

CITY OF ATLANTA



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Keisha Lance Bottoms
MAYOR

55 TRINITY AVE., SW, ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-0324
SUITE 4350, CITY HALL - SOUTH
(404) 330-6165
FAX: 404.658.7552

Joshua Williams
Chief Operating Officer

Josh Rowan, PE
ATLDOT Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Andre Dickens, Transportation Committee Chair

CC: Atlanta City Council Transportation Committee
Mr. Joshua Williams, COO
Ms. Charletta Jacks, Senior Intergovernmental Affairs Director

FROM: Josh Rowan, PE, PgMP, PMP, CCM; Commissioner ATLDOT

DATE: August 25, 2020

RE: **20-R-4264**



“Transportation” in Atlanta has meant one thing for decades – driving cars, as fast as possible. Most streets throughout the city have been designed and constructed exclusively for fast cars. As a result, many of our high-volume car corridors experience crash rates 3-4 times higher than the state average. *This half century focus on speeding up car commutes has been a constant detriment to the residents and visitors in the City of Atlanta, especially pedestrians.*

The Department has received numerous letters from the 4th grade class at Tuskegee Airman Global Academy on Cascade Road. *These students are afraid to walk to school because of the fast cars and careless drivers.* We have witnessed young children who live on Mt. Zion Road, which has some of the highest density in the city, walking in the street because of the damaged and missing sidewalks. We have seen seniors walking and using wheelchairs in vehicle travel lanes on Donald Lee Hollowell and other streets in southwest Atlanta due to damaged and missing sidewalks.

20-R-4264 is a non-binding resolution which directs the Department to prepare a multi-year payment plan to holistically and responsibly pay down the City’s sidewalk repair backlog and fund new construction.

The Department agrees with the spirit of this proposed resolution, but it is our position the sidewalk issues are being addressed through the One Atlanta Strategic Plan and the city’s Vision Zero program. The Department seeks to add clarity through both the One Atlanta Strategic Transportation Plan and to estimate ballpark cost through basic parametric estimating.

The Transportation Plan addresses sidewalks, as follows:

- ***Reduce injuries and fatalities on Atlanta’s streets.*** In 2019, twenty-two (22) pedestrians were struck and killed by cars. The areas with the highest risk will receive the most attention.

- ***Make walking safer and more pleasant.*** This includes building sidewalks where they are needed the most, reducing damage to sidewalks, improving pedestrian lighting, and establishing new funding mechanisms to build and repair sidewalks.
- ***Make it easier to access jobs and services without a car.*** The lowest percentage of automobile ownership is in Districts 10, 11, and 12. It is imperative we provide safe streets to make walking a viable transportation option for those who cannot afford an automobile – equity
- ***Plan and distribute resources based on Safety, Equity, and Mobility conditions.*** This includes providing safe sidewalks in all neighborhoods. The Department is developing a prioritization model for future projects.

To quote an Atlanta resident who contributed to our Strategic Transportation Plan, “When you solve for the most vulnerable people on the street, you make the street better for everyone.”

Sidewalks should not be controversial. Most constituents want high quality and ADA accessible sidewalk facilities throughout the City of Atlanta. The following is a high-level financial analysis. These numbers are based on current data obtained from the sidewalk inventory:

- ***1,378 miles of street where no sidewalks exist.*** The Department is currently using \$350k per mile for sidewalks based on Renew cost estimates. (Note: this cost includes only the concrete sidewalk and does not include right of way acquisition, utility relocation, retaining wall construction, storm drainage improvements, or any curb and gutter.) The cost to add sidewalk on one side of the street is \$482M.
- ***1,178 miles of existing sidewalk.*** Assuming the sidewalk condition is comparable to the asphalt pavement condition, this would mean 60% of the sidewalk facilities are rated fair or worse. The cost to repair the existing sidewalk is \$247M.
- ***There are 20,139 curb ramps noted.*** If one-quarter of the curb ramps needed to be replaced, the cost would be \$25M.
- ***There are 2,436 obstructions noted in the sidewalks.*** We reserve the right to estimate these costs later as they likely involve utility poles as well as prior rights and accessibility issues.

The estimated cost to repair Atlanta’s sidewalks and to install sidewalks on one side of every street in the city is approximately \$750,000,000.

Further, the current TSPLOST program is approximately \$250,000,000. Assuming there are future TSPLOST programs in Atlanta and half of the revenue is invested in sidewalks, this would require six (6) additional TSPLOST programs and at least 30 years to deliver.

Keep in mind this \$750,000,000 scenario has not accounted for future sidewalk deterioration, future development, or population change during the 30-year delivery process.

The Department looks forward to continued collaboration with the Atlanta City Council’s Transportation Committee as we develop strategies to deliver much needed sidewalk infrastructure and to make car ownership an option in our world class city.