



Real Possibilities

November 9, 2015

To: Joint meeting of the public works and gang reduction and budget and finance committees

Public Works and Gang Reduction

Councilmember Joe Buscaino, Chair
Councilmember Nury Martinez
Councilmember Curren Price
Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell
Councilmember David Ryu

Budget and Finance

Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair
Councilmember Mitchell Englander
Councilmember Paul Koretz
Councilmember Bob Blumenfield
Councilmember Mike Bonin

RE: City of Los Angeles sidewalk/path of travel repair program

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of more 600,000 AARP members in the City of Los Angeles, I am writing to express our strong support for reimagining our sidewalks as an integral piece of the city's infrastructure, one which produces multiple benefits for Angelenos of all ages. We look forward to a future where Los Angeles is connected by ample sidewalks that provide shade and amenities, safe and dignified bus stops, and access to transit, as well as safe access for users of all ages and abilities. In this vision sidewalks can be a key component in creating a more sustainable, equitable, and economically vibrant Los Angeles.

The Willits Settlement represents an important step in creating a more accessible city for all Angelenos. However, we are concerned that many of these goals and existing policies are not being strategically addressed in the recommendations before you from the City Administrative Offices [5/26/15: *New policy for repair and management of sidewalks adjacent to private property*]. AARP welcomes the opportunity to work with the City to develop a strategic, data-driven framework for this policy and work plan. We encourage the City to look beyond sidewalk repairs as simply a budget issue, but to view them instead through a planning lens, which accounts for mobility and quality-of-life issues, connects and supports existing policies, and supports regional and statewide goals.

While the City endeavors to address the improvement needs extending over 11,000 miles of sidewalks, the Willits Settlement creates tremendous opportunities for the City to address a range of issues. These issues include sustainable funding of sidewalk repair work, improved mobility and accessibility for all Angelenos, safe and secure crosswalks, the preservation of our urban tree canopy, the equitable prioritization of repair locations, and more. Additionally, the sidewalks/path-of-travel repair program work plan represents a unique opportunity to provide a strategic plan that will link and support the City's existing policy goals, including the Great Streets Initiative, Vision Zero, Safe Routes to School Strategic Plan, the Sustainability Plan, Mobility Plan 2035, the Stormwater Capture Master Plan and many more.

Furthermore, the work plan presents an opportunity to extend beyond the City's existing policies by linking to regional and state goals around transportation and mobility, equitable community development, the environment, and accessibility. Aligning the City's sidewalk program with existing city and regional policies offers an extraordinary chance to improve coordination and achieve multiple co-benefits in our neighborhoods with limited fiscal resources.



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Recommendations:

1. Establish sidewalks as a core foundation of the City's transportation network. Sidewalks are a critical part of the transportation network and should not be approached in a piecemeal fashion when it comes to maintenance. The City of Los Angeles' sidewalks should be funded and maintained the same way our roads are - with transportation funds. We do not support the fix-and-release approach for funding and maintaining the City's more than 11,000 miles of sidewalks.
2. This year, Los Angeles should commit to developing an inventory of existing and missing sidewalks out of the \$31M that must be spent this year, and commit to using those findings and other relevant input to create a citywide sidewalk/path-of-travel strategic plan. In order to successfully move this program forward with public support, a transparent, strategic plan based on an inventory is crucial. This plan will also empower the City to leverage other sources of funds to accelerate and successfully implement this infrastructure program in a more effective and inclusive manner.
3. Develop a prioritization plan based on data and need. Utilize the City's Vision Zero High Injury Network, social equity, public health metrics, pedestrian volume and transit use data to establish a prioritization plan for repairs.
4. Integrate sidewalk repairs into larger city and countywide programs such as Vision Zero, The City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan, the Mayor's Great Streets Program, the Department of Public Works Green Streets Working Group, and Metro's First Last Mile Strategic Plan and Active Transportation Strategic Plan. This will improve safety and comfort for all users and create a more connected, less auto-dependent city and integrate citywide policies for successful, comprehensive, and inclusive implementation.
5. Protect and promote a thriving urban tree canopy through clear criteria and guidelines for tree mitigation and replacement, and commit to investing in best management practices to save as many trees as possible. If a tree does require removal, adopt an appropriate tree-replacement ratio and a commitment to maintenance funding for new trees.
6. Commit to review citywide needs and goals that intersect with sidewalk repairs in order to maximize the potential to leverage other funding sources for water supply, water quality and flooding issues, thus ensuring that infrastructure changes have multiple benefits and meet future city requirements such as the Stormwater Capture Master Plan and the Enhanced Watershed Management Program.
7. Support meaningful community participation in the development of the repair program (another round of community meetings), as well as a comprehensive outreach program and educational campaign to ensure communities will not be surprised by the final product.



It is exciting to see the City of Los Angeles prepare a work plan to invest in its sidewalks - we need a plan that ensures our sidewalks and paths-of-travel are usable and accessible for all, and especially for older adults and individuals with disabilities. The City of Los Angeles' sidewalk network represents a piece of infrastructure that has already received 20,000 requests for repair through the city's 311 service request system. The Willits Settlement, which requires the City to invest at minimum \$1.4 billion dollars in its sidewalk repair program over the next 30 years, is a significant infrastructure and finance package to address our sidewalks - one of the most important mobility elements and public spaces in the City of Los Angeles, which has not been comprehensively addressed by policymakers since the 1970s.

The current sidewalk policy opportunity for the City of Los Angeles presents a tremendous opportunity for the policymakers to be visionary, strategic, and comprehensive - linking together multiple mobility, public-space, quality-of-life, stormwater retention, and climate goals in how we fund, maintain, and prioritize the public realm that links the City together: its sidewalks.

We look forward to working with you to support an even better city for Angelenos of all ages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nancy McPherson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Nancy' being more prominent.

Nancy McPherson
State Director, AARP California

cc: Mayor Eric Garcetti

Board of Public Works Commissioners: Kevin James, Monica Rodriguez, Heather Repenning,
Mike Davis, Joel Jacinto

Ted Bardacke, Director of Infrastructure