



Staff Report

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TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Kristin Retherford, Interim City Manager

SUBJECT:

Additional public opinion research on the proposed Community Improvement Bond package for November 2022 ballot and further consideration of proposed projects for inclusion in the measure.

Ward(s): All Wards

Councilor(s): All Councilors

Neighborhood(s): All Neighborhoods

Result Area(s): All Result Areas - Good Governance; Natural Environment Stewardship; Safe Community; Safe, Reliable and Efficient Infrastructure; Strong and Diverse Economy; Welcoming and Livable Community.

SUMMARY:

At their May 16 Work Session, Salem City Council reviewed the Infrastructure Bond Engagement Steering Committee recommendation for the Community Improvement Bond proposal and took public comment. The \$300 million Community Improvement Bond measure is designed to address pressing needs for fire engines and equipment, for improvements to streets and sidewalks, for parks, for affordable housing with a branch library at two sites, earthquake safety improvements for the Civic Center, and cybersecurity to protect residents and our services relying on technology. Without raising tax rates, bond-funded projects would take care of what we have, prepare us for the future, saving money currently spent on repairs and maintenance of outdated facilities and equipment.

ISSUE:

Should City Council:

1. Direct staff to solicit additional public opinion research on the proposed Community Improvement Bond package for November 2022 ballot, including opinion on protected bicycle lanes, and
2. Consider modifications to proposed project list recommended for Community Improvement

Bond funding?

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct staff to solicit additional public opinion research on the proposed Community Improvement Bond package for November 2022 ballot, including opinion on protected bike lanes, and consider modifications to the proposed project list recommended for Community Improvement Bond funding.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

Since December 2021, the Infrastructure Bond Engagement Steering Committee held seven meetings, receiving testimony in writing and virtually, before developing a recommendation for the Salem Community Improvement Bond in April 2022. The Infrastructure Bond Engagement Steering Committee is comprised of Mayor Bennett and Councilors Gonzalez, Hoy, Stapleton and former Councilor Lewis. Councilor Varney was appointed in March 2022 to fill the position vacated by Councilor Lewis.

All material considered by the Committee, in its original form, is featured on the [Infrastructure Bond Engagement Steering Committee <https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/infrastructure-bond-engagement-steering-committee.aspx>](https://www.cityofsalem.net/Pages/infrastructure-bond-engagement-steering-committee.aspx) web page on the City of Salem's website. Recordings of the meetings are available on the [City of Salems public meeting channel on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQLj9RKZNHu4wfYcs_TC0TA>](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQLj9RKZNHu4wfYcs_TC0TA).

Steering Committee Recommended Project List. Project ideas came from community outreach with neighborhood associations, advisory boards and commissions, civic interest groups, individual testimony before the Committee and project submissions through the website. This broad community input and project suggestions from community members helped to shape the Steering Committee recommendation.

In building the recommended package, Steering Committee members considered capital improvement program scoring, geographic spread of benefit from bond projects, and equity and impact on the climate. The Committee also considered the potential impact on operations of new infrastructure investment, looking for ways to decrease and not add to maintenance costs. January 2022 public opinion research to assess public opinion of infrastructure needs and gauge response to the multi-purpose bond concept, showed an overall positive response to the Community Improvement Bond proposal.

Committee members also considered experience of other communities, in-depth interviews from a cross-section of 20 community leaders including business and community leaders, neighborhood associations, employee union representatives and others who are involved or have a possible interest in a funding measure.

Public Opinion Research. The Steering Committee and City Council intend to consider public opinion research before finalizing the proposal and referring the measure voters to consider in November 2022. This will allow for opportunity to receive further feedback on the proposed Community Improvement Bond funding categories and several of the larger proposed projects. No additional funding is required to conduct the poll in late May/early June 2022.

Recommended Funding Categories. Recommended funding for each Community Improvement Bond category is summarized in a chart found in Attachment 1. Conversation in the City Council Work Session on May 16, 2022 mostly centered around projects within the Streets and Sidewalks, and the Parks Improvement categories. Further consideration of projects within the categories is not expected to significantly change funding amounts for each category within the proposed bond but will require a reallocation of resources.

Additional Information. At the May 16, 2022 Work Session, Council asked staff for more information about the proposed projects including bike lanes, bridge weight limits, park play equipment and shelters, and Madrona Avenue sidewalk connections.

- **Bike Lanes.** The Steering Committee recommendation includes two total miles and approximately \$10.9 million of protected, off-street, or buffered bike lanes, including missing links in the currently planned network. These links include the Pringle Creek Trail Connection, a multi-use path connecting Marine Drive and Wallace Marine Park, and bike lane facilities as part of the McGilchrist and State Street projects. Areas proposed for protected or buffered bike facilities not included in the Transportation System Plan (TSP) require a TSP amendment and a public outreach process as additional lane width may impact other policy decisions relating to street tree canopy, planter strips, on-street parking, and right-of-way acquisition from private property. Salem's TSP is set to be updated with public outreach and engagement beginning in July 2022.
- **Bridge Weight Limits.** Bridges that are "load-rated" means that the condition is deteriorating and will need substantial rehabilitation or replacement. While these bridges may last several more years in their current condition, funding to replace the bridges will be needed in the foreseeable future if the condition is not addressed. The four load-rated bridges in the City are Mission Street SE over Pringle Creek (a minor arterial), Liberty Street Bridge NE over Mill Creek (a minor arterial), 17th Street NE over Mill Creek (a minor arterial), and 15th Street NE over Mill Creek (a local street). All four bridges have the same load restrictions as recommended by ODOT bridge engineers due to safety concerns. The restrictions apply to specialized haul vehicles that incorporate closely spaced axles to support heavier loads. The specific restrictions relate to 5, 6, and 7 axle vehicles. The Salem Fire Department will not cross these bridges with fire ladder trucks and water tender trucks due to load restrictions. Fire has estimated a delay of five to seven seconds to response times related to the Liberty Street Bridge, 17th Street or 15th Street crossings. Avoiding the Mission

Street crossing, however, adds about 30 seconds to response times by re-routing to Fairview and 12th Street as the fastest option.

- **Park Playground Equipment.** Salem Parks staff prioritized the top ten parks for equipment replacement based on multiple factors including: vandalized equipment that is cracked, burned, or compromised; equipment that no longer meets safety standards; broken equipment; aged equipment made from materials that can no longer be produced; aged equipment that is compromised from high use; and equipment with fall protection issues. New equipment will be selected through a public outreach process so that neighborhoods can pick from playground options that would be suit their neighborhood park and users. The estimated costs were prepared to accommodate new layouts and changes to fall protection areas as needed. Staff were also asked about parks that had equipment removed due to safety issues and if they were going to receive new equipment as part of this proposed bond package. New equipment has been replaced in these parks, the latest being a spin-max tower placed in Nelson Park on May 17.
- **Covered Areas in Parks.** The Comprehensive Park System Master Plan recommends that the City provide shelters as a standard facility in community and urban parks, and specifically larger, reservable picnic facilities to meet the growing needs of the community. Staff used the following criteria for proposing the reservable shelters at Bush's Pasture Park, Geer Park, Orchard Heights Park, and McKay School Park:
 - Classified as a community or urban park
 - Developed or partly developed parks
 - Park lacks a large reservable shelter.
 - Park has a master plan identifying a project opportunity.
- **Madrona Avenue Sidewalk Cost Estimate.** To meet collector street standards in the Transportation System Plan, Madrona Avenue needs to be widened from Croisan Creek Road S to Balsam Drive S. A collector street includes two travel lanes, two bicycle lanes, curb, and sidewalk. To add these elements, the street will need to be reconstructed to widen the cross-section, replace failing pavement, correct drainage issues, incorporate stormwater treatment and stormwater detention facilities, relocate utilities, and complete ADA improvements. There are topographic challenges that will require retaining walls and a stream crossing that will require permitting and likely mitigation strategies. The estimate has been reduced from \$8.5 million as shown in prior Steering Committee meetings to \$8.2 million.

Possible Project List Adjustments. Projects recommended by the Steering Committee for funding are listed in detail in Attachment 2. Discussion focused on how or whether to increase funding for Ward 7, with possible addition of a missing Madrona Street sidewalk connection, and funding for protected bike lanes.

- **Historic Bridge Railings, Peace Plaza and Pringle Creek Trail.** Suggestions to reduce funding in other areas included possibly removing projects such as improvements to two historic bridge pedestrian railings, the Peace Plaza area of the Civic Center, and the Pringle Creek Trail connection (if other funding can be made available). If these projects are removed

from the project list, \$9,225,000 would be available for reallocation. If removed, however, the Pringle Creek Trail connection (a multi-modal pathway/off-road bike facility) could not be funded with Urban Renewal in its entirety within the bond time frame of the next ten years. Leaving the Pringle Creek Trail connection as proposed and removing the historic bridge pedestrian railings and Peace Plaza improvements would make \$5,650,000 available for other projects.

- **Pedestrian Improvements.** The current recommended project list includes a category for safer pedestrian crossings budgeted at \$7.5 million in investment. This would improve approximately 15 pedestrian crossings, depending on the complexity of the roadway. The current list also includes improvements to Fisher Road, State Street, and Pringle Road, and these individual road projects include a total of seven pedestrian crossings. Given these project-related crossing improvements, a \$3.5 million reduction from this category would leave \$4 million for safer crossing improvements throughout the City and still result in achieving roughly the same number of pedestrian crossing improvements.
- **Other Categories.** There are also two other separate sidewalk improvement categories: 1) for sidewalk infill, or missing sidewalks; at \$7.5 million and 2) sidewalk replacement where sidewalk panels are failing at \$10 million. Reducing either of these categories may also free up funding for other priorities.

Summary of potential project reductions:

- \$3,650,000 from Historic Bridge Railings
- \$2,000,000 from Civic Center category associated with Peace Plaza renovation
- \$3,575,000 from the Pringle Creek Trail Connection project
- \$3,500,000 from Safer Pedestrian Crossings
- \$0-\$7,500,000 from Sidewalk Infill
- \$0-\$10,000,000 from Sidewalk Repair

Next Steps

The Steering Committee will meet in early June to review the polling results, take further testimony, and consider any recommended changes to the bond package to the City Council. The measure needs to be formally referred by the City Council's July 25, 2022 meeting for the November ballot.

BACKGROUND:

Through the City Council Policy Agenda in 2018, the City Council addressed the need for a general obligation bonding strategy. After a recommendation from the City's Finance Committee, the Mayor appointed four Councilors and himself for the Infrastructure Bond Engagement Steering Committee. The bond will total \$300 million, which will be issued strategically over a 10-year period. Due to expiring bonds, refinancing of current debt to lower rates, and an increase in assessed value of properties in Salem, the bond would not increase tax rates. Bond funded projects would save money currently spent on repairs and maintenance of outdated facilities and equipment and improve energy

efficiency.

Courtney Knox Busch
Strategic Initiatives Manager

Attachments:

1. Funding for each Community Improvement Bond category
2. Steering Committee Recommendation: Community Improvement Bond project list