

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Public Works



Fiscal Year 2018 Proposed Budget Oversight Public Hearing

Testimony of

Christopher J. Shorter
Director, Department of Public Works

Before the

Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Chairperson Mary H. Cheh

April 26, 2017
Room 412
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTOPHER J. SHORTER, DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
FISCAL YEAR 2018 PROPOSED BUDGET OVERSIGHT HEARING
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT
APRIL 26, 2017/ROOM 412**

Introduction

- Good morning, Chairperson Cheh, members of the Committee and staff. I am Christopher J. Shorter, Director of the Department of Public Works. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss Mayor Bowser's FY 2018 proposed budget for the Department. With me today are the DPW General Counsel Christine Davis and our Agency Fiscal Officer Perry Fitzpatrick.
- I want to thank Mayor Bowser and City Administrator Rashad Young for allocating increased funding to enhance the Department of Public Works' capabilities. I would also like to thank all the men and women who show their commitment to the District of Columbia every day when they put on their uniforms and work tirelessly to keep our city clean, ensure parking opportunities for motorists, and service District government equipment and fleet.
- We are a people-intensive operation and we would accomplish nothing without our employees who brave all types of weather to deliver services. These men and women are the most important assets we have as we continue to deliver on our mission.

Budget Highlights

- I am pleased to provide testimony on Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2018 budget entitled, "DC Values in Action, a Roadmap to Inclusive Prosperity." Earlier this month, Mayor Bowser presented the District's 22nd consecutive balanced budget. It reflects the ideas and priorities of District residents and fulfills our commitment to deliver for District residents each and every day.
- Mayor Bowser's FY 2018 budget makes strategic investments in education, affordable housing, transportation, infrastructure, public safety, job training, and employment services that keep residents on the pathway to the middle class. These investments reflect the key priorities identified by District residents at Budget Engagement Forums held during the budget formulation process.
- The Mayor's FY18 Budget provides the Department of Public Works \$178,009,567, a 3.3% increase in funding and a 4.0% increase in FTEs. With this budget, we will secure increased efficiency and reliability of service delivery to reflect population growth and changing housing patterns, as well as support our continuous improvements in service delivery and efforts to put residents on the pathways to the middle class.
- In our capital budget, Mayor Bowser has funded:
 - Consolidating DPW facilities at the existing West Virginia Avenue, NE campus.

- Investing in the DPW snow removal, trash collection and sweeper fleets with new equipment.
- Increasing our capacity to relieve rush hour traffic congestion with additional tow trucks.
- And improving the tipping floor at the Ft. Totten Transfer Station.

What the Budget Will Provide

Overview

- The District of Columbia is a world capital, a destination for international and national visitors, an arts and entertainment venue, and finally, our world-class restaurants are being recognized as among the best in the nation. We are attracting thousands of people each year, which accounts for the tremendous growth experienced during the past decade.
- As a result, the Department of Public Works also is evolving to keep pace with the needs of our residents, businesses, commuters and visitors. More importantly, we are using advanced technology to anticipate the future to ensure we are meeting the demands of our growing city.
- Everyday our trucks crisscross the city providing traditional municipal services. We will be better able to provide those services with this budget that funds the people, equipment and supplies necessary to meet these growing needs.
- Among those services is our Grounds Maintenance Program, which has an increase of \$694,000 and 40.0 temporary positions for leaf collection operations. The budget also provides the sophisticated technology needed to aptly manage our resources to ensure efficient, effective and reliable service delivery.
- Mayor Bowser’s vision of the District’s inclusive prosperity is captured in the DPW budget for FY 2018, which provides the necessary investment in DPW programs and our infrastructure. These are the areas I will discuss in more detail in my testimony:
 - Development of an enterprise-wide service Information Technology platform to increase effectiveness, efficiency and reliability of service delivery;
 - Capital investments to spur economic development in Ivy City/Trinidad neighborhoods and strengthen our fleet management and parking enforcement program;
 - Continued progress towards advancing the District’s environmental and sustainability goals;
 - Support for employees and trainees to pursue their professional development and career goals;
 - Stabilizing the Snow Removal Program Structure for improved oversight, and;
 - Launching the American Public Works Association accreditation process.

Achieving Overall Service Delivery Improvements through Strategic IT Applications

Field Service Management System

- FY 2018 will mark a programmatic shift away from the traditional stand-alone software systems that service our various programs and operate independently from one another to

a system that allows all software to interface and communicate in a meaningful way. The use of advanced technology is essential to transforming our work processes to make better decisions about assets and resources to work in a smarter and more coordinated manner.

- We will accomplish this with an overarching Field Service Management System. Through this new system, we will be able to achieve technological interconnectedness to streamline operations and reengineer our processes by allowing the different systems to “*talk to each other*.” The result will be better real-time intelligence to allow us to collect and synthesize information in a more coordinated and comprehensive manner.
- The first step toward realizing this vision was installation of a new automated vehicle location (AVL) system on vehicles in the snow program. We are now installing the systems in our trash/recycling trucks. Through AVL, we can better manage our assets because we are tracking our equipment in real time.
- In addition to AVL, we are upgrading and modernizing other IT systems that help with DPW’s daily operations by bringing long-term efficiency and productivity gains. We will be able to use our resources more efficiently with more accurate data being reported in real time from its systems and applications.
- So, what does that mean for our most traditional sanitation and parking enforcement services?
- This real-time information will allow managers to make more informed decisions that will translate into efficiencies and future improvements in service delivery. By merging both our performance and programmatic systems, we will be able to answer questions about missed or delayed collections as well as using this information to confirm collections.

Optimizing Collection Routes

- The population boom that began a decade ago isn’t slowing down. According to the DC Office on Planning, “Over the next 15 years the District is likely to reach a new peak population above 800,000 residents.”
- Population growth drives demand for DPW’s services. Our customer base for trash, recycling, bulk and leaf collections consists of residents of single family homes and apartment buildings with no more than three living units. Our customer base for snow removal, parking enforcement and public litter can collections is everyone – residents, visitors, and commuters alike – in the District of Columbia!
- Already, our population has swelled by 100,000 people since 2000. Today, our crews are picking up more waste from more homes. To ensure our services keep pace with population growth and growing neighborhood density, we must use technology to optimize our routes to balance the workload.

- Our crews are working in Mount Vernon Triangle, Capital Riverfront, and U Street where we saw the greatest increase in households between 2000 and 2015. Anacostia, Eckington, Bloomingdale, Petworth, Brookland, Ivy City and Trinidad are among the other neighborhoods that also saw an upsurge in population.
- Just as there has been an increase in residents, there also is an increase in the number of vehicles registered to DC residents. According to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), there were more than 275,000 active vehicle registrations at the end of FY 2010. That number increased to more than 292,000 by September 30, 2014.
- This does not include the number of vehicles entering the District every day for work and pleasure, which means there is increased competition for limited curbside parking spaces in our residential and commercial neighborhoods.
- Our Parking Enforcement Officers are assigned to sections of the District and they cover specific beats within those sections. The beats need to be revisited to match the number of officers needed to fairly enforce regulations in light of the increased density in residential neighborhoods, the increased number of neighborhoods with mechanical street sweeping and its accompanying parking restrictions, and the increased number of vehicles seeking on-street parking along commercial streets.
- I would like to take a moment to address an issue that came up during our performance hearing, which is how we are enforcing bike lane violations. DPW Parking Enforcement Officers have stepped up their enforcement of bike lane violations. In FY 2014, we wrote 1,430 tickets. In FY 2015 we wrote 2,483 tickets, and in FY 2016, we wrote 2,687 tickets. To date this year, we have written 1,755 tickets.
- As with our other location-based services, parking enforcement will benefit from the application of more sophisticated technology.
- These are just examples of how our new technology will benefit DPW's customers and employees.

Creating a Continuous Improvement Culture to Anticipate Needs of Our Growing Population

- In FY 2018, the Office of Organizational Effectiveness and Change Management will continue leading DPW's effort to address barriers to achieving the highest levels of efficiency, effectiveness and reliability in service delivery.
- Improvements to our customer service program is reengineering the 311 call center, which includes procuring new call technology and improving call center's customer service quality.
- We have several process improvement projects underway, including:
 - Conducting a root cause analysis for missed and late trash and recyclable collections.

- Analyzing how we transition from one seasonal service to another, e.g., snow to mowing to leaf season, along with how to close out projects associated with a particular season and ensure improvements are in place by the next season.
- Through our partnership with the City Administrator's Office's The Lab @ DC, we are analyzing smart litter can data to identify opportunities for route optimization and to understand the public's behavior patterns relating to litter cans.
- Finally, the technology that underpins so many of our programs must be kept current. In FY 2017 we replaced the entire 10-year-old automated vehicle locator (AVL) system that had been used for our snow program. This is the precursor to additional improvements to be achieved with FY 2018 funding for information technology.

Capital Budget

Long-Term Vision for Improved Service Delivery

- Currently, DPW staff are scattered throughout the District. Consolidating our administrative and the majority of our operations staff on the West Virginia Avenue, NE campus will help us achieve multiple goals. Campus consolidation reflects a \$163 million investment to begin in FY 2023.
- I would like to note that the U Street neighborhood is among the District's fastest growing neighborhoods, stimulated by siting the Frank D. Reeves Center for Municipal Affairs at 14th and U Streets, NW in 1986. We expect a similar economic benefit to occur in the Ivy City, Trinidad, Truxton Circle neighborhoods when we consolidate the majority of DPW's functions in the 1800 block of West Virginia Avenue, NE.
- Already, new residential and commercial properties are appearing in the neighborhoods near our campus. I anticipate our presence will lead to additional residents of these neighborhoods as DPW employees opt to live closer to their workplace and support the area's commercial enterprises as we spend our dollars there.
- Another needed investment is being made in DPW's parking enforcement program through funding to acquire 20 tow trucks to amplify our ability to keep our rush hour streets clear. Again, the increases in population and vehicles using our streets necessitate the need for these additional resources. This proposed investment totals \$2.1 million, starting in FY 2018.
- Through enforcement of parking regulations, in particular those that affect rush hour streets, DPW's ticket writers and tow truck operators keep the streets clear for private and commercial vehicles and more importantly, public safety vehicles. The additional tow trucks that are in the Mayor's FY 2018 capital budget will make a significant difference in realizing more efficient traffic flow.
- As you are aware, most of our operations are based on the use of trucks, and our most important trucks are those that keep the streets clean. Through a proposed investment of

\$46 million beginning in FY 2018, DPW will add new trash and recycling trucks as well as street sweepers.

- In FY 2018, we also will upgrade the tipping floors at the Ft. Totten transfer station. This site is critical to the District's system of solid waste management because this is where trash and recycling collected by DPW's crews is transferred and taken out of the city for disposal. We also receive trash and recycling collected by private haulers for disposal and removal from the District.
- Taken together, the Mayor's capital budget for DPW will significantly enhance our agency's ability to serve the city and take us to the next level of efficiency, effectiveness and reliability.

Environmental Sustainability

- Our FY 2018 budget continues the exceptional programs led by the Office of Waste Diversion and introduces others. Most importantly, we will maintain the strong relationship with our stakeholders that produced multiple firsts, including the first zero waste music festival, the first Feeding the 5,000 DC event, and the first food waste/composting initiative in partnership with DC's farmers markets.
- In FY 2018, DPW will carry out these initiatives:
 - Implement solid waste collector registration and reporting to increase transparency and establish a District-wide baseline waste diversion rate.
 - Revise existing food waste regulations that currently impede source separation and recycling of organic waste.
 - Submit the annual solid waste diversion report to communicate progress made towards the city's 80% diversion goal.
 - Conduct the waste characterization study to provide data and information needed to design education and outreach campaigns and programs.
 - Host interagency waste reduction working group meetings to allow oversight of the Office of Waste Diversion.
 - Participate in quarterly environmental stakeholder meetings to increase transparency and discuss planned activities and progress. Implement outreach and education (social media) activities to promote services, programs, and share best practices for source reduction and diversion.

Investments in People to Support Inclusive Prosperity and Create Pathways to the Middle Class

- In my prior performance oversight testimony last month, I identified the various programs DPW is engaged in to enrich our employees and their families as well.
- Today, I would like to focus on the partnership with the Academy of Hope. Through this collaboration, we will support the hopes and dreams of our employees to realize a fulfilling career in DPW.

- We are creating an opportunity for employees and their family members to get their GED or National External Diploma. For those interested in higher education but who need to renew their skills to reach that goal, this program will serve as a “bridge” for those with a high school diploma or GED.
- The partnership offers seminars about preparing oneself for a new job or promotion through resume enhancement, interviewing skills and computer training.
- This is a two-way partnership. Academy of Hope students who are not DPW employees may participate in DPW job-related training in map reading and acquiring a Commercial Driver’s License.
- DPW has long been known for giving a chance to those who need one. Through this partnership, we are able to expand our ability to provide meaningful opportunities for residents to follow their pathway to the middle class.
- At the core of our commitment to supporting our employees’ success in the workplace and in life is our deepest appreciation for the effort they make every day on behalf of the District.

Stabilizing the Snow Removal Program

- Through this budget, Mayor Bowser is creating a formal structure for the District’s Snow Removal Program and making a critical investment of \$3.76 million above the FY 2017 budget to stabilize the operation.
- As the District’s population has expanded, we have seen an increase in new communities that are included in our snow removal plan, and with the use of the advanced technology, we are better able to respond to their needs.
- The snow removal budget has been a flat \$6.2 million for many years. While this most recent snow season was punctuated by only one significant storm, the entire budget was exhausted. Ice can be more problematic than snow because you cannot push ice to the curb as you can with snow.
- In advance of snow season, consumable resources, such as salt and beet juice, must be available in anticipation of earlier than usual storms. We’ve had experience with storms as early as October. Several years ago in October, we conducted our annual dry run exercise and it snowed the next day.
- When major snow events occur, the metropolitan region and sometimes the entire East Coast and beyond can be affected, thus spurring increased competition for these consumables as well as additional equipment to boost snow removal capacity. This funding increase puts us in a much stronger position to compete.

- Additionally, these funds will curb the need for mid-year enhancements thus reducing concern that public safety may be compromised.
- I would like to note that within the context of the snow program, in FY 2017 we took a giant step forward to support environmental sustainability by identifying sites around the District where snow can be properly disposed, in partnership with the District's Department of Energy and Environment. We now have the means to simultaneously achieve the goal of restoring safe travel throughout the District and doing so in an environmentally safe manner.

APWA Accreditation

- Meeting the needs of our current and future population requires understanding how our current processes influence our work. DPW is in the planning stage to launch our Department-wide American Public Works Association accreditation effort. This will provide the means to formally verify DPW's compliance with the recommended and best practices set forth in the APWA Public Works Management Practices Manual. It is a voluntary, self-motivated approach to objectively evaluate, verify and recognize compliance with the recommended management practices.
- Through our ongoing partnership with APWA's training and development team, we learned about best practices for self-assessment and will soon launch our very own APWA self-assessment software necessary for certification. The Mayor's FY 2018 budget will support our next steps, including consultation with the City of Ventura, California.

Conclusion

- I am pleased to report that the Mayor's budget for the Department of Public Works demonstrates her leadership and commitment to our shared DC Values and ensures that all District residents have an opportunity to benefit as we work to attain inclusive prosperity.
- In closing, I would like to thank you again, Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committee on Transportation and the Environment. This concludes my testimony. I am available to answer questions and provide additional background information if needed.