

SAPCC Transportation Committee

May 28, 2019

Present: Pat Thompson (chairing), Kim Frair, Karen Nelson, Liam Stewart, Patty George, Betty Wheeler

Guests: Ava Mayers, Harold Green

Minutes

The April minutes were approved with the addition of last names to the committee members. Karen moved, Kim seconded. Approved unanimously.

Extend the Greenway

Pat attended a preliminary meeting that described the feasibility study commissioned by Midtown Greenway Coalition and its partners to turn the railroad bridge at 27th Avenue into a connection between Minneapolis and St. Paul. An official announcement will be held on June 6, after they have had time to discuss the results with the railroad (owners of the bridge) and Hennepin County. Liam, our official rep, is not able to attend that meeting; Pat can attend. A drone flew along the bridge to see what condition it is in. Options include the railroad discontinuing use (currently one train a day), the railroad sharing half the deck width, and a couple of others that will be described more fully at/after the June 6 meeting. Hennepin County is the primary partner because more of the bridge is in their county, but Ramsey County is also important because there needs to be something to connect *to* here and the county rather than the city is the entity that deals with the railroads. Possible connections include U of M East Bank campus as well as the Grand Round at Pelham and the St. Anthony Ave. spur (which connects to Ayd Mill).

Potholes

Betty described the terrible state of potholes on streets north of Hampden on the approaches to Urban Growler and Bang Brewing, such as Bradford and Hersey. Hampden itself between Charles and Territorial is bad. The committee urged SAPCC staff to use social media, the list serve, and NextDoor to encourage SAP residents and business folk to call St. Paul Public Works to complain about potholes.

Cleveland Avenue rebuild options

We were stood up by the planners, and so had no new information on option E other than what Pat had learned from them and shared at the April meeting. No data on the pedestrian counts yet.

However, option E will clearly widen the street and the pedestrian crossing distances, narrow the boulevards and won't calm traffic. Everyone present agreed that option E is not favored, nor were A or B for the same reasons.

Our focus was on C and D: off-road path on the east side, but the question is with or without parking on the west side. C has parking and D does not.

Ava, a guest attending who lives on Cleveland, favors having parking for guests and times when contractors are needed in her home. This was heard from other Cleveland residents at other sessions.

Committee members referred to the off-street/alley parking count that was done, which showed almost every residential building on the west side of Cleveland having off-street parking, the vast majority with multiple

spots. In addition, a Raymond neighbor is carrying a petition to change all of the street parking south of Hendon to “no parking without a permit” instead of the current “1 hour without a permit,” which means city enforcement can be tightened and could result in less unpermitted parking once people realize they will be ticketed (and therefore more spots will be available for people with permits on adjacent blocks to Cleveland).

Patty advocated keeping parking on Cleveland for businesses. Other committee members noted that there is only one retail business on this stretch of Cleveland: Mim’s. The owner of Mim’s was asked before this meeting what he thought about street parking on Cleveland, and he said that while he cares that his neighbors care about keeping the parking, for his business it is not critical.

There was discussion of whether the University can make their rented State Fair parking lot a lower cost than their other lots to increase its use (to compensate for its remoteness and need to bus from it), or work with the fraternities and sororities on Cleveland to do their week-long car storage some other way than on the city streets. As long as city parking permits are only \$15/year and University parking is \$69/month there will be a problem. Some of the fraternities and sororities have 40 parking permits.

The committee noted that in essence, we are talking about approximately 90 parking spots on Cleveland, about 65 of them north of Commonwealth that are well-used and 25 south of Commonwealth that are lightly used. 60% of the cars parked on Cleveland north of Commonwealth don’t have a permit displayed, according to the Kimley-Horn study.

Option C would include bumpouts around the parking spots, which is good in terms of creating a shorter pedestrian crossing. However, Pat described something she heard from Environment Committee member Karlyn Eckman: When parking spots are not used but are surrounded by bumpouts, car drivers sometimes try to pass other drivers on the right in the parking lane and then run into the bumpout at the far end. (This is in addition to the problems that bumpouts can cause with snow clearance, especially at the edges.)

Karen acknowledged that for either option C or D (which has a two-way bike path on one side of the street adjacent to the sidewalk), when bike-riders make connections at the ends of the path to bike lanes on opposite sides of the street, that is statistically somewhat more dangerous than if the bike riders had been on the same side of the street. BUT there is much research showing that protected lanes and off-street paths encourage more biking (and the more bikers there are, the safer it gets). The Franklin Avenue bridge is a good example of really protecting bike-riders. You see families with children on that bridge.

Pat urged everyone to remember that this is a 50- to 80-year rebuild of the street and that we live in an era of climate crisis. We should be setting an example. Cars are a major source of carbon emissions. St. Paul says it will decrease vehicle miles traveled 40% by 2040; how will that happen? 33% of St. Paul is paved streets and parking (whether public or private). If we are committed to taking responsibility for our role in climate change, this is a place to start. Even electric cars are not the real solution: we need to move to walking, biking, transit because each car is a waste of space that makes everything else farther apart, less human scale, and more expensive.

Betty described how the Raymond Phase 3 design, which kept parking on one side, has turned out badly. They could have had a narrower street that calmed traffic but instead it has speeded up and people are afraid to even park their cars there (within bumpouts) because it doesn’t seem safe.

Patty advocated keeping parking on Cleveland because we have snow and elderly people, and it’s not realistic that we become New York City. We can’t expect everyone to start biking tomorrow.

When people are moving in, if there's no parking on Cleveland, what will they do? someone asked. They would use the alley or the side street, depending on where the home is located. Liam pointed out that many people in the world live in places with much less access to vehicles from their homes than would be the case if there was no parking on Cleveland (in terms of proximity).

In general comments we have heard in meetings and by email, one person has advocated for option B (in-street bike lanes, no parking – out of concern for pedestrians being adjacent to the off-street bike path). Otherwise, we have only heard support for options C and D.

If the Cleveland planners are committed to option E, Karen has an alternate idea to have the multi-use path on the east be for northbound bikes and add one in-street bike lane on the west side, which would be a hardscape-protected southbound lane (either with no parking or with the bike lane protected by the parking lane). There would be a pedestrian refuge of some sort at intersections, either a few feet wide or at parking lane width.

At this point the chair entertained a motion. Karen moved a resolution in support of option D. It was seconded by Betty.

- Whereas District 12's draft 10-year plan, transportation section, and the Saint Paul 2040 plan:
- clearly place the safety of the most vulnerable users first (pedestrians, people on bikes),
 - call for the narrowest crossing distances for pedestrians, and
 - advocate protected bike facilities where possible, and
- Whereas The District 12 draft 10-year plan also identifies that the cost of parking is borne by us all and that pricing should be used to manage street parking, and
- Whereas We are in a climate crisis that will necessitate a wholesale change in how our transportation system — currently 29% of greenhouse gas output — works, leading to fewer privately owned motorized vehicles and denser land use, and
- Whereas Saint Paul pledges to be carbon-neutral by 2050, and
- Whereas The rebuilt Cleveland Avenue will be with us for at least 50 years
- Whereas The rebuilt Cleveland Avenue can serve as model for how to make a street that fits into our climate-conscious future, prioritizing pedestrians and bicyclists, and
- Whereas Cleveland Avenue is currently only 31–32' wide, cuing drivers to travel around the speed limit
- Whereas All parties agree that a wider street cues drivers to go faster, and that adding 12' of bike lane to the street will visually make the street appear wider to car drivers (as evidenced by the rebuild of Raymond Phase 3), and
- Whereas All parties agree that increasing vehicle speed is *not* a desired outcome of the rebuild, and that in fact *decreased* speeds would be desirable, and
- Whereas The “door zone” that exists when an unprotected bike lane is placed next to parked cars is dangerous, especially on a downhill slope as exists on the southbound side of Cleveland and
- Whereas Bike lanes are continually blocked by delivery vehicles, parked and standing cars, and unplowed snow, and
- Whereas Minimizing the amount of pavement decreases water runoff and decreases cost to build and maintain, and
- Whereas Approximately 65 parking spots are in use on Cleveland, while thousands of other people use the street in other ways every day, and
- Whereas Intersection bumpouts that create parking bays, while good for narrowing intersections for pedestrians, cause problems with snow plowing and are less ideal than eliminating parking completely, and
- Whereas Almost every residence and business along Cleveland has off-street parking along the alley, and

- Whereas The University of Minnesota could do more to encourage use of its paid lot at the State Fair to accommodate current car parking on Cleveland, and
- Whereas It's likely all parking on side streets adjacent to Cleveland will become permit-only (rather than 1-hour without a permit, as it is currently south of Hendon), making it easier for parking enforcement to discourage illegal parking and free up side street spots, now therefore
- Be it resolved The St. Anthony Park Community Council and its Transportation Committee endorses option D of the five options identified by the planning team, because:
- It has the narrowest street width, cuing drivers to drive slowly (26'),
 - It has the narrowest crossing distance for pedestrians without bumpouts (26'),
 - It has the widest boulevards, buffering residences from vehicles and creating a green, traffic-calming environment with good growing space for trees over time (16' on the west side, 6–12' on the east side),
 - It has the least paved area of any of the options (45')
 - It has the safest bike and pedestrian facilities for all types of users: an off-road path (8') and 5' sidewalk on the east side of the street, which will be cleared of snow by the U of M.
 - It fulfills a piece of the St. Paul Bike Plan.

The motion was approved with 4 in favor and 1 opposed, no abstentions.

Then a second motion was made by Karen and seconded by Liam:

The St. Anthony Park Community Council and its Transportation Committee opposes any plan for Cleveland Avenue between Como and Larpenteur Avenues that widens the street level to include unprotected, in-street bike lanes because this design would:

- increase the crossing width for pedestrians by 12'
- leave south-bound bike riders on the side away from the U campus, which is often the riders' destination or point of entry to the street
- allow the bike lanes to be blocked by delivery vehicles, ride drop-offs, and temporary parking
- be encroached by parked cars in winter when snow is not cleared sufficiently from the parking spots
- create a dangerous door zone and parallel-parking zone on the downhill side, where bike riders will be traveling at the highest rate of speed

This motion passed unanimously.

Committee members wondered what SAPCC can do to work with the University to ameliorate the permitless (and to some extent the permitted) student parking in the neighborhood. Pat explained why parking at the U costs as much as it does (as a large employer/people magnet, the University is required to take part in a transit management plan, which works to discourage driving vs. transit and a major part of that is through parking cost); but it seems that the transit pass cost is still pretty high and not enough of an inducement (\$114/semester for students, for instance).

Walking tour of reopening the grid in South St. Anthony Park

Don't forget – Sunday, June 9, 1 p.m. Meet on Cromwell at Wabash (at the east end of the railroad bridge that crosses highway 280) for a walking tour with urban geographer Bill Lindeke. We'll end at Bang Brewing around 3 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.