



Testimony of TCA Vice President Marissa Valeri on Proposed Budget for FY 2023 for Pedestrian Safety and Walkability

My name is Marissa Valeri, and I am a founding member of the Rockville Pedestrian Advocacy Committee as well as the Vice President of the Twinbrook Community Association. I'm speaking tonight in support of the inclusion of Vision Zero projects in the FY23 Budget and a true investment in pedestrian safety and walkability in our City.

I don't need to tell you how important Vision Zero is for Rockville. It is heartening to have our City supportive of the mission of Vision Zero and heartening to have commissions and committees working diligently every day towards it. I am lucky to volunteer alongside a talented and committed crew of residents focused like lasers on making Rockville safer and more enjoyable for pedestrians.

I would like to first focus on the existing projects listed under the Vision Zero Action Plan. I agree with and support wholeheartedly the projects listed for FY23. I would encourage the City to move Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Improvements to being a routine capital maintenance project similar to Sidewalks. As we look at our City through a proactive lens of prevention and not reaction, we will need to implement more safety measures and new technology to keep both pedestrians and bicyclists safe. Finally, investing in our sidewalks is investing in pedestrians — both in our safety and in making our experience here in the City more enjoyable. I urge you to continue if not expand funding for sidewalk installation and improvements.

I would be remiss if I did not speak to the funding for the Twinbrook Pedestrian Bridge. In my dual role as RPAC ambassador and TCA Executive Committee member, I follow this project perhaps closer than most. In reviewing the CIP, I am disheartened by two things: one, a carryover from FY22 of \$50,000 and two, the nebulous term "future" used for estimated start and estimated completion.

In regard to the carryover of funds, the pedestrian and Twinbrook community would like to know why these funds were not used in FY22. The CIP notes that the design phase should have started in FY22. What began in FY22 if no funds were used? On point two, using the term "future" is not a concrete term used in project planning. What are the aspirational goals here? A community can understand to a certain extent when there are unforeseen delays - see also Baltimore Road - but they do not understand why there is no stated goal for design, construction, or completion. Finally, there is no line in the CIP for a feasibility study which I understand is a step in this process. I urge this to be added in the interest of transparency and accountability.

It appears that there were delays in this process that could have been avoided with better planning. While normally this shouldn't be a concern, it is one here. We will need to advocate on the state level to secure funding to make this project a reality, and every delay in the initial stages pushes our ability to secure that funding back as well.

I encourage the City to develop real dates for estimated start and completion of the feasibility study, design process, and construction. I also encourage the City to include the Twinbrook Pedestrian Bridge as a Vision Zero Project and let's work together to make this a reality. Our communities are here and ready. Thank you.