



March 8, 2015

Dear Fellow East Siders:

This week's letter discusses the City's capital investment program, State aid for school construction and snow removal from sidewalks.

Last Thursday, the City Council approved a [Resolution](#) I introduced establishing a commission to review and report on the City's capital improvement and investment program. The Resolution will address an issue I raised in an [Op-ed](#) I wrote that the Providence Journal published concerning the City's need for an infrastructure plan. The Commission will prepare a report containing an inventory of the outstanding bond issues, analysis of the City's credit rating and capital finance costs and a discussion of alternative capital projects that have been proposed in the City's departments. I am hopeful that the Commission's Report will allow us to look at our individual bond financing decisions within a broader framework that allows any single project to be weighed against all potential alternatives, rather than exclusively on its own merits. In this way we can ensure that the City will have the capacity to complete its core "must have" projects before devoting scarce resources to other "nice to have" projects.

State Representative Aaron Regunberg has introduced [legislation](#) to revamp the State's school construction aid program. The legislation (a version of which passed the Rhode Island Senate, but not the Rhode Island House) would create a new State office to review school construction projects based on the existing program in Massachusetts (which is working well). His bill also would create a tangible funding commitment to support school construction programs, which would lift a moratorium on new projects that the General Assembly has maintained since 2007. Given the City's extensive backlog of deferred maintenance, this type of legislation would be important to the City's educational program and economic development. I introduced a [Resolution](#) in support of the legislation's passage.

There are many lessons to learn from this season's snowfall and the City's program to address it. One issue is the congestion caused when pedestrians share narrow streets with cars. These pedestrians often walk in the street because the residents and property owners are not shoveling the walk in front of their property, a City requirement that is currently not being effectively enforced. With that said, I recently reviewed the ordinance containing this requirement and discovered a potential gap in its language for owners of property on street corners. The current ordinance does not necessarily cover the portion of the sidewalk going from the street corner to area bordering someone's property; therefore, I introduced an [Ordinance](#) clarifying this responsibility. The Ordinance Committee will review this legislation at a meeting **tomorrow night (Monday, March 9) at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall, Third Floor**. The ordinance itself is far from a complete solution; for example, some owners of corner lots have informed me that snow plowing patterns create especially high snow banks at corners, making their task almost impossible. Also, as mentioned above, the City currently does not have a robust program to require anyone to shovel their sidewalks, as a walk around almost any neighborhood will confirm. With that said, we need to address the legislation along with a number of programmatic reforms to provide the proper rules to require property owners to provide passable sidewalks in the winter.

Sincerely,