

From: [Bennet Huber](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Cost of new sidewalks is \$414 million!?
Date: Monday, July 23, 2018 9:09:56 PM

I apologize if this is not the appropriate email alias to send this concern to, please forward as necessary.

I was just browsing through the latest version of currents and was struck by the \$414 million dollar estimate for adding new sidewalks in Shoreline, since it seemed absurdly high to me. I broke out my 8th grade math skills and did some rough back of the envelope calculations to see if it made sense:

- The latest US GDP was \$18.57 trillion. At \$414 million/70 miles, we have $18.57e9 \text{ dollars} * 70 \text{ miles} / 414e6 \text{ dollars} = 3128 \text{ miles}$ of sidewalk you could build at that price with the total economic output of the entire country in a year. This is barely enough to cross the continent once, yet personal experience suggests there are hundreds of roads that currently accomplish this feat.
- This article - <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2012/01/smaller-towns-building-sidewalks-isnt-always-simple/920/> - suggests the average cost of installing a sidewalk from scratch in Missoula, MT is $\sim \$5000 / 50'$. Using our same basic math skills, the cost of installing 70 miles worth of sidewalk should be $70 * 5280/50 * 5000 = \$37 \text{ million}$. So sidewalks in Shoreline, WA apparently cost over 10x those in Missoula, MT.
- According to <http://www.shorelinewa.gov/home/showdocument?id=9735>, there are ~ 21000 houses in Shoreline. $414,000,000 / 21,000 = \$19,700$ is the amount every household in Shoreline will ultimately pay for this project. For \$20000/house it seems like you should be able to install sidewalks in front of literally every house in Shoreline, possibly twice over. Hell, if you give me \$20000 I'll make sure to install a sidewalk in front of mine :).

Obviously, my first thought after doing this exercise was the \$414 million number in the newsletter was simply a typo. After some cursory googling, however, I think I've found the original document it came from (<http://cosweb.ci.shoreline.wa.us/uploads/attachments/cck/council/staffreports/2018/staffreport060418-9a.pdf> page 7), and it looks like a lot of thought went into it. Unfortunately, I couldn't find any explanation as to what methodology was used to come up with those estimates. I can only conclude it was either severely flawed, I'm missing some non-obvious extremely expensive cost of adding sidewalks, or someone is making a lot more money building sidewalks than they should be. As you're ultimately in charge of planning and executing the project I thought it best to bring this to your attention.

Yours Truly,

Bennet Huber

PS - I fully support upgrading and adding new sidewalks in Shoreline, I just think the price tag is a bit high.