

LivableStreets Alliance

April 2019

Budget hearings - Public Works, Transportation, and Police Departments

Thank you for your engagement on transportation-related issues in the FY20 budget process. We have included information below related to our three priority areas for this budget cycle:

## 1. Operational Efficiency for the Transportation and Public Works Departments

With the creation of the Chief of Streets position in 2015, the City of Boston started taking important steps towards integrating the Public Works and Transportation Departments. The recent departure of the Transportation Commissioner and the still-vacant Public Works Commissioner role present a prime opportunity to take additional steps towards further integration.

Other cities, including Oakland, New York, and Atlanta, have increased efficiency by combining all planning, operations, engineering, and community engagement work into one integrated transportation department.

It's unclear what steps have been taken in Boston towards increasing operational efficiency between BTS and DPW in the last year; in particular related to hiring of 20 new positions funded by the FY19 budget increase and creating a new staffing structure.

## 2. Project Implementation

With additional staff capacity and funding in FY19 we had hoped to see more project implementation, yet certain priority projects of *Go Boston 2030* have come no closer to implementation.

Projects that were slated to be new or scheduled projects in FY19 and received funding, but were never started, include:

- Congress Street
- Columbia Road
- State Street
- Bowdoin Street/Geneva Avenue
- Warren Street/Blue Hill Avenue

Projects that exceeded their FY19 budget without clear explanation for where that money came from or went towards, include:

- Commonwealth Avenue Phase 3 & 4
- Sullivan Square/Rutherford Avenue
- Dudley Street
- Melnea Cass Boulevard

One project that is emblematic of systemic issues around the City's transparency is the \$2.5 million spent on the Northern Avenue Bridge. When asked in a Northern Avenue Bridge Task Force Meeting, Public Works stated that \$900,000 went towards structural analysis and an additional \$1.6 million went towards planning. In FY19 there was one public meeting, seven task force meetings, a limited scope traffic study, and a handful of renderings completed. \$1.6 million is an astounding amount of money to be spent on planning before the City has determined a preferred alternative or produced any conceptual plans.

### **3. Vision Zero Integration Into the Boston Police Department**

A full-time, permanent data analyst is needed to clean up crash report data, investigate trends, and ensure Boston's crash data is properly reported to the state. We recommend a line item of \$75-85K to fund this position, including benefits, and understand from conversations with the Boston Police Department that creating this position would be welcome, as the previous position ended due to lack of continued grant funding.

In addition, it's unclear how well integrated Vision Zero practices are in the Boston Police Department. What Vision Zero training is currently in place for officers? Does BPD have a way to analyze traffic crash data in order to determine what the most dangerous behaviors for drivers are? In other cities, the most dangerous driving behaviors include speeding, running red lights, and failure to yield to pedestrians. Determining which behaviors lead to more fatalities and serious injury crashes will help officers use data to target enforcement on the most dangerous behaviors.