

June 10, 2015

To: City of Austin Budget Office  
CC: Honorable Mayor and Council  
From: City of Austin Pedestrian Advisory Council  
Re: “Budget in a Box” Recommendations  
Via: Electronic and US mail

The City of Austin Pedestrian Advisory Council “Budget in a Box” Task Force met to complete the Budget Office’s “Budget in a Box” and recommends budget items as follows:

- Fully Fund COA Sidewalk Master Plan
- Fully Fund Urban Trails Master Plan
- Fund Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon Program
- Fund Complete Streets Program

The City’s Sidewalk Program is primarily funded through 2012 bond money. That money will be completely exhausted very soon. At the current rate we are spending about \$5-7 million/year of 2012 bond money on sidewalks, to address an approximately \$1 billion sidewalk deficit. At that rate it will take us about 200 years to have a complete sidewalk network along our existing streets.<sup>1</sup>

Sidewalks are our critical connections for navigating our communities and making transit work well. These important connections benefit our residents by improving air quality, improving safety, reducing the need for emergency response to traffic crashes by making streets safer, and addressing obesity issues by creating places where people can walk. It’s not enough to tell people they need to walk for exercise; we need to give Austinites safe places to do that. The Pedestrian Advisory Council believes the City needs to begin to allocate money annually to sidewalk construction through the budget process and not rely upon bond dollars for this vital piece of infrastructure.

The pedestrian network has gaps, which need to be addressed to provide true connectivity and safety. Additionally, the pedestrian network requires key components to improve that connectivity and safety: Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (or other crossing tools) for safe pedestrian crossings, the Urban Trails system for connections through nature, and Complete Streets that are designed to be comfortable, safe, and convenient for all users. There are currently over 100 vetted requests for PHBs awaiting installation, but no existing funding.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Austin Public Works Department Sidewalk Program staff.

As the group completed the budget in a box, we were mindful of the exercises' mandate to indicate a desire for budget decreases or increases. While the Pedestrian Advisory Council believes there should be increases to the aforementioned programs, the group believes this could be accomplished either through revenue increases or by remaining revenue neutral through strategic reallocation of funds.

We appreciate your attention to these funding priorities. Should you require additional follow-up we would be more than happy to assist.

Sincerely,

Heyden Black Walker, Chair  
City of Austin Pedestrian Advisory Council

The Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) shall advise the City of Austin on pedestrian planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement efforts regarding the creation, maintenance and operation of pedestrian facilities in order to ensure a safe and enjoyable circulation for both commuting and recreation within the City of Austin. The PAC's goal is to ensure sensitivity to pedestrian issues in the design and implementation of all public and private projects impacting pedestrians.