

October 26, 2011

Share    **City Council's Budget Committee Votes 2-2 on Sidewalk Repair Responsibility Shift, Keeping the Issue Alive**

The Los Angeles City Council's Budget and Finance Committee voted 2-2 last week to shift to property owners the responsibility for sidewalk repairs due to tree root damage, including from city trees. Councilman Parks and Councilman Rosendahl voted for the responsibility shift. Councilman Englander and Councilman Koretz voted against it. The tie vote means the issue can still move to the full City Council for consideration at any time. The sidewalk issue affects all residential and commercial property owners.

The Council's Public Works Committee voted the measure down, 2-1.

"Fortunately, some committee members acknowledged the lack of a plan to implement the proposed ordinance, and that it would be irresponsible to repeal existing law under such circumstances," said Cary Brazeman, founder of LA Neighbors United, which opposes the responsibility shift. "For whatever reason, this issue continues to bedevil the city, though on the surface it seems to be one of the more easily fixable infrastructure problems, if only there were the will to do it."



Councilmembers asked the Bureau of Street Services to report back in 60 days on four potential options to help address the sidewalk situation: (1) A bond offering to fund repairs; (2) Special assessment districts to fund repairs; (3) A point-of-service plan that would require all property owners to repair their sidewalks at the time utilities are connected; and (4) A point-of-permit plan that would require all property owners to repair their sidewalks at the time they seek building permits.

Councilmembers did not discuss the concept of bonding an on-bill financing program that could enable property owners to finance repairs over time on their property tax bill or DWP bill. Such a program could allow interested property owners, no matter where they live in the city, to obtain financing for repairs, with only program participants footing the bill. Councilmembers also did not discuss the related issues of tree trimming and root pruning.

The city has the financial capacity to fix the sidewalk problem over time, starting with the worst cases. In fact, as Councilman Englander noted last week at the meeting, diligent efforts are being made in some council districts to do just that. That's a good start, while the Bureau of Street Services could inventory the condition of all city sidewalks. Demonstration projects could follow that allow the city to experiment with different repair approaches on a community-wide basis. As current tree and sidewalk problems are fixed, a system of shared responsibility potentially could be phased in.

Stay in touch on this issue. If you're not receiving email alerts directly from LA Neighbors United, please sign up at [www.LAneighbors.org](http://www.LAneighbors.org). You can read more about the sidewalks issue on the website under "City of Broken Sidewalks."