

Testimony given before the Board of Estimate and Apportionment on Friday, April 21, 2023 by Liz Kramer

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on the budget. My name is Liz Kramer, and I currently serve as the co-chair of the Community Mobility Committee. We are an advisory group made up of residents who are committed to creating a safer, more accessible experience for people who are getting around by walking, transit, biking, and other modes of transportation.

Mayor Jones and President Green have made great steps in the last year towards dedicating ARPA funds to address critical infrastructure needs, including traffic calming and creating a comprehensive mobility plan for the City of St. Louis. I appear before you today to ask for the 2023 budget to reflect a sustained commitment to making St. Louis a safer, more accessible place to walk, bike, take transit, and drive.

For the investments made in the last year to succeed, there's more we need in St. Louis. Perhaps most pressingly, we need expertise within the department that is primarily responsible for our infrastructure: the Streets Department. We are asking for you to add senior staff to the Streets Department with expertise in multimodal transportation. We anticipate this person will serve as not only the coordinator and contact point, but the accountable official for infrastructure like sidewalks, cycletracks, and bike lanes. This person must be skilled in project management, community engagement, and finding alignment among many stakeholders, and will serve as a complement to experts already hard at work in Planning and the Board of Public Service. This role is critical to successfully executing the vision of the yet-to-be-begun mobility plan, and to other priorities of St. Louis residents.

We also want to see funding dedicated to forward-thinking initiatives that other cities have successfully undertaken, including having resources available to make high quality, quick-build improvements on roads that have been proven dangerous, implementing the work that comes out of the mobility plan towards a Vision Zero approach, and automated enforcement. We've sent you a letter that outlines specifics of our hopes for these resources.

For us, funding is an important part of addressing the needs on our streets and sidewalks, but there are structural changes to how funding is allocated that would increase the equitable distribution of high quality infrastructure across St. Louis, correcting decades of historic disparities in investment. We need a comprehensive approach to infrastructure where funding can be applied where it is needed. To this end, we encourage you to explore alternatives to the current Ward Capital system that reduce the influence of individual alderpeople over what infrastructure is built where, and alternative structures for programs like 50/50 sidewalks, which not only requires an alder to dedicate funding to see improvements come to fruition, but for property owners, regardless of income, to cover the cost of our shared public infrastructure. These structural changes would support shifting the power, and must be accompanied by data showing that the city is following through on commitments.

Again, thank you all for your commitment to addressing the conditions on our streets and sidewalks. This funding would change the experience of getting around our city in both the near- and long-term, and we look forward to seeing this momentum continuing.