



May 22, 2007

Pedro Ramos
Managing Director
City of Philadelphia
1401 John F. Kennedy Blvd., Room 1430
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Mr. Ramos:

I am writing you today to express my concerns about the City of Philadelphia's plans for a coordinated street furniture program. It is laudable that Philadelphia is interested in undertaking this type of long-term project, which could benefit people that live in, work in, or are just visiting Philadelphia. Based on my reading of the request for proposals and discussions with my colleagues, I have a number of concerns about Philadelphia's initiative to improve its street furniture program.

There is much room for improvement in terms of how the street furniture program could improve the environment and the air quality for Philadelphians. Ensuring careful placement of bus shelters, in both commercial *and* residential areas of the city, would ensure that Philadelphia residents have a reasonable walking distance to at least one public transportation option that has a *covered shelter*, which is currently not the case in many residential areas in Northeast and West Philadelphia without such shelters. People might opt out of riding transit and use their cars more, especially in inclement or extreme weather. Carefully planning this program could lead to more individuals beginning to ride on SEPTA, increased availability of Center City parking for those visiting from out-of-town, reduced traffic congestion in Center City, and improved air quality.

Philadelphia's request for proposals is not sufficiently comprehensive in terms of the types of street furniture it addresses. The Council agrees that improvements to the existing system of bus shelters and trash cans are necessary, but there are many other street furniture elements that have been inadequately addressed. It would be nice to see elements such as more bike racks and lockers, recycling containers, vending machines for city maps, and poster surfaces for residents to place flyers and signs in an organized fashion. If Philadelphia is to work on improving street furniture, it should devote the energy required to seriously address all the issues, not just some of them.

Not enough community input was incorporated into Philadelphia's program. Based on my research and discussion with colleagues, other communities that have addressed street furniture, such as Haddonfield, New Jersey or Toronto, Ontario, Canada have incorporated more public dialogue and community input into the process. Engaging the community ultimately allows for a better end product that more accurately reflects the needs and wants of the people who will benefit from the project.

The priorities in evaluation of submissions to the RFP weight revenues to the city heavily, at the expense of maximizing the benefits to city residents, workers, and visitors. The city should weight the specific improvements that street furniture elements bring to quality of life at least as heavily as financial considerations.

If you have any questions about the Council's position in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at 215-567-4004, ext. 116.

Sincerely,

Joseph Otis Minott, Esq.
Executive Director