

Statement to Pittsburgh City Council on the Knight Foundation grant

My name is Ziggy Edwards and I'm a resident of The Run. First, I want to thank you for listening to me today—and I sincerely hope you consider what I am saying. Last time I stood here in front of City Council, you were about to approve capital budget funding for the highly problematic Mon-Oakland Connector. One of the things I said that day was, "Your vote on this issue will be a public record of whose interests you represent."

Today I'm back to talk about the \$410K Knight Foundation grant you are about to accept. That's a huge chunk of money—all directed at "teaching" residents about autonomous vehicles. And it's no coincidence that the "deep engagement" targets residents of Hazelwood, Greenfield, and Glen Hazel—who just happen to live in the path of the proposed Mon-Oakland Connector.

THIS IS NOT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. Completely missing from the picture are public accountability and decision making about solutions for our communities. This looks more like a marketing campaign, a desperate attempt at image control. If the Mon-Oakland Connector truly benefited those of us who live in the communities it affects, the City wouldn't need so much help selling the idea.

The cost just for the roadway infrastructure for this project is projected at \$23 million. Operating costs per passenger for micro transit tend to be extremely high. Part of the reason we're not sold on the plan is that it directs a high amount of scarce resources to what is essentially a luxury transportation project for universities and developers. You're not going to be able to convince our communities we need the Mon-Oakland Connector. We are well aware of what we need. For years, in some cases decades, we've been asking for straightforward transportation and safety improvements—such as sidewalks on the hazardous, City-owned parcels along Irvine Street, weekend service on the 93, bus shelters, and traffic calming speed humps. Fixing every single one of those critical problems probably wouldn't approach \$23 million.

We refuse to be a sacrifice zone for development of Hazelwood Green and treated as guinea pigs for an unproven technology using a road that would permanently degrade Panther Hollow, The Run, and Schenley Park. The proposed route raises questions about housing speculation and resident displacement. On top of that, the road may undermine desperately needed water and sewer remediation work. Yet City officials continue to dismiss our concerns in their undemocratic, single-minded pursuit of development. They won't listen to us because their plan is for us to go away.

It's not autonomous vehicle technology that has us scratching our heads, it's the City's disregard for our neighborhoods and public parks. Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald told my neighbor regarding the Mon-Oakland Connector, "This isn't for you; this is for the universities to get down to the Hazelwood [Green] plan." In other words—it's not for us, it's against us. The Mon-Oakland Connector

plan is wrong. Spending \$410K—regardless of where it comes from—to prop up this plan is a shame and a colossal waste of money.