



**Date:** August 7, 2014

**To:** Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager  
**Through:** Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager  
Bo Ferguson, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Mark Ahrendsen, Director of Transportation  
Marvin Williams, Director of Public Works  
**Subject:** Prioritization of Sidewalk Construction Projects

**Executive Summary**

During the review of the 2014-15 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), City Council members discussed the priority of implementing citizen-petitioned sidewalk projects over high-priority sidewalk projects identified in the DurhamWalks! Pedestrian Plan. The City Council requested a follow-up review of current sidewalk project priorities prior to expenditure of additional sidewalk construction funds allocated in the 2014-15 CIP. The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the City Council with a report on current sidewalk project priorities and provide an opportunity for the City Council to affirm or modify current policy direction.

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the City Council: 1) receive a report from the administration concerning current sidewalk construction priorities; and 2) direct the administration to proceed with designing and constructing eleven City Council-ordered petition sidewalk projects with remaining funds designated to specific downtown sidewalk projects and to the City Council’s Unfunded Construction Priority List projects.

**Background**

The [DurhamWalks! Pedestrian Plan](#) was adopted by the City Council in 2006. One purpose of the plan was to provide a priority ranking of street segments where new sidewalks are needed based on a set of objective criteria. The criteria were revised by the City Council in November 2011 to give greater weight to sidewalks near schools and parks/recreation centers. A total of 235 projects were ranked using the revised criteria (Attachment A). To develop a funding priority list, the top 52 projects were screened to exclude projects which had identified funding sources. The remaining unfunded 24 projects were then adopted by the City Council as the Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List (Attachment B). This list is used to seek federal, State and local funding sources and to implement projects as funding is made available.

Funding and implementation of projects can occur in multiple ways:

1. The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) requires street-frontage sidewalks, or payment-in-lieu, with new development construction. Some of these sidewalks are also identified in the DurhamWalks! Plan.
2. Sidewalks are built as part of new thoroughfare projects constructed by NCDOT (e.g., Hillandale Road widening, Guess Road widening, NC 55 widening, Alston Ave. widening, East End Connector, etc.) or by the City (e.g., Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway, Stadium Drive Extension, Fayetteville Road widening, Carver Street Extension, Angier-Driver streetscape, etc.). Sidewalk costs are included in the road project budget; however sidewalks constructed by NCDOT typically require a 20 percent matching city-share cost. These local costs are funded through the CIP's Federal-State Matching Projects.
3. Independent pedestrian projects are also funded through the State/MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). These projects also typically require a 20 percent non-federal local match also funded through the CIP's Federal-State Matching Project.

Remaining DurhamWalks! projects and all other sidewalk improvements are funded through the CIP's Sidewalk Fund. There are currently eleven approved (or "ordered") petition sidewalk projects. These projects were petitioned by property owners who will be assessed for a portion of the project cost. The sidewalk assessment rate for each of the ordered projects is \$5.00 per linear foot of sidewalk frontage. The actual cost to the City can vary significantly depending on roadside conditions, drainage, obstructions (e.g., trees), right-of-way limitations, and topography. The current estimated construction cost of the eleven petition sidewalk projects is \$737,814 based on an average construction cost of \$55 per linear foot plus an adjustment for inflation and contingency. A list and maps of the petition ordered sidewalk projects is provided in Attachments C and D.

Recognizing rising sidewalk construction costs, the City Council increased petition sidewalk assessment rates in March 2013. For sidewalk projects included in the DurhamWalks! Plan, the assessment rate was set at \$35 per linear foot. For projects not in the plan, the assessment rate is based on actual cost. The City Council also authorized the City Manager to prioritize the construction order of petition sidewalks. No petition sidewalk requests have been submitted since the adoption of the increased assessment rates. Other than petition sidewalk projects, the City does not assess property owners for sidewalk construction.

A number of sidewalk projects are currently being designed or are under construction. Some are independent pedestrian projects and others are part of thoroughfare projects. A listing of these projects is provided by Attachment E.

**Issues/Analysis**

Attachment C lists the eleven petition sidewalks. Some of the petition projects were not included in the DurhamWalks! Pedestrian Plan 2011 rankings. However, all of the petition projects have been scored using the DurhamWalks! Plan methodology and rankings range from a high of 53 to a low of 226 out of 235 projects. With these scores, none of the petition sidewalk projects would rate higher than Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List projects. Many of the petition sidewalk projects are relatively short and low cost. Seven of the eleven projects are less than 800 feet in length with an average estimated construction cost of about \$20,000. Many of these projects close a gap in a neighborhood sidewalk network and improve community connectivity.

Many of the highest-ranked projects from the Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List (Attachment B) are longer in length and more costly. The City often uses funds received from NCDOT and the DCHC MPO to construct these types of projects. Several of the projects from the Unfunded Priority list were submitted to NCDOT for funding under the new Strategic Transportation Initiatives program this year and several scored well and will likely be funded. Most of the petition sidewalk projects are not good candidates for federal funds due to the additional requirements associated with the use of these funds. In general, City funds are the most feasible funding source for petition projects.

The CIP’s Sidewalk Fund currently has \$2,505,170 in available, unexpended funds; this amount includes an additional \$400,000 provided in the 2014-15 CIP. The administration proposes that these funds be spent as follows:

FY 15 Sidewalk Repair and ADA Curb Ramps	\$765,000
Petition Sidewalks	\$737,814
Downtown Curb Ramps –Water Main Project	\$35,000
Downtown Sidewalk – 21C Hotel	\$150,000
Downtown Sidewalk – City Center Building	\$150,000
Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List Projects	\$667,356
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,505,170</b>

Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List projects will be implemented in the order practicable with available resources. It is anticipated that the available funds will be used for projects # 1 - Roxboro Rd (from Pacific Ave to Murray Ave) and # 3 – NC 55 (Riddle Rd to Cecil St). Project # 2 – Club Blvd (Midland Terrace to Glenn School Rd) is more costly and is also partially outside the city limits.

In addition to the funds listed above, also note that \$250,000 is included in the 2014-15 Street Maintenance operating budget that will be put toward sidewalk repair. The

amount will be divided between contracted work and material costs for work completed by City forces.

### **Alternatives**

The Durham City Council could decide to:

- Direct the expenditure of CIP sidewalk construction funds to the eleven City Council-ordered petition sidewalk projects with remaining funds designated to specific downtown sidewalk projects and to the City Council's Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List projects.
- Direct the expenditure of CIP sidewalk construction funds to specific sidewalk projects in downtown and to the Unfunded Construction Priority List projects and implemented in the order practicable with available resources. Petition sidewalks will be ranked and included in future updates to the Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List as appropriate.
- Direct the expenditure of CIP sidewalk construction funds to seven of the eleven City-ordered petition sidewalk projects of less than 800 feet in length with an average estimated construction cost of about \$20,000 (total estimated cost of \$169,224) with remaining funds (\$1,263,132) designated to specific downtown sidewalk projects and to the City Council's Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List projects. The four remaining petition sidewalks will be constructed in priority order from the Durham Walks! Plan as funds become available.

### **Financial Impacts**

Funds to plan, design and construct sidewalk projects are approved annually through the City's CIP. The purpose of this agenda item is to establish the priority order for implementing new sidewalk projects from the DurhamWalks! Plan and ordered petition projects.

### **SDBE Summary**

No SDBE implications have been identified for this matter.

### **Attachments:**

- Attachment A – DurhamWalks! Plan 2011 Sidewalk Corridor Rankings
- Attachment B – 2011 Unfunded Sidewalk Construction Priority List and Map
- Attachment C – Petition Sidewalks Ordered by Council, 2006-2013
- Attachment D – Map of Petition Sidewalks
- Attachment E – DurhamWalks! Projects in Design or Under Construction
- Attachment F – Presentation