

March 7, 2013

Mayor Charlie Hales
Portland City Council
1221 SW 4th Ave., Room 340
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mayor Hales and Members of City Council,

On February 20th, Portland Bureau of Transportation's Interim Director Toby Widmer unveiled a proposal to cut \$1.2 million in sidewalk funding in East Portland and \$500,000 from the city's ADA curb ramp program.

Proposing to cut a long-awaited basic sidewalk project in Portland's poorest neighborhood and severely cutting funding for ADA access is not in keeping with the city's stated commitment to equity and its membership in WHO's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities. Repaving streets is absolutely important for this city, but we ask that you prioritize children's safety and accessibility for people with disabilities first and foremost in this budget cycle.

"The first duty of society is justice." – Alexander Hamilton

Curb ramps provide access for people who use wheelchairs, who would otherwise be excluded from the sidewalk because of the barrier created by the curb. Maintaining independence for all community members should be a central consideration in transportation infrastructure design and design of the built environment. As our population ages, its mobility options change. Portland's ADA curb ramp program already took a significant financial hit in the 2012-2013 budget: curb ramp funding was cut by \$1 million, or 30% of the entire program. Now, only one year later, Portlanders are again being asked to accept another 30% cut to a program that provides basic access to residents with disabilities.

The Portland Plan calls for the city to "Complete and begin to implement the City of Portland's ADA Title II Transition Plan to remove barriers and conditions that prevent people with disabilities from accessing, participating and benefiting from city programs, services and activities." The proposed cuts to one sidewalk construction and ADA curb ramps does not help us move forward as an equitable place.

Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and its Business Plan are guided by a number of goals through the budgetary process. The number one goal is to "Improve Transportation Safety," by reducing conflicts within and between travel modes. The City of Portland has a great deal of work before it in improving basic safety for walking. Reducing conflicts between people walking and people driving hinges on constructing over 350 miles of sidewalks on both sides where they are currently lacking on the city's own arterials and collectors - roads with higher car volumes and speeds.

Portland's residents have waited too long for this basic infrastructure. We need to work now to meet this need over the years ahead. The implication of these choices affects all Portlanders. Fourteen people were killed in Portland while trying to walk across the street in 2012 alone. So far in 2013, Portland has suffered 8 traffic fatalities, four involving people walking. The number of pedestrians injured in Oregon during 2010-2011 was higher than the national figure (Oregon 21% increase, U.S. 19% increase). Safety for our most vulnerable road users is critical to improving safety for all modes. Cutting sidewalk funding now is not a responsible answer, even for dealing with PBOT's significant budget constraints.

We, the undersigned, look forward to being involved in the weeks ahead to develop budgetary solutions that allow all Portland's residents and guests to get where they need to go safely. Our shared commitment to this city is to an equitable, accessible city for all Portlanders. We look forward to working with you, Mayor Hales and City Council, to make that a reality.

Sincerely,

Steph Routh
Oregon Walks

Jason Miner
1000 Friends of Oregon

Gerald J. Cohen
AARP Oregon

Chris McCraw
Active Right of Way

Scott Bricker
America Walks

Rob Sadowsky
Bicycle Transportation Alliance

Mara Gross
Coalition for a Livable Future

Jan Campbell
Connecting Communities Coalition

Bob Joondeph
Disability Rights Oregon

Leslie Foren
Elders in Action

Jon Ostar
OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon

Chris Hagerbaumer
Oregon Environmental Council

Steve White
Oregon Public Health Institute

Marianne Fitzgerald
PBOT Budget Advisory Committee member

David Hampsten

PBOT Budget Advisory Committee member

Joe VanderVeer
Portland Commission on Disability

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Elaine Wells
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