



SIERRA CLUB

NORTH STAR CHAPTER

Sierra Club North Star Chapter
2300 Myrtle Avenue, Suite 260
Saint Paul, MN 55114

Tuesday Sept. 1, 2020

The Saint Paul City Council
15 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul MN 55102
CouncilHearing@ci.stpaul.mn.us

RE: Zoning File, 20-047-173— Hamline Midway Coalition Appeal of CUP for 565 North Snelling Ave.

Dear Saint Paul City Council Members:

We write on behalf of the Sierra Club North Star Chapter, representing over 20,000 members and 80,000 supporters across Minnesota, with substantial membership in the Midway area of St. Paul.

We oppose a new Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a reconstructed Taco Bell as proposed by Border Foods in Zoning File #20-047-173 at 565 Snelling Avenue North. We support the Hamline Midway Coalition's appeal of the Planning Commission's recent approval of a new CUP.

The proposed new CUP, if granted, would be just the latest episode in the Snelling-University intersection's long history of missed opportunity. Starting with the southeast quadrant's redevelopment from streetcar base to strip mall in the 1950s, this intersection is still the most misdeveloped transit hub in the Upper Midwest. Despite being a transit transfer point among the Green Line, the A Line and the #84 and #21 bus lines, the intersection is dominated by motor vehicles to the point where it is one the least safe and most polluted in the entire Minnesota trunk highway and Ramsey County road networks, especially for transit riders trying to transfer and cyclists trying to cross either artery.

A renewed drive-through at 565 North Snelling will only perpetuate and in this case exacerbate the misdevelopment and unsafe bike/ped environment of this station area for Minnesota's most successful light rail transit (LRT) line and Minnesota's most successful Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line. It will represent a reaffirmation of auto-dominance that is the exact opposite of St. Paul's stated goals of walkability and carbon emissions reduction. It will recreate a pollution hotspot in the form of idling stacks of automobiles exactly adjacent to what is already one of the Twin City metro's worst back-up-induced air pollution producers.

The urbanist vision and plan created for this intersection in recent years by the City and local stakeholders has been substantially postponed and preempted by Allianz Stadium, the demolition of the iconic former Midway Bank building (a Modernist classic the was engineered for six additional stories) and, now, the Planning Commission's approval of a new drive-through Taco Bell in the northwest quadrant of the station area.

All is not lost. Spruce Tree Center highlights the urban character of its location. Just to its south, a new mixed use apartment block is rising. We urge the City Council to reverse trend for the northwest quadrant of Snelling/University by denying a new CUP at 565 North Snelling.

Sincerely,

Mathews Hollinshead
Conservation Chair

Attachment: proposed site plan, 565 North Snelling

