



**Government of the District of Columbia  
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B**

*By Electronic Mail*

May 22, 2023

Director Everett Lott  
District of Columbia Department of Transportation

Director Timothy W. Spriggs  
District of Columbia Department of Public Works

Chief Robert Contee  
Metropolitan Police Department

RE: Noting Lengthy History of Requests & Calling for Action to Address Illegal Commercial Vehicles

Dear Directors Lott and Spriggs and Chief Contee:

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, at a duly noticed public meeting, with a quorum being the “majority of the total number of commissioner positions currently filled in Commission 4B,” at its May 22, 2023, meeting voted with \_ Yeas, \_ Nays, and \_ Abstentions to send this letter calling for action to address illegal commercial vehicles and noting our lengthy history of requests for action in our community and across the District of Columbia.

The District of Columbia has set a [goal of having zero fatalities and serious injuries on its roadways by 2024](#). Large trucks and buses are [especially dangerous to vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists](#). They are also the [largest culprits of neighborhood air pollution](#), which [disproportionately impacts low-income and minority neighborhoods](#).

Residents and Commissioners within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B have repeatedly expressed concern about both the illegal parking and travel of heavy trucks on residential roads within our community. As the Commission [has previously stated](#): DC's neighborhoods are not – and should not be treated as – truck stops.

One area of primary concern is the 6500 block of Piney Branch Road, NW, and the 900 block of Underwood Street, NW,<sup>1</sup> where large trucks unaffiliated with the nearby Safeway regularly take advantage of lax enforcement to park illegally for days or weeks. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has worked since at least 2019 for both infrastructure fixes and enforcement, including everything from submitting 311 requests to communicating with government agencies to working to strengthen the regulations applicable to these vehicles to testifying before the DC Council to formal Commission action:

- In April 2019, Commissioner Evan Yeats (then ANC 4B01, current ANC 4B04), Commissioner Erin Palmer (ANC 4B02), and Commissioner Scot Knickerbocker (then ANC 4B03) worked with Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners in Advisory Neighborhood Commission 7D and Advisory Neighborhood Commission 8C on the issue of illegally parked commercial vehicles, sending a [letter](#) to the District Department of Public Works noting “the repeated inaction of [the] department to respond to concerns about the storage of large semi-trailer trucks on our neighborhood streets.”
- Commissioner Yeats worked with then-Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh's office around that time regarding the issue of commercial vehicle parking adjacent to bike lanes, which forces bicyclists into standard travel lanes with little or no warning, creating dangerous and unpredictable interactions with vehicles. As a result, the [Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2020](#) includes a measure that prohibits trailers and commercial vehicles from “park[ing] on any public thoroughfare alongside a bike lane that does not have a barrier between the bike lane and the road, or in front of, alongside, or in the rear of any private dwelling or apartment, house of worship, school, playground, or hospital, except while engaged in work at such place for which the vehicle is reasonably necessary.”

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<sup>1</sup> Other areas of concern within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B include, but are not limited to, 6100 3rd Street, NE, where commercial vehicles park overnight; the 5700 block of South Dakota, NE (at the intersection of 1st Street and Madison Street, NE), where commercial vehicles are stored; and the area around Peabody Community Garden (6025 9th Street, NW).

- In June 2019, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B unanimously approved a [letter](#) to the District Department of Transportation, the District Department of Public Works, and the Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Carrier Unit regarding heavy trucks driving on residential streets, which asked for details regarding all available mechanisms to enforce limitations on the use of heavy trucks on residential streets, including cameras, and a description of penalties for improper travel of heavy trucks on residential streets and a list of citations issued over the previous year, both District-wide and within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B's boundaries. The Commission did not receive a substantive response.
- In November 2019, following repeated requests from Commissioner Yeats, the District Department of Transportation committed to installation of no commercial parking signage for the 6500 block of Piney Branch Road, NW, similar to signage created and installed to address the issue along Malcolm X Avenue, SE. (See attached.)
- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B approved a [Resolution](#) in January 2020 calling for increased funding and expansion of the Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Carrier Unit to assist with enforcement of illegal commercial vehicle parking and travel on residential roads following a presentation to the Commission indicating the Unit did not have sufficient resources to carry out its mandate. The Resolution recognized the Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Carrier Safety Unit is the primary agency tasked with the enforcement of laws pertaining to large vehicles and noted that the Unit only has seven officers.
- After a tragic pedestrian death at Dahlia Street, NW, and Piney Branch Road, NW, in June 2020, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B approved a [Resolution](#) calling on the District Department of Transportation to examine Piney Branch Road, NW, from Georgia Avenue, NW, to Eastern Avenue, NW, in consideration of needed traffic safety infrastructure, including consideration of sightlines on Piney Branch Road, NW, and the entrance to the Safeway.
- The District Department of Public Works reported in July 2020 that they had been "[cleared](#)" to enforce commercial vehicle parking restrictions under the Vision Zero Omnibus Amendment Act. Yet, the Department [responded](#) to several reports (around January 2021) regarding these commercial trucks that "these trucks have been investigated, they were found to not be in violation of current regulations, and registered to someone in the adjacent neighborhood." A [map of](#)

[bike lane enforcement tickets](#) issued by the Department at the time showed zero tickets issued along the Piney Branch Road, NW, bike lane.

- In March 2021, Commissioner Palmer testified at a DC Council oversight hearing for the District Department of Public Works, and in December 2021, noting: “Commercial trucks park on residential streets, despite what feels like endless reports to 311 and the Department of Public Works, effectively taking advantage of lax enforcement for free truck storage space. These trucks present serious safety concerns: they are wider than standard parking spaces and impede sight lines, as well as intrude into any adjacent bike lanes. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and cars are unnecessarily placed in danger. The trucks often idle, creating significant pollution, and the area experiences significant dumping next to the trucks.” (See attached.)
- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B unanimously approved a [follow up letter](#) to the District Department of Transportation, the District Department of Public Works, and the Metropolitan Police Department’s Motor Carrier Safety Unit regarding commercial vehicles on residential roads in April 2021. The letter noted that while “[t]he [District Department of Public Works] appear[ed] to have recently ticketed ... commercial vehicles along Piney Branch Road, NW, on one occasion, ... subsequent requests for enforcement have been closed because ‘no sign was posted.’” The Commission requested “continued, regular ticketing, which may require additional educational efforts so that parking control officers understand that these vehicles are eligible for ticketing.” The letter also reiterated requests from the Commission’s June 2019 [letter](#) regarding illegal commercial vehicle travel on residential roads, noting: “there is no meaningful way for Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B or residents to report and seek enforcement for commercial vehicles on residential roads and there are no mechanisms in place to slow or discourage commercial vehicle cut-through traffic.”
- In October 2021, Commissioner Yeats and Commissioner Palmer communicated with the District Department of Transportation about the possibility of a Bikeshare station to break up the space that allows commercial vehicles to park along the 6500 block of Piney Branch Road, NW. (See attached.) And in May 2022, the Commission unanimously approved a [budget priorities letter](#) to the DC Council that included a request for the same.
- Commissioner Palmer testified at a DC Council oversight hearing for the District Department of Transportation in December 2021, providing similar testimony to

that provided in March 2021 regarding the District Department of Public Works. (See attached.)

- The District Department of Transportation responded to the Commission's April 2021 [follow up letter](#) on July 12, 2022, stating that the regulatory restrictions on commercial vehicles on residential roads – which the Commission has consistently sought to have enforced – had “created significant improvements of conditions along Piney Branch Road.” The letter stated that the District Department of Public Works and the Metropolitan Police Department “[would] continue to monitor and cite parked vehicles” and that the District Department of Transportation had installed one-hour parking limitation signs on the 900 block of Underwood Street, NW. (See attached.)
- Despite claimed improvements, residents and Commissioners have seen little, if any, enforcement. Following communications in September 2022 from Commissioner Palmer, Commissioner Yeats, and Commissioner Brooks, and due to assistance from the Office of Ward 4 Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, the District Department of Public Works provided a list of all tickets issued for the 6500 block of Piney Branch Road, NW, and the 900 block of Underwood Street, NW. Although residents and Commissioners submit 311 requests to enforce commercial vehicle parking limitations on a regular basis, the Department had only issued 16 citations for the 6500 block of Piney Branch Road, NW, and what appears to be zero citations for the 900 block of Underwood Street, NW. The Councilmember's office noted they “remain[ed] concerned that there's a disconnect between what the community sees in terms of violations vs. the relatively low number of citations issued this past year.” (See attached.)
- The District Department of Transportation again refused in September 2022 to install no commercial parking signage along the 6500 block of Piney Branch Road, NW, claiming that the current signage is sufficient for ticketing. The failure to install signage signals to commercial vehicles parking is allowed, and there has been little-to-no ticketing regardless. (See attached.)
- In August 2022, Commissioner Palmer and Commissioner Yeats again contacted the District Department of Transportation and the DC Council, noting: “The Commission has tried every avenue available to address these illegally parked commercial vehicles: 311 requests, letters, resolutions, testimony, and direct advocacy with Councilmember offices.... The current situation places the burden on residents to report illegally parked commercial vehicles. The District Department of Public Works often responds slowly or not at all in ticketing these vehicles.” Commissioners again proposed several infrastructure and enforcement

solutions, including “physical barriers to prevent the ability of commercial vehicles to park along this stretch, including a Bikeshare station, stormwater infrastructure, planters, and/or concrete barriers; installation of the offered no commercial parking signs along the 6500 block of Piney Branch Road, NW; [and] parking lines designating smaller areas for parking,” as well as “regularly scheduled monitoring of the area and ticketing; coordination with MPD Motor Carrier Unit and clear communication with residents regarding resources and responsibilities for ticketing and enforcement; [and] prompt responses to resident requests for ticketing.” (See attached.)

Despite these efforts – over years – to address an important road safety issue, a lack of agency action continually shifts the burden to residents and volunteer Commissioners to report illegal commercial vehicles and hope that some action will be taken. While the District of Columbia has on paper a robust system to prevent oversized vehicle parking and designated freight routes to guide traffic around residential neighborhoods, lack of consistent enforcement and clear reporting mechanisms means that, in practice, heavy truck traffic in our communities is largely unregulated. Heavy trucks park repeatedly in the same illegal spots and overstay time limits in parking zones despite innumerable reports to 311.

During the course of these efforts, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has identified several key challenges related to the illegal parking and travel of commercial vehicles in the District of Columbia:

- the lack of consistent enforcement of commercial vehicle parking violations, regardless of 311 reporting by the community, and an over-reliance on community reports rather than proactively enforcing laws governing commercial vehicle parking;
- an inability to tow illegally parked commercial vehicles other than exigent circumstances;
- deficiency in resources in commercial motor vehicle safety enforcement, a specialized skill, which is conducted by only seven officers of the Metropolitan Police Department for the entire District of Columbia; and
- an overly complex and burdensome reporting process to determine if heavy trucks are permitted to travel on residential roads with unclear routes to request additional enforcement.

These are not issues unique to the District of Columbia, and other jurisdictions have identified practices to help address them. Among them are the creation of dedicated heavy motor vehicle safety inspection and enforcement teams under the auspices of the Department of Transportation, not under the police department, such as found in [Utah](#). Automated camera enforcement is used in [Baltimore](#) to ensure that trucks remain on designated routes.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B requests that the District Department of Transportation, the District Department of Public Works, and the Metropolitan Police Department's Motor Carrier Safety Unit provide collectively a plan to address illegal commercial vehicle parking and traffic on residential streets, including installation of physical barriers and other infrastructure that can serve the dual goal of preventing these vehicles from parking and providing traffic calming, as well as consistent enforcement of existing regulations against commercial vehicle parking and travel that will meaningfully deter such conduct. Based a recent discussion between the Vision Zero audit team of the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor and Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B's Vision Zero Committee at the Committee's May meeting, the Commission understands the upcoming [Part Two of the Vision Zero audit](#) will engage your agencies on "traffic safety enforcement policies and practices." The Commission requests your agencies work proactively with the Auditor to compare DC's practices for commercial vehicle safety and enforcement with best practices in jurisdictions across the country and seek to implement any recommendations for improvements that may be found in the audit report.

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has voted with \_ Yeas, \_ Nays, and \_ Abstentions to appoint the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B02, Erin Palmer, the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B08, Alison Brooks, and the Commissioner for Single Member District 4B04, Evan Yeats, or any member of the Executive Committee in their absence, to be authorized to communicate this letter and represent Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B in communication with you or any DC government entity regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02 Commissioner  
Evan Yeats, ANC 4B04 Commissioner  
Alison Brooks, ANC 4B08 Commissioner

cc: Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, Ward 4

Councilmember Brooke Pinto, Chair, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety

Councilmember Charles Allen, Chair, Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau, Chair, Committee on Public Works and Operations

Deputy Mayor for Operations and Infrastructure Lucinda Babers

Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, Lindsey Appiah

Ingrid Drake, Audit Supervisor, Office of the District of Columbia Auditor

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