

Chair Hollinger and members of the Environmental Planning Commission,

I am concerned that the approach taken to develop the CIP/GO Bond document does not provide adequate information or clarity as to how funds will be spent, in addition to across the board cuts for all departments. In previous years, we have been able to see line items and specific projects for most departments - particularly large departments like DMD. This year, I am concerned that the broad spending categories give neither good direction to City departments nor assurance to Albuquerque residents that these funds will be spent in a way that meets our needs.

I am particularly interested in how funds will be spent for the DMD Streets Program. While the GO Bond Book states that the funds will be concentrated on rehabilitation and deficiency correction, it is not clear to me what that means. In past years, line items for things like ADA improvements, safety and intersection improvements, the Vision Zero program, and specific listed projects gave me some confidence that the City would invest in projects to make our community safer for people using all modes of transportation to get around our community.

In a city that consistently ranks high for traffic deaths and serious injuries, we need to make a concerted effort to improve our roadways. The programs listed above received small pockets of funding in the overall budget, but at least showed some commitment to protecting the lives of residents. Rehabilitation and deficiency correction is critical work, but there is no guarantee this focus will lead to safer streets. I have been honored to participate in conversations about how we can use the street maintenance program to make small "complete streets" improvements on roadways across our city in recent years, but many of those improvements have been made possible or more effective by funds specifically earmarked for safety projects.

In some ways, I can see an argument for broadening the categories in the budget - as a former City staff person and as a concerned resident, I understand the frustration that can come from overly specific dedication of funds that does not always allow for flexibility or creativity. That being said, when there is little to no clarity on how the funds will be spent, I worry that funds will easily be pulled away to projects that don't increase safety or serve the communities that need investments the most - and toward pet projects that may create more dangerous infrastructure or reduce the already limited amount of space that is dedicated to our most vulnerable road users - people walking, biking, using mobility devices, and using transit.

While I am most focused on the potential impacts on traffic safety initiatives because that is an area I am most passionate about and familiar with, I think that we could see a similar impact on other departments, like Parks and Rec and Transit, where there is similar lack of clarity as to how funds will be spent. Not to mention a seemingly drastic cut to the Transit budget without explanation, in a time when that Department has been working hard to identify ways to build a more effective transit system.

I hope that the EPC will push back on this approach to ensure that there is accountability and that the funds will be spent in the most effective and beneficial way for all residents of the city.

Thank you for your consideration,

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