

To: Mayor Selby and Members of the Olympia City Council

From: Samuel Gacad-Cowan, Chair, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)

Date: September 8, 2021

Subject: 2022-2027 Preliminary CFP Budget (Draft)

This year's CFP highlights the need for safe and functional mobility as Olympia's population continues to grow. We must utilize pedestrian infrastructure to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges Olympia currently faces. Pedestrian infrastructure can empower individuals to engage with our city without dependence on dangerous, expensive and polluting vehicles. BPAC wants to remind the city council that as long as vehicles are prioritized over people, we will continue to fall short of Comprehensive Goal Plan 1, "All streets are safe and inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists. Streets are designed to be human scale, but also can accommodate motor vehicles, and encourage safe driving." Our perspective is from the lens of individuals who use bicycle/pedestrian facilities frequently and have personally experienced the hostile environment of car-centric urban planning.

We've identified three specific considerations concerning projects that we'd like to bring to the council's attention. BPAC is glad to see that Cain and North is listed as a site for a future roundabout. However, we want the council to be aware of a nearby housing development on the corner of 22nd and Cain, directly across from NOVA Middle School. We could not find any plans in the TMP for a future roundabout here. Currently there is only a stop sign, and this area could use more pedestrian support and improved traffic flow.

We also want to emphasize the importance of Policy 23.2 from the comprehensive plan, "Raise driver awareness of pedestrians at crosswalks on wide, high-volume streets using blinking lights, flags, signs, markings, and other techniques." This is especially important for plans to extend sidewalks on Eastside Street/22nd Avenue from Fir Street to I-5. According to the Street Safety Plan (Figure 2), drivers here regularly drive more than 10 mph over the speed limit.

Finally, Olympia's improvements to Parks and Recreation areas will create greater traffic in the surrounding neighborhoods. These neighborhoods may already be experiencing parking scarcity. The Lions Park sprayground, the repurposed Legion Way Armory, and the Kaiser Woods Park are all examples of parks that will create more trips through neighborhoods. We recommend that Parks and Recreation areas prioritize bicycle and pedestrian access in order to alleviate traffic and parking demand in surrounding neighborhoods.

BPAC also recommends the council examine the decision making process to ensure that desirable outcomes are achieved. Out of the six project programs listed in the Transportation

Chapter, only three have a “Level of service standard or measurable outcome.” Two of those programs use the Complete Streets framework. Streets can qualify as “Complete Streets,” but still present hostile conditions for vulnerable users. Complete Streets should not only include all modes of transportation, but prioritize vulnerable users over cars. For example, on most of our bicycle corridors, the only support provided to cyclists are signs and worn-out sharrows. This requires cyclists to share lanes of travel with cars, which can be dangerous for slower riders and scare away prospective bicycle commuters. However, these are still considered “complete streets,” even though the safety of the cyclist is compromised for the freedom of the automobile. We recommend that standards for complete streets be clearly outlined and include greater support for pedestrians, cyclists and those who use assisted mobility.

For programs without measurable outcomes, we urge the council to identify metrics. Monitoring progress through clear metrics is crucial to ensuring desired outcomes. The methodologies for prioritizing and qualifying projects seemed unclear or difficult to interpret. We noticed inconsistencies between the projects in this year’s CFP and those listed and prioritized in the TMP. As mentioned in previous letters, we recommend that the Council make decisions driven by data. We feel the prioritization score maps from the TMP are good and should be used to make our city safer for vulnerable walkers, cyclists and rollers. We request greater transparency for decisions that deviate from the TMP prioritization.

Prioritizing alternative transportation can ensure that individuals who choose a healthier, greener and cheaper form of transportation are supported and rewarded for their decision. Those without access to a car, or those who use assisted mobility have a right to dignified and safe means of transportation. In conclusion, we look forward to seeing these projects come to life and hope that our input can guide the City of Olympia toward meeting goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,

Sam Gacad-Cowan

Chair, Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee