



"Working Together for a Healthier Richmond"

Candice Reid
Clerk, Richmond City Council
900 East Broad Street
Suite 200
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: 3/22/18 Governmental Operations Committee, RES 2018-R025

Miss Reid,

On 3/22, City Council's Governmental Operations Committee will take up Resolution number 2018-R025 regarding the safety of city-owned sidewalks. As the City's public health professionals, we write to support the ordinance as proposed for the purpose of improving health outcomes for Richmond residents.

Without this proposed resolution, Richmond lacks the needed means to ensure that pedestrian travel remains safe and accessible to all residents and visitors. Nationally recognized guidelines for street design from the Federal Highway Administration recommend that state and local jurisdictions maintain and expand accessible pedestrian networks. This generally accepted directive must, however, account for the ongoing construction and redevelopment needs in our city. Whenever a lot or building in the city undergoes demolition, rehabilitation, or construction, the adjacent public right of way may be impacted in order to accommodate the redevelopment activity but it should not eliminate the safe passage of people walking to travel throughout our city's commercial and residential areas.

When sidewalks are not available, pedestrians of all different ages and abilities are forced to share the street with vehicles, which puts them at risk of injury or death in the event of a crash with vehicle traffic. In Richmond, this occurs frequently, but unnecessarily, in conjunction with construction activities. Last year, 22 people died on Richmond streets and the greatest portion of those fatalities, 28%, were pedestrians. Also in 2017, there were 120 crashes in the city that involved pedestrians. Resolution 2018-R025 offers an opportunity for the city to lower these numbers and to improve the safety of people walking throughout Richmond. The expectation in Richmond should simply be that redevelopment projects provide a temporary walkway to allow the city to continue growing while accommodating the population already here. This would bring us into accordance with VDOT's Manual for Work Zone Accessibility, which explains that "alterations to the street/roadway should not decrease the accessibility of the existing (pre work zone) pedestrian route."

We encourage this committee and, ultimately, full council to pass this resolution. This is a policy shared by our peer cities across the US, including Washington D.C. to our North and Raleigh to our South, along with many others, and their experiences can serve as examples to Richmond as we look to implement this resolution.

Sarah Powers
Chronic Disease Prevention, Transportation Analyst