Transit for Livable Communities

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Dear St. Paul City Councilmembers:

Transit for Livable Communities provided an award to the City of Saint Paul for the *Griggs Street Bikeway* in 2009. This letter affirms our continued support for this important project and explains why it rose to the top in our initial selection process. We appreciate the scope of the public engagement process led by the City of Saint Paul Public Works department; we believe that through this process there has been a demonstration of need consistent with the goals and expectations that underlie the federal nonmotorized transportation program.

Traffic circles were one of the design options that received support from community members but have recently raised increased community concern. Traffic circles have been heralded across the country as one of the most effective tools for reducing crashes and the severity of crashes. They allow for traffic calming while still providing full access to all road users. Slowing the speed of traffic, especially at crossings, is a very important aspect of making streets work better for bicyclists and pedestrians.. Traffic circles do this quite well without requiring the loss of momentum for those riding bicycles. This makes them a good tool for bicycle boulevards.

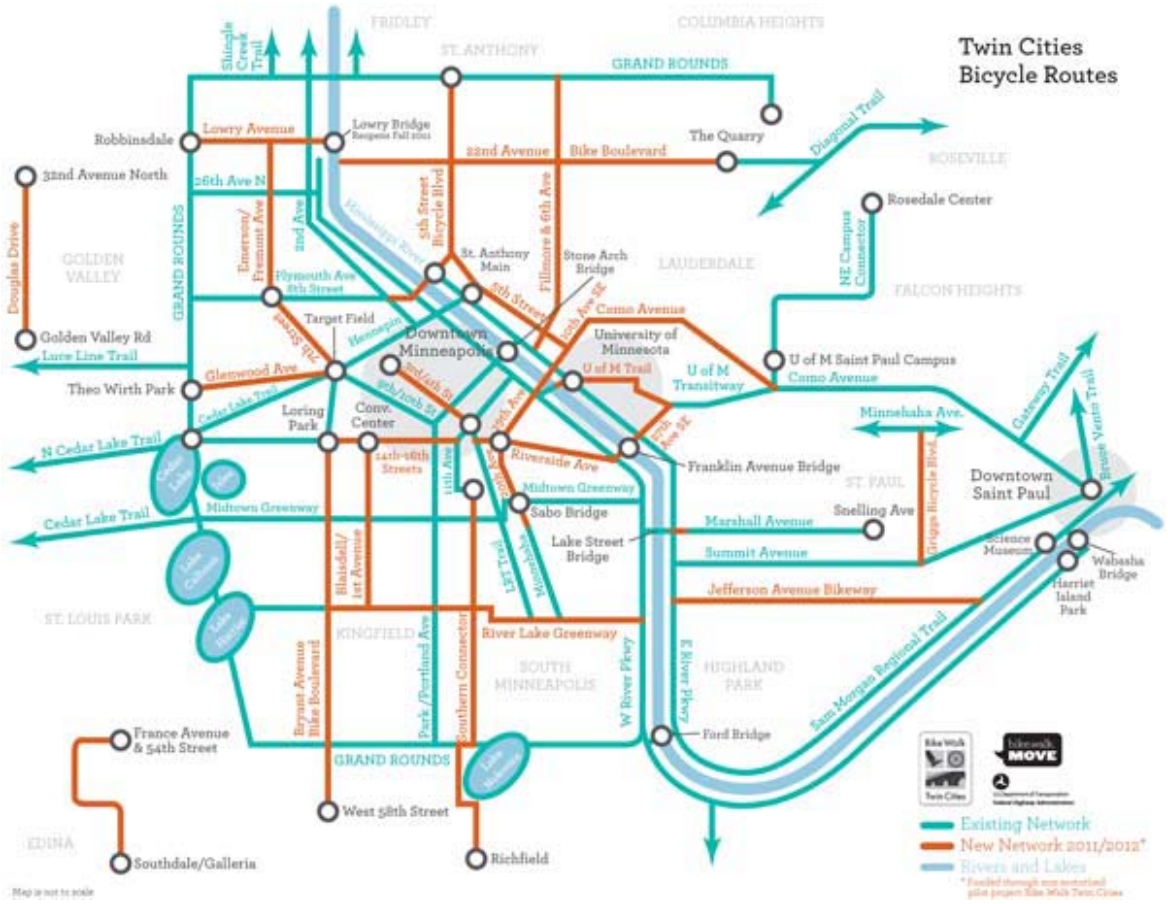
Numerous other cities have embraced traffic circles. In Seattle, traffic circles have proven to be so successful in reducing crashes that the City has installed more than 1,000 of them in the last several decades. Demand is so high that neighborhoods desiring traffic circles must fill out an application and join a waiting list. The City of Minneapolis continues to use traffic circles for traffic calming on bicycle boulevards and other residential streets. Madison, another snow-climate city, uses traffic circles extensively. A City of Madison fact sheet states:

> The Madison Traffic Engineering Division has installed traffic circles (round raised islands) in the center of several residential intersections to reduce the speed of traffic and the number of traffic crashes occurring at these locations. We, and many other cities, have found that traffic circles have been very effective in reducing speeds on local streets. By decreasing speed, drivers will have a better chance of avoiding collisions with cross traffic and are more likely to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians.

Other measures to make Griggs a more bicycle and pedestrian friendly street were also discussed at public meetings, including pedestrian-scale lighting, pedestrian ramps, pavement markings,

crosswalks, curb extensions, and strategies such as dynamic speed display signs to slow traffic on cross streets identified by residents as being especially problematic. It is our understanding that the city is now including these in the plan.

The *Griggs Street Bikeway* is a project that was first conceived and recommended through the **Bike Walk Central Corridor Action Plan.** The project will support existing bicycle and walking transportation and encourage more people to walk and bike, including underserved populations. We anticipate that students, staff, and visitors of Gordon Parks and St. Paul Central High Schools and residents of Skyline Towers, many of whom do not have access to a car, will especially benefit from this investment. A project like this helps to demonstrate that the City of Saint Paul's commitment to transportation equity. The new Griggs Street Pedestrian/Bicyclist Bridge funded and built by MnDOT has also made this corridor a safer and more popular route. Griggs Street will become a major backbone of the growing nonmotorized system in Saint Paul, allowing important north south travel where alternative routes are in short supply.



Do these investments make a difference? We now know that they do. Recent count data in Saint Paul and Minneapolis reveals that walking and bicycling has increased significantly during the years of the implementation of the Non-motorized Transportation Pilot Program. For instance, bicycling on the Marshall St./Lake Street bridge since the most recent improvements on Marshall (Cretin to the bridge) has increased 33% while walking has increased 53%. Counts in 2011 reveal that the

bridge now supports 836,000 bicycle trips each year and 261,000 pedestrian trips, representing more than 10 percent of the total traffic.

Investments in improving conditions for walking and bicycling are worthwhile, providing benefits not only to those that will use the facilities, but the entire community. When more people walk and ride a bike, especially for transportation purposes, the air becomes cleaner, energy vulnerability decreases, and the public becomes healthier. We hope that the city will move forward with this important project.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.
Sincerely,

Barb Thoman
Executive Director

Joan Pasiuk
Bike Walk Twin Cities Program Director