Pedestrian Safety & Walkability Capital Improvement Proposal

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I. Introduction

This proposal is to increase the walkability and pedestrian safety of Pima County. It proposes $25 in pedestrian capital improvements via 16 specific corridor projects totaling $21 million, and $4 million in categorical funding. The proposal has been organized by local non-profit organization, Living Streets Alliance, on behalf of a broad coalition of supporters and partners in creating a walkable community, including:

1. American Automobile Association (AAA) Arizona
2. American Planning Association (APA) Southern Arizona Chapter
3. Arizona School for the Deaf & Blind
4. American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Southern Arizona Chapter
5. Barrio Hollywood Neighborhood Association
6. Barrio Kroeger Lane Neighborhood Association
7. City of Tucson Pedestrian Advisory Committee
8. Carondelet St. Mary’s Hospital
9. Direct Center for Independence
10. Duffy Neighborhood Association
11. Dunbar/Spring Neighborhood Association
12. ELDER Alliance
13. Feldman’s Neighborhood Association
14. Garden District Neighborhood
15. International Rescue Committee: Center for Well Being
16. Local First Arizona
17. Madden Media
18. Menlo Park Neighborhood Association
19. Miramonte Neighborhood Association
20. National Federation for the Blind Tucson Chapter
21. Palo Verde Neighborhood Association
22. Pima Council on Aging
23. Primavera Foundation
24. Rincon Heights Neighborhood Association
25. Senior Impact Coalition
26. Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired (SAAVI)
27. South Tucson Healthy Habits Coalition
28. Sunnyside Neighborhood Association
29. Technicians for Sustainability
30. Tucson Bus Rider’s Union
31. Tucson Clean and Beautiful
32. Tucson’s REACH Coalition
33. United Way - Senior Impact Coalition
34. Watershed Management Group
35. West University Neighborhood Association
II. Purpose

The purpose of this proposal is two-fold: 1) to bring pedestrians safely and comfortably to community destinations, such as schools, businesses, and transit stops; and 2) to increase the economic vitality of jurisdictions within Pima County by encouraging walkable and therefore desirable communities in which to live, locate a business or visit as a tourist or convention-goer.

There is a movement in Pima County towards complete streets. For planners, complete streets refers to a planning process that at all stages considers the needs of all modes of transportation, but we also mean this project to complete streets in the most literal sense throughout Pima County. Often, millions of dollars in federal, state and local funding have gone to improve a particular stretch of roadway, but the last stretch (and especially pedestrian accommodations) often goes incomplete for lack of funding. For example, this program proposes a project in Tucson’s Ward 5 that has seen over $30 million in public investment (bond funds, etc.) to improve parks, housing, neighborhoods, drainage and regional attractions, but yet is lacking the basic funding to get its most likely users — those on foot, bicycle and using mass transit — to take advantage of those investments of public dollars. This bond proposal aims to translate those millions of dollars of public funds already invested into livability dividends.

Living Streets Alliance’s role in this proposal is as an advocacy organization working on behalf of the needs and desires of the community to create a safe and walkable region. This proposal advocates for funding for pedestrian capital improvement projects for local jurisdictions; not funding for Living Streets Alliance. To reiterate: LSA will not receive a penny of this funding, rather it is working to ensure that jurisdictions receive money to fund their much-needed pedestrian capital improvement projects.

A. Everyone Is, Or Wants to Be, A Pedestrian

Walking is the most basic and equitable mode of transportation that exists; every person is a pedestrian at some point during their day. The Arizona Public Interest Research Group recently released a research report around transportation trends in Arizona. The PIRG report found that in Arizona, as in the nation, there is a trend away from driving. Indeed, between 2005 and 2012, there was a 10.5% decline in the number of annual per capita miles driven by Arizonans. According to the 2000 US Census, 48% of households in Pima County have one or fewer vehicles.

This trend away from driving is led by Millennials, the largest generation in the United States, and the second largest demographic group to relocate to Arizona. In the Phoenix-Tucson “Sun Corridor”, population growth between now and 2050 is projected to be 117.9%, an apparently large portion of which will be Millennials. If Pima County expects to attract its fair share of this demographic and economic boom, it had better invest now in the multi-modal transportation infrastructure that Millennials are seeking, including pedestrian infrastructure. The PIRG report points out that, “Millennials are more

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1 Arizona PIRG Education Fund, Bikes, Trains and Less Driving: Transportation Trends in Arizona, Summer 2014
2 Transportation Trends, pg. 8
3 Transportation Trends, pgs. 11-12
4 Transportation Trends, pg. 6
likely to want to live in urban and walkable neighborhoods and are more open to non-driving forms of transportation than previous generations. A recent survey of Millennials found that 54 percent said they would consider moving to another city if it had more and better options for getting around, and 66 percent said that access to high quality transportation is one of the top three criteria they would weigh when deciding where to live.\(^5\)

Millennials aren’t the only ones who desire walkable communities. In the summer of 2013, Pima County conducted a regional bond survey to get a sense of which bond proposals voters were likely to support. This pedestrian safety and walkability proposal received the second highest ranking in its category, the highest ranking within central Tucson, and the third highest ranking of all the bond proposals listed. This is no surprise; Imagine Greater Tucson identifies walkability as a key priority for residents in the Tucson metro region.

The PIRG report recommends “With driving stagnating and demand for transit, bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure increasing, officials should reallocate resources toward system repair and programs that expand the range of transportation options available to Arizonans.”\(^6\)

B. The Walkability Dividend\(^7\)

Walking is also increasingly a driver of economic development. Report after report finds that pedestrians and cyclists visit accessible businesses more often and spend more money in those businesses overall. This may partially be a result of having less transportation expenses and thus more discretionary income. For example, a household in Armory Park (Walk Score 75) spends $587 per month on transportation as compared to a household in Rita Ranch, (Walk Score 17) which spends $1,042 per month on transportation.\(^8\) That’s $455 per month per household that could be spent on local retail and services instead of in service of a vehicle.

A cursory look at home prices in downtown Tucson as compared to outer lying areas will reveal the truth that buyers place a premium on homes in walkable communities. A recently published white paper found that, in the City of Tucson, for each Walk Score point a neighborhood has above the median Walk Score point, a home in said neighborhood increases from $700 to $3,000 in value.\(^9\) Another report finds that, nationwide, “each step up the walkability ladder adds $9 per square foot to annual office rents, $7 per square foot to retail rents, more than $300 per month to apartment rents, and nearly $82 per square foot to home values.”\(^10\)

There is no doubt that pedestrianism is a critical part of Pima County’s transportation future. To increase the number of people walking, the distances being walked, and the diversity of trips made by foot, walking needs to be safe, comfortable and convenient. A walkable environment has the following

\(^{5}\) Transportation Trends, pg. 11
\(^{6}\) Arizona PIRG Education Fund, Transportation Trends in Arizona, Summer 2014, pg. 5
\(^{7}\) Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America One Step at a Time, Jeff Speck, 2012
\(^{8}\) Housing + Transportation Affordability in Tucson Metropolitan Area, Pima County, and Pinal County, The Drachman Institute, March 2009, pg. 25
\(^{9}\) Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in U.S. Cities, Joe Cortright, 2009
\(^{10}\) Now Coveted: A Walkable, Convenient Place, Christopher B. Leinberger
benefits:

- **Safety** – a reduction in the terrible toll of injuries and deaths to pedestrians in our communities
- **Transportation** – reduced traffic congestion and increased efficiency/effectiveness of a multi-modal transportation system
- **Health** – reduced levels of obesity, heart disease, adult onset diabetes, and other illnesses resulting from sedentary lifestyle
- **Equity and Diversity** – increased access for people of all ages and abilities, including the 33% of the population that can not or does not drive an automobile at any given point in time
- **Environment** – improved air and water quality as well as curbed heat island effect
- **Economic Development** – improved pedestrian connections to business districts to promote small scale, local economic development as well as increased “livability” which makes it nationally competitive as a desirable place for major employers and venture start-ups.

Given the above-described benefits, Pima County can’t afford not to invest in pedestrian infrastructure, safety and walkability.

C. Regional Demand: PAG 2015 Pedestrian Plan Update

There is clearly urgent need for pedestrian capital improvements throughout Pima County, as demonstrated through the recently adopted Pima Association of Government (PAG) 2014 Pedestrian Plan Update.¹¹

Data collected via the Plan shows that there is not only great demand for pedestrian accommodations, but that pedestrian safety is also a pressing issue throughout the region. A visualization of each of these issues can be seen on the next two pages; maps directly pulled from the PAG Pedestrian Plan Update.

These two data sets, in combination with an inventory of the sidewalk network along major roadways in Pima County, were used to rank corridors through the region and generate a regional priority list for making improvements. Additionally, a recalibrated segment priority list was created for each PAG member jurisdiction. Virtually all of the corridors – or at least the majority of the segment – listed as Signature Projects in this proposal ranked within the top quartile of their respective jurisdiction’s priority list. This further underscored the potential they have to improve safety and increase walkability.

Priority lists for each jurisdiction can be viewed on pages 134-177 of the Draft Plan. (Note: it is important to note that priority lists are limited in that they only include major roadways and arterials. This is because there is not regional sidewalk data available for roadways of smaller scales and not because they don’t merit improvements.)

III. Scope of Pedestrian Safety & Walkability Capital Improvements

This proposal is for $25 million to implement jurisdiction-based pedestrian safety and walkability capital improvement projects throughout Pima County via a dual component approach including 16 signature corridor projects (totaling $21 million) in combination with 3 areas of categorical funding (totaling $4 million). Projects will begin in 2016, or as early as bond funds are released. Capital improvement projects may include, but are not limited to components such as: enhanced connections and crossings; continuous sidewalk networks; streetscape improvements; pedestrian lighting; traffic calming; and green infrastructure.

Specific corridor projects listed in this document will focus on the “pedestrian collector system” scale of roadway that falls between the intra-neighborhood pedestrian efforts of the Pima County Neighborhood Reinvestment Program and arterial efforts of the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). Because of current transportation funding structures, it is particularly difficult to secure funding for pedestrian capital improvements on this scale of roadway in the region.

The signature project component features 16 corridor improvement projects put forth by participating jurisdictions at the request of Living Streets Alliance. This includes projects submitted by the City of Tucson, Town of Oro Valley, City of South Tucson, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and the Tohono O’odham Nation.

The categorical component will allow jurisdictions to request funds for particular pedestrian improvement projects through a competitive process. Any categorical project must fall within one of three categories:

1. Safe Crossings;
2. Enhancements; and
3. Safe Routes to School (infrastructure only).

Additionally, jurisdictions may leverage these funds to secure additional match funding through the federal Transportation Alternatives Program, RTA funding, development impact fees, and any other potential source of matching or competitive funds.

Any project as a part of either component should align with the goals and objectives outlined in the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) 2014 Regional Pedestrian Plan Update.

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12 LSA solicited all PAG member jurisdictions (Eastern Pima County) to include projects in this proposal.
IV. History of the Planning Process

Living Streets Alliance was founded in January 2011 by people representing a diverse set of expertise and perspectives but united by a shared concern about the negative effects of a regional transportation system designed to prioritize a single mode of transportation. Though its founding members came from various disciplines such as public health, economic development, urban planning and landscape architecture, environmental preservation, education, transportation and public policy, they all came together to focus on advancing a regional transportation policy that accounted for multi-modal transportation. With that in mind, LSA immediately recognized that the major gap in transportation conversations in the region was pedestrianism and conceived of its 2012-2013 Pedestrian Safety & Comfort Campaign. Its goal was to make the simple act of walking safe, comfortable and convenient in the greater Tucson area.

As part of its campaign, LSA began and still facilitates Neighborhood Walkability Assessments. These assessments are intended to help neighborhoods identify the gaps and obstacles in their pedestrian networks as well as the amenities or characteristics that would make walking easier, more comfortable and more enjoyable. LSA also spearheaded the creation of a Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) for the City of Tucson and established walking promotion month, known as WALKtober.

In December of 2011, mindful of the great need that exists for safe and comfortable pedestrian infrastructure and encouraged by community, partners, and leadership who have voiced support for a more walkable region, LSA met with Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry in order to see what might be done about making Pima County a more walkable, livable place. At that meeting, Mr. Huckelberry suggested that **LSA generate a bond proposal for pedestrian infrastructure.** Following that direction, LSA began the process of creating a $50 million pedestrian infrastructure bond proposal.

A general timeline of the planning process to date is as follows:

- **March 2013:** LSA submitted a $50 million bond proposal for a pedestrian program.
- **Summer 2013:** Pima County conducted a regional bond survey to assess potential voter support for various propositions. LSA’s proposal received the second highest ranking (40.1%) of the votes in its category, and was the highest ranking proposal within central Tucson, receiving 54.8% of all votes. Most importantly, of the entire list of proposals, LSA’s ranked third highest.
- **Fall 2013-Spring 2014:** LSA met with community partners such as Neighborhood Reinvestment, the 12th Ave Coalition and the Tucson Pedestrian Advisory Committee and stakeholders such as Pima Association of Governments and the Tucson Department of Transportation to refine its proposal and ensure that bond proposals with similar ends did not overlap or compete for limited bond resources.
- **April 2014:** LSA submitted a revised proposal for $25 million, proposing a capital improvement program focusing on the streets and thoroughfares that fall between intra-neighborhood streets that are the domain of Neighborhood Reinvestment and arterial efforts of the RTA. These inter neighborhood streets are the connective tissue of the pedestrian network.
- **May 2014:** LSA presented its revised proposal at the monthly meeting of the Pima County Bond
Advisory Committee. Around 50 supporters attended the meeting, and over a dozen spoke; numerous letters of support were sent in before and after the meeting; dozens of comments in support were submitted via the County’s online form. The motion on the proposal was “to move the concept forward without a specific amount tied to it, with a request to other jurisdictions regarding whether or how they would support the concept, and specifically ask the City of Tucson Bond Committee for its recommendation.”

- **May-August 2014:** LSA approached all PAG member jurisdictions to assess support for the proposal and determine specific projects appropriate for each jurisdiction. Pima County, the Town of Marana, and the Town of Sahuarita elected not to submit projects, while the City of Tucson, City of South Tucson, Town of Oro Valley, Tohono O’odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui Tribe each submitted projects. Since then, LSA has been working closely with the responsive jurisdictions to develop the final Signature Project package. (Note: Pima County, Marana and Sahuarita could still submit projects for this proposal, which would necessitate further review and evaluation.)

V. Funding: Why Bonds?

Bond funds are critical to multi-modal transit development, and particularly pedestrian infrastructure improvement for at least two reasons. First, Pima County and its constituent jurisdictions have already invested millions of dollars in bond funds, impact fees, highway user funds and other resources to start all manner of road and neighborhood projects that are nearly finished, but for the most basic connection: the pedestrian connection. Second, traditional sources of transportation funding are problematic to the say least. State HURF funds, even when properly allocated to Pima County, can generally only be spent on road improvements. The region receives roughly $35 million in federal transportation funds (both Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration), the bulk of which is reserved for major roadways. The remainder goes to federal highway projects and a scant $1 million is allocated for “Transportation Alternatives.” These funds are specifically intended to fund bicycle, pedestrian and other alternative modes of transportation as well as recreational trails and educational outreach around alternative transportation. (For example, local Safe Routes to School programs are funded with these dollars.)

The RTA 1/2 cent sales tax provides the bulk of transportation funding in Pima County down the road, and LSA and its partners are working closely with PAG to ensure that all available RTA funding can be leveraged to support and amplify the impact of bond-funded projects.

VI. Cost Estimates

At $25 million, this bond proposal is a small fraction compared to the hundreds of millions that PAG estimates are needed to meet Pima County’s most basic pedestrian infrastructure and safety needs. The City of Tucson alone estimates that $500 million is needed to bring its sidewalk network up to basic ADA compliance. This does not even begin to cover additional pedestrian needs like shade, safety lighting, enhanced crossings, traffic calming, etc.
Cost estimates for each signature project were provided by the appropriate local jurisdiction. In the case of projects submitted by the City of Tucson, initial cost estimates for each corridor were provided by Psomas Engineering. Estimates for green infrastructure\(^{13}\) provided by Watershed Management Group and estimates for lighting, traffic calming, and additional enhancements by TDOT were then added on top of the initial cost estimate for each corridor.

Each jurisdiction will assume responsibility for future Operation and Maintenance costs of improvements made within their jurisdiction and will be required to provide documentation of their existing O&M policies. This will be included in the IGAs.

**VII. Program Elements and Implementation**

Both the Signature Project and Categorical Funding components of the Pedestrian Safety and Comfort Proposal will begin in 2016. The signature project component is comprised of 16 signature projects across Pima County, while the categorical component may feature projects in any PAG member jurisdiction.

**A. Signature Project Component**

Right around $21 million is slated for the Signature Project component. Ideally, each of the 16 signature projects will yield a complete street, able to safely and attractively accommodate multi-modal transportation. Project pricing has been calculated with a complete street in mind, bearing in mind that a complete street varies from context to context — a complete street in Oro Valley is likely to look different than a complete street in Vail or the Catalina Foothills. Even so, each signature project has been selected to respond to its urban/rural context and may include sidewalks, transit stops, safe and frequent crossings, traffic calming devices where appropriate, pedestrian lighting, green infrastructure and environmental enhancements, etc.

**B. Categorical Funding Component**

Under the Categorical Funding component of the proposal, funds will be awarded by the PAG Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee through a competitive process. This committee is made up of a voting member from each jurisdiction. There are also up to seven community volunteers who are appointed by the Regional Council for two-year terms. Project proposals must fall under one of three categorical priorities: Safe Crossings; Enhancements; and Safe Routes to School (Infrastructure Projects). Projects or improvements in each category may include, but are not limited to:

- **Safe Crossings:** Projects awarded funding through this category may include, but are not limited to, HAWKs, PELICANs, TOUCANs, pedestrian refuge islands, accentuated crosswalks, chicanes, bulb-outs

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\(^{13}\) “Green infrastructure” uses vegetation, soils, and natural processes to manage water and create healthier urban environments. At the scale of a city or county, green infrastructure refers to the patchwork of natural areas that provides habitat, flood protection, cleaner air, and cleaner water. At the scale of a neighborhood or site, green infrastructure refers to stormwater management systems that mimic nature by soaking up and storing water. (Source: EPA)
• **Enhancements**: Projects awarded funding through this category may include, but are not limited to, pedestrian lighting, benches, drinking fountains, shade trees and green infrastructure, art, ADA ramps, sidewalk gap fills

• **Safe Routes to School**: Projects in this category will be infrastructure projects only, literally building sidewalks and enhanced connections that comprise safe routes to schools, **not providing any programmatic funding for the Safe Routes to School programs.**