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**Testimony before the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Budget Oversight Hearing DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department  
March 29, 2023**

Chairperson Pinto and members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am the Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner representing Single-Member District 5C07, which covers northern Langdon. Before I proceed, I'll warn that this testimony will, out of what I consider necessity, contain descriptions of traffic violence.

I would like to echo and expand on the concerns voiced by Allison Clausen regarding the site selection for relocating the Engine 26 FEMS station. While I share and co-sign her detailed ecological concerns, I'd like to pick up and elaborate on the Vision Zero/traffic safety issues related to the under-consideration Langdon site, which is on an interior block of my neighborhood, within the forest patch at the junction of 20th St NE, Evarts St NE, and Queens Chapel Rd NE.

On Friday, February 3rd, 2023, at 11:40 pm, the driver of a 2004 Infiniti G35 Coupe was stopped on the 2700 block of 20th St NE, adjacent to Langdon Elementary School. I know a lot about what happened next thanks to detailed video footage captured by a neighbor's security camera<sup>12</sup>.

- They waited at the red light as cross-traffic cleared the intersection, before proceeding slowly through the red light.
- Once through the intersection, they began accelerating. Past a 15 mph speed limit sign. Past both sides of Langdon Park, the Chuck Brown Memorial, the playground, and the Rec Center
- They didn't slow down for the four-way stop at 20th and Hamlin Sts; rough calculations put their speed through the intersection at between 87 and 109 miles per hour
- No more than 950 feet and 15 seconds from a stop, they crashed into a row of three parked cars on the opposite side of the street, with one launching 20 feet along the sidewalk and against a retaining wall.

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<sup>1</sup> More media and information about this crash and the ongoing Vision Zero investigation can be found here: <https://anc5c07.com/issues/20thst/>

<sup>2</sup> MPD press release on this crash can be found here: <https://mpdc.dc.gov/release/traffic-fatality-3000-block-20th-street-northeast>.

The driver's car landed in the middle of 20th St NE, where DC FEMS had to extract the driver<sup>3</sup>, 22-year-old Andy Jose Cariño of Severna Park, Maryland, from the mangled wreckage. He was pronounced dead on the scene.

This story illustrates two important points:

1. The heroic and critical work that DC's Bravest must stay ready and respond quickly to perform for our community every day
2. The urgent and critical need to implement traffic safety infrastructure on our subarterial roadways, like 20th St NE, to make reaching fatal speeds like this impossible

The details surrounding Cariño's crash came as little surprise to me and my neighbors. We have been calling attention to the dangers of 20th St here for years. This area of 20th St NE is 32 feet wide with two minimally used parking lanes, one driving lane in each direction, and no lane markings between intersections. The stretch of 20th from Franklin to Hamlin, where Mr. Cariño gained speed before crashing, is 750 feet steeply sloping downhill from each side, with no traffic controls or safety mitigations of any kind, save for a single unsignalized crosswalk connecting the two halves of Langdon Park. Besides the park, the roadway runs along multiple schools and kid-centric facilities, including Langdon Elementary School and Woodridge Library.

In my subsequent discussion with DDOT's Vision Zero team, I was told, as I had been many times before, that one of the reasons it would be difficult to install traffic calming on 20th St NE is the impact on emergency vehicles. I'm afraid that placing a fire station on an interior block adjacent to the subject area of 20th will only exacerbate this concern.

I am told that this site has been the subject of studies on unit response time to the growing Engine 26 service area, but I'm left to only imagine the degree to which inaction on improving the safety of my community's subarterial roadways, ones emergency vehicles would be using for every single engagement, are baked into these studies.

Unfortunately, a lack of consideration for my community's safety is inherent in the plans I've so far seen, which are isolated to stray diagrams on a Public Space permit application from July/August 2022. For instance, the notional plans:

- include two separate curb cuts for the adjacent surface parking lots of the co-located Models Cities and Engine 26 facilities, needlessly creating two conflict zones for *non-emergency* vehicle use, in an area of sidewalk likely to be frequented by children and seniors
- would put loud emergency vehicles adjacent to Langdon Elementary, a condition that is likely to disrupt the learning environment at a neighborhood public

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<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/dcfireems/status/1621733208709545984> screenshotted in Appendix A

school where approximately 66% of the student body is at risk, including an influx of recently relocated migrant families

- similarly put those vehicles near the Washington Center for Aging Services, a long-term senior care facility, disrupting the peace there as well
- remove large swaths of natural tree canopy primarily to add surface parking lots, an inherently inefficient use of land

To that last point, while underground or structured parking is costlier to construct, the cost differential pales in comparison to the cost of disrupting additional square footage of this forest. As Ms. Clausen so effectively put it, the forest absorbs air pollution, noise, and heat generated by the industries. It also filters and absorbs stormwater that would otherwise pollute Hickey Run, an effort the city has already spent \$4 million to mitigate. Further, research demonstrates that forested areas increase learning outcomes for nearby schools and improve community mental and physical health outcomes. Removing canopy would compromise those benefits and jeopardize public health in various categories.

This forested area is irreplaceable and the downstream effects of disrupting a portion of it are unknowable; I believe no reasonable weighing of these costs would seek to save money on surface parking spaces over structured or underground. If this is too costly, then that should be part of the site selection process.

During the March 29th verbal testimony, FEMS Chief Donnelly stated that a final site selection has not occurred, and that the proposed \$3.5M in FY24 is intended for site selection and acquisition. I fully appreciate the difficulty and need to allocate space for this important community service, and the fact that critical seconds determinative of the outcomes in an emergency could be lost if a facility is located too far away from the periphery of its service area, but I believe all efforts should be made to put this facility on a principal arterial, similar to Engine 26's current site on Rhode Island Ave NE.

This is not simply a desire to keep the facility out of my neighborhood; I personally live on Rhode Island Ave NE, and my district is bounded by Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Montana Aves, with Bladensburg Rd and New York Ave not far away. I'd welcome brownfield sites on any of these arterials be considered, and can offer my support as a Commissioner to perform community outreach as needed to accumulate community buy-in accordingly. If additional money needs to be allocated to facilitate the market prices in these locations, additional budget should be allocated accordingly.

I thank you again for your time.

## Appendix A: Social Media post screenshots

