

Tyesha Andrews
Committee of Public Works and Operations
Department of For-Hire Vehicles
Friday, February 16th, 2024

Hello, Councilmember Nadeau and DC Council staff. My name is Tyesha Andrews. I am a Ward 8 resident and I serve as a PAVE Citywide and Ward 8 PLE Board member. I am also a parent and my children currently attend Plummer Elementary and Jefferson.

Thank you all for being here today and holding this hearing. As a parent and resident of the District of Columbia, I have a lot of experience helping my family navigate the various modes of transportation in the city.

First, I have some data that I feel is important for those on this Council and at the Department of For-Hire Vehicles to know about the experience of parents getting their kids to and from school.

- In recent surveys, it was found that children living in Wards 5, 7, and 8 are often traveling over two miles to get to school and some are traveling over three miles.
- Though 50% of all students in DC live in Wards 7 and 8, they are the ones traveling further than any other ward, besides Ward 5, to get to and from school each day.
- During their travels, our youth are being targeted and enduring or witnessing violence. This often increases with distance to school, as many students travel across wards and even across the city to get to and from school. We must do a better job at protecting all of our children because they are our future.

As a parent, I have many concerns about getting my children to school safely. When I heard about the DC School Connect program, I was hopeful that my son would be able to utilize the service. I applied several times for my son to be able to take the DC School Connect bus and I have been denied each time because seats are so limited. I believe this is a huge issue because many students in Wards 7 and 8 are traveling far to attend school which has allowed more time and space for incidents of violence to occur both to and between students. I hoped that if he were able to ride on DC School Connect, he would no longer face the many challenges he has when traveling to school.



Just last year, my son was on his way to McKinley, where he attended school at the time, and had an incident happen to him on his way home from school. Keep in mind that this is not the only time he has had an issue getting to and from school. But most recently, my son was jumped by other kids after getting off the platform at the Waterfront metro station. There was no trained adult around to help him and the only people present to intervene were his peers. When I filed a report to his school, nothing was done and the children who jumped my child were not held accountable. Our kids need to be safe traveling to and from school AND they need to get to school efficiently. Teenagers now are having a much different experience getting to school than what I received growing up. I didn't witness all of the violence that my children are. Times have changed and we as leaders of this city must create systems and put structures in place to help our kids, especially when they are doing something as simple as going to school or home.

I am not alone in these concerns, PAVE parent leaders have worked with schools, community organizations, and even agency staff to come up with specific solutions to address this issue. I am asking the Department of For-Hire Vehicles to increase the DC School Connect routes during school arrival and dismissal, prioritizing those with the greatest need. The Department of For-Hire Vehicles is not alone in this work. For there to be an increase in routes, the Department of Operations and Infrastructure and DC Human Resources will need to work together to recruit and retain more bus drivers for the DC School Connect program. More routes will increase access and those that can utilize it will have safer and more efficient commutes to school.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to the solutions you develop and am available for questions.

Sincerely,

Tyesha Andrews

Citywide and Ward 8 PLE Board Member, PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education)