

November 15, 2015

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

Via email: John.White@LACity.org, for Council File 14-0163-S3

**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 Joint Policy Committee members:

The Willits settlement represents an important step in creating a more accessible city for all Angelenos. It is also an opportunity to reimagine our sidewalk network as an integral piece of Los Angeles's infrastructure that produces multiple benefits. We look forward to a future where our city is connected by a robust sidewalk network with ample shade and amenities, provides access to transit and safe and dignified bus stops, connects patrons with commercial and cultural destinations, treats and captures stormwater runoff, and provides safe passage for travelers of all abilities. Our sidewalks are a key component in creating a more sustainable, equitable, and economically vibrant Los Angeles.

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*). The undersigned organizations welcome 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 repairs through a planning lens that examines mobility and quality of life issues, links 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, but are not limited to, 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. 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 countywide policies such as the Metropolitan Transportation Authority ("Metro") Complete Streets Policy and First/Last Mile Strategic Plan..

Therefore, 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. At the same time, this positions the City to leverage other existing transportation funds to accelerate efforts.

### **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 by piecemealing maintenance based on property ownership. 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 over 11,000 miles of sidewalks.
- 2. Commit to developing an inventory of existing and missing sidewalks out of the \$31M that must be spent this year. Also** 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 (HIN), social equity and public health metrics, and pedestrian volume and transit use data to establish a prioritization plan for repairs.
- 4. Accelerate the repair program to fix the City's sidewalks in 10 years, not the proposed 30 years.** Enable the sidewalk repair program to successfully compete and leverage existing and future funding and other potential investments. Environmental sustainability funding sources could include, Integrated Regional Water Management Program (IRWMP), Prop 1, and California Climate Investments (formerly the cap-and-trade Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund) to integrate water infrastructure into sidewalks to create green streets. Transportation funding from the state's Active Transportation Program (ATP) Grant, CalTrans' Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, and the potential 2016 Los Angeles County transportation sales tax revenue could also be used to upgrade our sidewalks and support active transportation and multi-modal mobility.

5. **Integrate the sidewalk repairs into larger City and Countywide programs.** Recent initiatives such as Vision Zero, the City of Los Angeles Mobility Plan, the Los Angeles 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 aim to improve safety and comfort for all users and create a more connected, less auto-dependent City and integrate Citywide policy for successful, comprehensive and inclusive implementation.
6. **Protect and promote a thriving urban tree canopy through clear criteria and guidelines for tree mitigation and replacement, and a commitment to investing in best management practices to save as many trees as possible.** If a tree does require removal, implement adoption of an appropriate tree replacement ratio and a commitment to maintenance funding for new trees.
7. **Commit to review City-wide 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 to augment sidewalk repair funding.** This creates the ability to ensure any infrastructure changes have multiple benefits and meet future city requirements such as the Stormwater Capture Master Plan and the Enhanced Watershed Management Plans.
8. **Support meaningful community participation through the development of the repair program (another round of community meetings).** Develop a comprehensive outreach program and educational campaign to ensure communities will not be surprised by the final program.
9. **Develop a comprehensive replacement program that promotes responsible deconstruction, reuse and disposal of materials.** Work with communities where solid waste material recycling/disposal facilities (selected for this program) are located to ensure that impact is minimal to populations living near facilities and along routes that will provide access to the facilities.

It is exciting to see the City of Los Angeles prepare a work plan to invest in its sidewalks as we are in overdue need of a plan that ensures our sidewalks and paths of travel are usable and accessible for all, especially for 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 an tremendous opportunity for our policymakers to be visionary, strategic and comprehensive - linking together multiple travel modes, public space, quality of life, stormwater retention, and climate goals in how we fund, maintain and

prioritize the component of the City's public infrastructure that links together every trip: the City's sidewalks.

We look forward to working together with you to support an even better City of Los Angeles for all.

Please contact Investing in Place Managing Director Jessica Meaney at [jessica@investinginplace.org](mailto:jessica@investinginplace.org) or (213) 210-8136 for more information.

Sincerely,

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