A RESOLUTION

25-60

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

February 7, 2023

To declare the existence of an emergency with respect to the need to approve the reprogramming request of Fiscal Year 2023 capital funds in the amount of $850,000 within the District Department of Transportation.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "District Department of Transportation Fiscal Year 2023 Reprogramming Approval Emergency Declaration Resolution of 2023".

Sec. 2. (a) Since 2010, over half of the deaths by suicide from a bridge in the District have been on the William Howard Taft Memorial Bridge ("Taft Bridge") along Connecticut Avenue, NW, including deaths in April of 2022 and January of 2023, as well as at least 3 additional suicide attempts during that time.

(b) Research shows that constructing barriers that physically restrict access to bridges is the most effective bridge suicide prevention approach; adding suicide deterrent measures, such as a barrier, reduces suicides from a bridge by 86%, conclusions that are borne out by the experience of the nearby Duke Ellington Memorial Bridge ("Ellington Bridge"), where suicides have decreased by 90% since a barrier was installed in 1986. Notably, and as evidenced by the Ellington Bridge in its close proximity to the Taft Bridge, once a barrier has been implemented, deaths by suicide do not increase on neighboring bridges.

(c) Importantly, suicidal feelings are often temporary and preventing a suicide gives a person time in a moment of crisis that can save their life in the long term; specifically, research shows that 9 out of 10 people who attempt suicide and survive will not die by suicide at a later date elsewhere or with another method, and overall suicide deaths often decline throughout the surrounding area after bridge barriers are in place. This is true of the District, where the overall suicide rate in the city has declined since the mid-1980s.

(d) To address concerns about the Taft Bridge in particular, an interagency group including the Office of the City Administrator, the District Department of Transportation ("DDOT"), the Department of Behavioral Health ("DBH"), and the Mayor's Office on Community Relations has met over several months to investigate short- and long-term suicide deterrent design measures for the Taft Bridge and assess and prioritize the incorporation of deterrent design features on all District owned and maintained bridges.

(e) As an immediate-term measure, DDOT, with guidance from DBH, has fabricated and installed on the Taft Bridge and the Calvert Street Bridge signage that publicizes suicide prevention resources.

(f) The DDOT internal project team has spent the last several months mobilizing to write a scope of work and procure a bridge architect consultant for the Taft Bridge design, which all agencies in the interagency group, including DBH, have reviewed.

(g) DDOT has engaged with federal and local agencies that will need to review the Taft Bridge design, to streamline the process, as well as engaging with the community, including Ward 3 Councilmember Matthew Frumin and Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3C Chair Janell Pagats.

(h) DDOT and the whole of the Executive Branch, working with community leaders and suicide prevention experts, have developed a well-thought out plan for the Taft Bridge, and moving quickly could help prevent suicides. It is estimated that 135 individuals' lives are impacted by the loss of a loved one to suicide and that the likelihood of those survivors dying by suicide is higher than the general population causing a ripple effect within the community for generations to come.

Sec. 3. The Council of the District of Columbia determines that the circumstances enumerated in section 2 constitute emergency circumstances making it necessary that the District Department of Transportation Fiscal Year 2023 Reprogramming Approval Act of 2023 be adopted after a single reading.

Sec. 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately.