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Another Voice: Public's voice needed in infrastructure discussion

Another Voice
Aug 24, 2020

By Lynda Schneekloth

The Grandmothers Council is concerned with the protection of life now and into the future and so are delighted to hear about infrastructure projects from our elected officials.

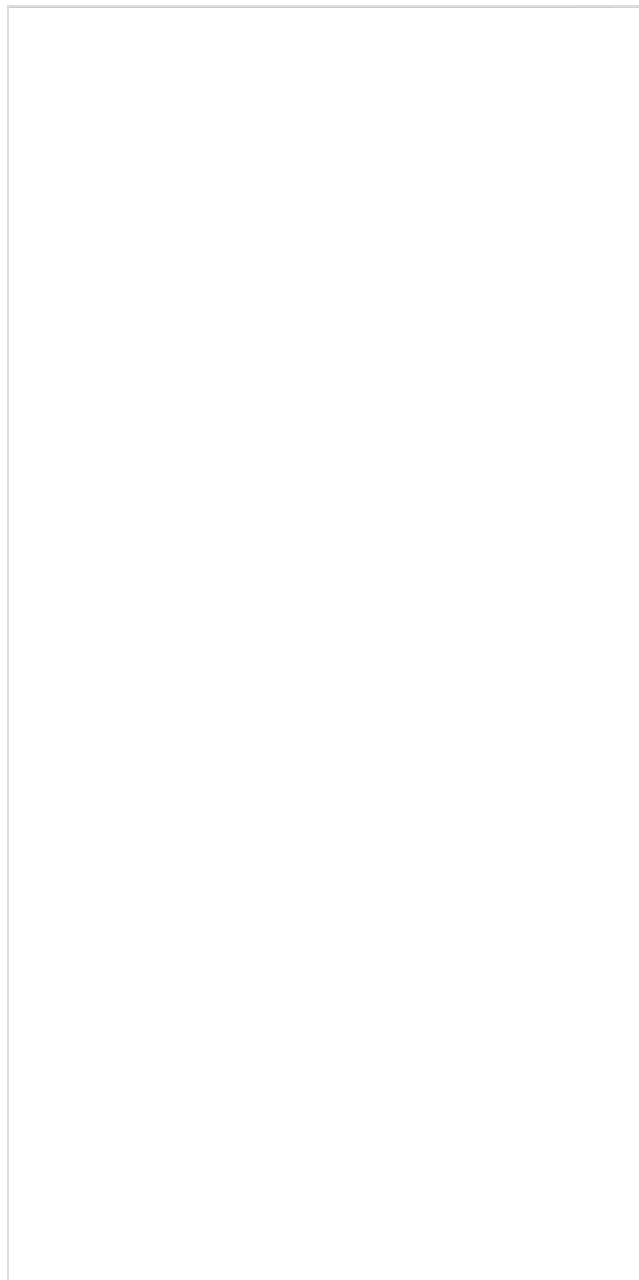
Why infrastructure? This is the technical term for our homes and shared places. It is our “exoskeleton,”

without which we cannot live, and includes parks, patterns of homes, road, utilities, etc.

If we are paying attention, we'll notice that the quality of our exoskeleton is not equitably distributed and that it is constantly changing. If we are really paying attention, we may wonder who is making the decisions – mostly not us, although we do have opinions.

We are coming to a moment of significant transportation infrastructure investments in Western New York because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for economic development and job creation. Mayor Byron Brown's proposal for more than \$200 million will improve the quality of life for city residents if federal legislation is passed.

We are also hearing talk about a major infrastructure project that may change the face of our city. This possible



project is a very different scale from sidewalk improvements and has included the transformation of the Scajaquada Expressway, the restoration of Humboldt Parkway, the light rail out to Amherst and North Campus, the demolition of the Skyway and construction of new roads, passenger train improvements between Buffalo and Niagara Falls, and so on.

This post-Covid decision is critical because it must also address our response to climate change, the biodiversity crisis, racial and economic injustices and a crisis in democracy.

The Grandmothers argue that this should be a public conversation to establish criteria for selection: does it solve a transportation problem or create one; does it create “community wealth”; does it advance New York

State's commitment to the elimination of carbon to meet climate goals; does it support environmental justice; does it heal the wounds of past injustices; does it support local jobs and labor unions; does it restore our natural heritage; and so on.

Projects that have been put into the public realm should be evaluated on publicly agreed upon criteria while our eyes and hearts are focused on the impacts on the generations to come and the challenges they will face. It is time that we stop decisions by a select few based on "the economy" narrowly defined.

We are a community of people, caretakers of our natural and cultural heritage.

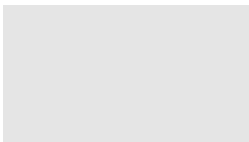
Let's have this conversation about investments in our community for the well-being of all. Let the infrastructure conversation begin.

Lynda Schneekloth is a member of the Grandmothers Council.

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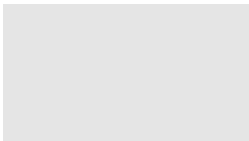
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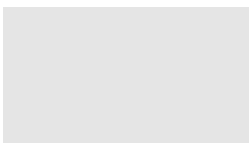
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