SWEEP Inspectors issued 64 residential and commercial sanitation citations equaling \$26,825 in fines. Additionally, each time they went out, they informed residents and business owners about proper sanitation practices, including trash disposal, collection days and times, as well as enforceable actions. Their presence reassured renters of their property owners' responsibilities.

Over the duration of this task force, PEMA employees issued 16 parking tickets and impounded 16 vehicles with a total of \$19,942 in unpaid parking fines.

Now I will talk about our sanitation programs that contribute to clean streets, but first I want to address the elephant in the room, leaf collections.

DPW completed the FY23 leaf season last week, and we collected 7,763 tons of leaves. I want to note that, again we struggled with keeping our schedule this leaf season. However, I am committed to fully determining the root causes of the delays and implementing solutions before the start of leaf season FY24.

Special Street Sweeping Program

Street sweeping is vital to achieving clean streets. DPW's Solid Waste Management Administration (SWMA) conducted a special mechanized street sweeping program for unposted routes in Wards 7 and 8 in FY 2022. We swept more than 1,100 miles of streets in these two wards and collected more than 80 tons of debris.

Wards 7 and 8 Alley Cleaning Pilot Program

DPW initiated an alley cleaning and neighborhood clean-up pilot program from June 30 to August 25, 2022.

These wards were chosen after an assessment of alley cleaning service requests. The pilot program included an educational campaign to focus resources and provide incentives to enhance the cleanliness of public space in Wards 7 and 8. SWEEP Inspectors distributed 2,400 door

knockers to residents explaining how to maintain the public space around their property.

We also increased community engagement by providing community groups that scheduled a Helping Hand neighborhood clean-up and/or beautification project with the very popular “Don’t Litter” yard signs. We distributed more than 100 signs during the program.

In FY 2023, we collected 102 tons of bulk materials, 50 tons of yard waste, and 311 tons of debris.

SWEEP Inspectors conducted multiple High Impact Visibility Enforcement (HIVE) activities in Wards 1, 2, 6 and 7 in FY 2022. This multi-agency tool focuses attention within specific areas to educate residents and businesses about proper sanitation practices. Inspectors also enforced sanitation regulations. We welcomed participation from DC Health, the Department of Behavioral Health, and the former Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs [now DLCP and DOB] in our HIVEs.

Helping Hand

DPW gives a “helping hand” to communities across the District every year between April and December. In FY 2022, we provided rakes, brooms, and bags to 46 community clean-up projects. Once a clean-up is completed, we collect the filled bags and dispose of them.

PEMA also contributes to our clean streets effort. In FY 2022, PEMA conducted five blitzes of enhanced enforcement and removal of abandoned vehicles in Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8.

MuralsDC

Clean streets are attractive streets. In 2022, we celebrated the 15th anniversary of DPW’s graffiti prevention program, MuralsDC. This signature program began as an effort to reduce graffiti. It gained international stature when Mayor Bower unveiled the Black Lives Matter

mural near the White House after the murder of George Floyd. This mural has been replicated across the United States.

Since its launch, MuralsDC has created 165 original works of art on public facing buildings and surfaces throughout the District. To celebrate this milestone, MuralsDC began its partnership with Hop On Hop Off Big Bus Tours DC for a tour of murals along the U Street, N.W. corridor and in the Ivy City and Atlas District neighborhoods in northeast.

The year also included the development of the first of its kind art “alley gallery” located between the Atlas Center for the Performing Arts and the H Street Country Club in N.E. The “Allery” includes 10 MuralsDC 51 Statehood projects, created in 2020, and 11 brand new murals that celebrate the energy and icons of the H Street corridor.

MuralsDC closed its anniversary year with the first official Art All Night DC event we called “Dancerie in the Allery.” The event featured a DJ, live art performances by two “Allery” muralists and scores of guests dancing alongside the newly created art past midnight.

Transition to the Benning Road Transfer Station for Residents’ Use

DPW successfully transitioned Household Hazardous Waste operations from the Fort Totten Transfer Station to the Benning Road Transfer Station with minimal disruption of services. About 4,000 residents a month use this platform for e-cycling, bulk, household hazardous waste, and shredding services.

Parking Enforcement

As I noted earlier, our parking enforcement team works with other District government agencies on a variety of issues. I would like to mention a few more.

Abandoned Vehicles

In FY 2022, DPW executed two abandoned vehicle blitzes in Wards 7 and 8. The focus was on vehicles that had been identified as abandoned, which

allowed DPW immediately to tow these vehicles during the blitz. DPW plans to increase the number of wards for the blitz in FY 2023 to add Wards 4 and 5. The blitz will rotate each month to focus on each of the wards.

Vision Zero 2022

Mayor Bowser is committed to traffic safety, and DPW is part of the multi-agency team carrying out her vision. PEMA works closely with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to boost parking enforcement in high injury sites. Through SWMA, we deliver our street maintenance services, including street and alley cleaning, snow and ice removal and leaf collection citywide, which also boost traffic safety.

Within the Vision Zero context, DPW has elevated enforcing safety violations, such as blocking fire hydrants, crosswalks, bike lanes, bus stops, and driveways. On a monthly basis, DDOT provides us with fatality and high crash locations. In turn, we alert our parking enforcement supervisors to pay special attention to the four-block areas where these sites are located. We focus on safety-related parking violations and distribute a “hot list” to staff assigned to these beats.

In FY 2021, we issued 143,783 violations. And, in FY 2022, we issued 168,188 safety violations, including 61,121 for no parking anytime; 38,247 for no standing anytime; and 11,287 for parking less than 10 feet from a fire hydrant, which reflects a 17% increase over FY21.

DPW responds to the increasing use of bicycles by vigorously ticketing vehicles that block bicycle lanes. Since 2018, parking officers issued 10,811 tickets for this violation. We also have begun enforcing the new regulation that prohibits vehicles that are either over 22 feet long or more than eight feet wide from parking next to an unprotected bicycle lane. The regulation that restricts vehicles from parking next to playgrounds, schools and churches now forbids them from parking next to such unprotected bike lanes.

Booting and towing services also are critical to the success of the Safe Streets component. The additional booting and towing staff we received contributes to enforcement of safety violations. We also are better able to support MPD's special events work. By immobilizing or towing these vehicles, it sends a clear message to their owners that their behavior has consequences.

DPW also participates with the Bicycle Advisory Council, receiving members' input about how our enforcement and street maintenance operations improve cyclists' safe travel.

New Impound Lot at 2115 Bryant Street, NE

We began using the new impound lot on Bryant Street, N.E. on Monday, February 6, and motorists are retrieving their vehicles. This site gives us 190 more spaces to impound booted vehicles. It also reduces the time to relocate these vehicles to a more central site within the District. In time, our Blue Plains Impound Lot will be used only for abandoned and dangerous vehicles.

Fairness in Parking Enforcement

No one likes getting a parking ticket, even when we know the ticket is properly issued. DPW places a great emphasis on writing accurate tickets, and I am proud to say that in FY 2022, only 0.3% of our tickets were dismissed when challenged.

New Booting and Towing Staff

In FY 2022 we hired three booters and 14 towing operators.

In FY 2023, we recruited internally and filled eight booter positions with existing DC government employees. We expect them to start working next month. We also are recruiting for the booting supervisor position. The goal is to fill that position in March 2023.

Earlier, I described how we embrace residents who want to turn their lives around by working with us through the Building Blocks DC program.

Today, we are using the Pathways to Government Employment Partnership program to hire four new booters. The program is for District residents who graduate from our public high schools or receive their General Educational Development degree.

The supervisor position is in the recruitment process, and we hope to fill it in March.

Last year, PEMA conducted a job fair that netted six new Motor Vehicle Operators for the Towing Division.

Support for MPD

As I stated earlier, PEMA supports MPD through our work on the Multiagency Task Forces. Last year, we created a pilot program, a 10-person rapid response team, to respond to the top 10 safety parking-related requests. We believe this 10-person rapid response team will shift some of that burden from MPD to us.

When we see a vehicle on MPD's alert list, the Parking Enforcement Officer's device reports the location to MPD. In FY 2022, we reported 7,470 vehicles.

Environmental Stewardship

Stormwater

Most people think our environmental stewardship is limited to recycling, food waste collections and other programs that will lead to achieving an 80% reduction in waste going to landfills or waste-to-energy facilities. However, we are responsible for another program that is equally important to our quality of life and the state of our waterways – DPW's Safety and Security Administration is responsible for keeping us in compliance with our Multi-Sector General Permit Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Of the 35 SWPPP sites citywide, DPW is responsible for 17 of those sites. Since 2020, we achieved and continue to maintain 100% compliance with the SWPPP, which had never occurred before.

Ongoing training, site visits and coordination with the Department of Energy and the Environment (DOEE) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) ensure we will continue to fully comply with these requirements.

Office of Waste Diversion

The Office of Waste Diversion (OWD) had a monumental year guiding the District toward Zero Waste.

I am incredibly proud that the District of Columbia received the 2022 Recycling Program of the Year award for large U.S. cities from Resource Recycling, an established recycling industry trade publication. The District was recognized for reducing our residential recycling contamination. It distinguishes the District from other large American cities in the country with respect to the quality of our single-family residential recycling stream.

This award, and the recycling industry's recognition, have quickly positioned the District as a leader among peer cities in the Zero Waste industry. Officials from across the world are taking notice and seeking our assistance as they design their own municipal Zero Waste programs.

We also made great progress in FY 2022 on completing the District's first Zero Waste DC Plan, which will serve as a roadmap to guide the city towards achieving our Zero Waste goal of diverting 80% or more of the city's waste away from landfill and incineration towards its highest and best use. In July 2022, after years of foundational research, DPW launched the most robust engagement cycle in the agency's history to support the development of the Zero Waste DC Plan – engaging nearly 700 individuals through community engagement meetings; and receiving 1,180 comments during two public comment periods and 5,330 responses to our public survey. We are grateful for residents' and institutions' participation in helping us develop the Zero Waste DC Plan, which is being finalized and will be published in April 2023.

Despite the scale and complexity of the District’s ambitious Zero Waste goal, Zero Waste is indeed possible for our city.

Achieving our 80% diversion goal means we must make a substantial investment in public outreach – building on our current outreach impact. In FY 2022, we conducted a citywide ad campaign calling for support to “End Plastic Waste” which was posted on bus shelters, at Metro stations, and in Metrorail cars and buses across the city. We also produced a residential postcard mailer that was sent to all DPW-serviced households to promote the Zero Waste DC Plan public survey and community engagement events and introduce our residential curbside composting pilot.

Investment in infrastructure also is key to achieving our city’s Zero Waste goals. To that end, we continue the planning process to convert the Benning Road Transfer Station into a modern Zero Waste Campus. DPW has allocated \$105 million to invest in the modernization of the Benning Road facility to allow for future on-site management and processing of 500,000 tons of solid waste per year including:

- Pre-processing (preparing) 100,000 tons per year of source-separated commercial food scraps for anaerobic digestion at an external facility;
- Processing (recycling) 200,000 tons per year of mixed recyclables;
- Collecting and diverting 40,000 tons per year of source-separated commercial glass recycling at an external facility;
- Collecting and diverting 20,000 tons of hard-to-recycle materials via residential drop-off; and
- Transferring 140,000 tons of trash bound for landfill or incineration outside of the District.

We conduct weekly meetings to discuss the design and capacity of the modernized Benning Road Facility. We look forward to the public’s influence on the future of this site via an online public input period and

public meetings. Redevelopment of this site, through this largest single capital investment to the District's solid waste management program, is expected to unlock the capacity to divert up to 40% of the District's waste stream from disposal. Project completion is slated for 2026.

Our residential programs also continue to grow in impact. Between FY 2017 and FY 2022, the Food Waste Dropoff Program increased participation by 965%. The amount of food waste collected increased by 794% over that same period. This growth is astounding and points to residents' demand for diversion programs. This program is undergoing an expansion as we speak.

Also, in FY 2022, DPW was awarded a \$152,000 grant from the EPA to launch an innovative and novel education and outreach strategy for District-based commercial food waste generators. The program, called Food Waste Ready, will train and certify commercial food waste generators via an automated, online learning management system (LMS), equipping food waste generators with the knowledge needed to initiate and sustain successful source separated organics programs and divert organic material from landfills. The Food Waste Ready training program is estimated to launch in summer 2023.

This year, the Office of Waste Diversion has several exciting initiatives.

Beginning January 1, 2023, 51 large food waste generating entities – including 47 grocery stores and four (4) universities – were required to source separate food waste generated on-premises for diversion from landfill and incineration.

OWD has notified these covered entities of the requirements and is committed to supporting them through education and technical assistance as they come into compliance. Part of this strategy includes the deployment of the EPA-funded Food Waste Ready program mentioned previously. With more than 10% of the citywide waste stream comprised of commercially-derived food scraps, these initiatives have enormous potential to accelerate the District on the path toward Zero Waste. In time,

we expect source separation provisions can be expanded, including requiring universal recycling and composting citywide.

In FY 2023, we anticipate the launch of the Curbside Composting Pilot program for 12,000 single-family residential households across all eight Wards. Households must opt-in to participate in the pilot program and will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis, with a maximum of 1,500 households permitted per Ward. We anticipate this program will divert approximately 6,000 tons of food waste from disposal. There are several procurements related to this program, including:

- A Print and Mail solicitation which was awarded.
- A Curbside Composting Materials solicitation which was awarded to a Certified Business Enterprise (CBE); and
- The Collections/Hauling/Processing Services contract that is pending solicitation within the next couple of weeks. This contract will exceed \$1 million and, therefore, will require Council approval.

Residents will be able to sign up for the Pilot starting in the Spring, with service beginning this summer. Once launched, the Pilot Program will run for 52 consecutive weeks.

In summary, the District is well-positioned to achieve Zero Waste.

Alternative Fuels Use and Reduced Salt Use

DPW plays a major role in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by increasing our use of alternative fuel vehicles (AFVs). Notably, we have made significant progress in the use of biodiesel, electric and other AFVs. The snow program will continue to use the 46 100% biodiesel six- and 10-wheel heavy plows acquired last year. During their average seven-to 10-year life span, they can yield about a 56% to 86% reduction in GHG emissions. These vehicles also are multifunctional, able to spray both brine and pre-wet salt. Both operations contribute to reducing the use of salt during a snow event.

The District's fleet includes 628 biodiesel vehicles, 592 E85 vehicles, 214 hybrid vehicles, 116 electric vehicles, and 69 CNG vehicles. I also would like to mention that we have installed 291 electric vehicle (EV) chargers District-wide.

Reducing GHG emissions is important for environmental protection, and so is controlling the use of salt, which can be detrimental to our water supply and environment. Today, we have 51 smart salt spreaders that provide the following advantages:

- We can calibrate them to adjust automatically to the snowplow's speed; and
- When in use, these spreaders report the location and amount of salt being spread per lane mile.

Information Technology

IT underpins everything we do. DPW continues to leverage information technology to support existing business operations and launch new initiatives. We introduced technical solutions for long-standing manual processes and empowering staff to use these tools will enhance their day-to-day experiences. We're now using Esri Quick Capture to allow Solid Waste Enforcement and Education Program employees to sign in/sign out remotely, thus decreasing travel time and increasing productivity. We also use the Esri Field Maps and Workforce application to schedule ground maintenance and our mowing crews.

We introduced a new pilot program to expand our use of the cloud-based solid waste platform to collect data for our nightly litter can collections.

DPW leads the District Snow Team and, every year, our IT staff introduces new technologies and they upgrade existing ones. We are using a combination of two technologies, which are GeoTab and EVStreets, to track the deployment and efficiencies of our snowplows. We use GeoTab for our municipal plows and EVStreets for our contract plows.

GeoTab is a telematics device that's inserted into a port inside the truck that helps us optimize the efficiency of our fleet. We can track municipal vehicles in real-time. It provides us with the ability to optimize routes, view driver behavior, receive engine data reports, and create and run customized reporting.

With EV Streets, we locate our contract plows as they travel throughout the District. It provides the same technology as GeoTab but instead of inserting a device, drivers use a mobile application. We decided to use this software to account for vehicles we don't own and/or may not have the technology to use GeoTab.

And, we have an integration between GeoTab and EVStreets using an application programming interface (API). The automatic vehicle location (AVL) data from EVStreets is integrated into the GeoTab system to provide us comprehensive reporting on route completion and vehicle tracking from one view.

In FY 2023, we started much needed construction to expand the use of our Fort Totten Transfer Station to include a citizens dropoff ramp. After construction, we will install License Plate Recognition System (LPRS) technology to capture information from all vehicles entering our transfer station scales. The cameras will help reduce security events and accurately pinpoint bad actors that drop off hazardous waste.

FY 2022 and FY 2023 Snow Seasons

Putting the snow program at the end of my testimony is not an indication of its lack of importance to DPW's operations. Instead, it means, happily for our city, but sadly for our children, that this year we have not had any measurable snowfall. In FY 2022, our first snowfall began January 2, and the last snowfall began March 12. There were seven events altogether, producing a total of 13.2 inches of snow. Between January 2 and March 12, the District Snow Team worked 15 12-hour shifts.

By January 2022, we had used more than 14,000 tons of salt. This year, we have used 418 tons, primarily for public safety activities, e.g., salting streets where fires had occurred to prevent freezing. My fingers are crossed that this snow season remains quiet.

Conclusion

Thank you, Chairperson Nadeau, for giving us this opportunity to share our accomplishments in FY 2022 and FY 2023. We look forward to working with you and your Committee regarding DPW's operations and services.

I am prepared to answer any questions that you or the Committee may have.