May 8, 2014

Pima County Bond Committee
Chairman and Members
130 W. Congress
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear Chairman and Members,

We are writing in recommendation of the Living Streets Alliance pedestrian infrastructure bond proposal. City of Tucson Pedestrian Advisory Committee convened our first meeting in September of 2013 at the behest of Mayor Rothschild, at least partially in response to a staggering number of pedestrian deaths in the city in the past year. The PAC represents all six city wards, as well as constituencies exceptionally impacted by the walking environment that include youth, the elderly, and the disabled. The PAC has developed an overall mission: to identify and set priorities in policies, programs, and projects to create a complete pedestrian environment for Tucson.

As PAC members engage in a process of refining our goals under this mission, we are increasingly aware that the major constraint to creating pedestrian infrastructure is a distinct and equitable funding stream for pedestrian projects. Overall, pedestrian funding makes up less than 2% of transportation despite the fact that everyone is a pedestrian, and one-third of our community cannot or does not drive and thus relies upon walking as a major form of transportation. This bond proposal fits well with the vision of the PAC to increase funding, and would allow jurisdictions to identify and pursue priorities for their communities, and the resulting projects would create both a vision and a roadmap for the future.

Projects that fall under the scope of pedestrian infrastructure include a variety of approaches to meet the needs of diverse community. These include: 1) Improved connectivity created by safe crossings between neighborhoods and in reaching adjacent amenities using tools such as high visibility crosswalks, curb extensions, crossing refuges, ADA compliant curb ramps and on-ramp pedestrian signals; 2) continuous well-maintained sidewalks of adequate width; 3) Streetscape improvements that make walking both comfortable and attractive; 4) Traffic calming techniques such as road diets, corner bulbouts, traffic circles, and planted medians that create quieter, local roadways; 5) Routes to destinations close to home and work, such as local businesses, libraries, parks and community centers; and 6) Green infrastructure that creates a pleasant microclimate using parkways, rain gardens and street trees.

This bond proposal was popular among residents who responded to the county-wide survey. This may reflect the sheer numbers of people potentially impacted by the bond, as well as the multiple benefits of an improved walking environment such as reduced traffic congestion, improved health outcomes, increased access to community resources, improved air and water quality and a curbed heat island effect. The PAC members view this bond proposal as an important step that provides further momentum to city and regional leaders interested in developing Tucson as a vibrant, attractive and profitable environment for youth, young professionals, businesses, and older residents seeking economic security and quality of life.

Recognizing the number and importance of the many projects being proposed to the Pima Bond Advisory Committee (BAC) and the competing and diverse needs of our community, the CoT PAC members strongly and respectively urge the BAC to support this Pedestrian Safety and Comfort Bond Program for the benefit of all County residents.

Sincerely,
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