

Please enter this e-mail into the official record for the 1/18/2012 St. Paul City Council Public Hearing for Item #21, RES PH 12-3, Griggs Bikeway Plan.

Overall the plan is good, but there is one major part of it that I strongly oppose - traffic circles.

Traffic circles are expensive to install, especially compared with the minimal impact they have on improving safety. In fact, these proposed traffic circles will detract from safety in three ways. First, drivers may slow down a little when approaching, but as soon as they can tell that there are no other motor vehicles approaching, they will accelerate through the turn and out the other side. I have witnessed this behavior numerous times at other traffic circles similarly situated in residential areas of St. Paul.

Second, they must be maintained. The City puts dirt in the middle and then nearby neighbors provide the plants and the labor to install them. If neighbors don't keep up with the garden, it becomes overgrown and the vegetation creates a sight line barrier, making the intersection more dangerous. Even if current neighbors are willing to do the work, future neighbors may not be in a position or willing to invest their time in traffic circle upkeep. Also, some neighbors select plants that are too tall and create sight line issues. Even legally restricting traffic circle plantings to the same 18 inch height limit as for boulevard plantings would be of little help, given the lack of enforcement for current boulevard plantings that are too tall.

Finally, the budget for this project does not include the funds needed to bring all of the existing wheelchair ramps up to the current ADA standard. Many of these corners have the older style ramp that turns 45 degrees into the intersection. A person using a wheelchair would roll down this ramp right into the middle of the traffic lane. The lower height of someone using a wheelchair or scooter makes them more difficult to see by drivers of oncoming vehicles, especially if the sight lines are impeded by excessive plantings. Installing traffic circles without changing the corner ramps reduces safety of public facilities for people who use wheelchairs and scooters.

I agree with the other aspects of the plan to install a bicycle route on Griggs Street, but I oppose the entire plan if traffic circles are included. Remove the traffic circles from this plan and you will have a winner.

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