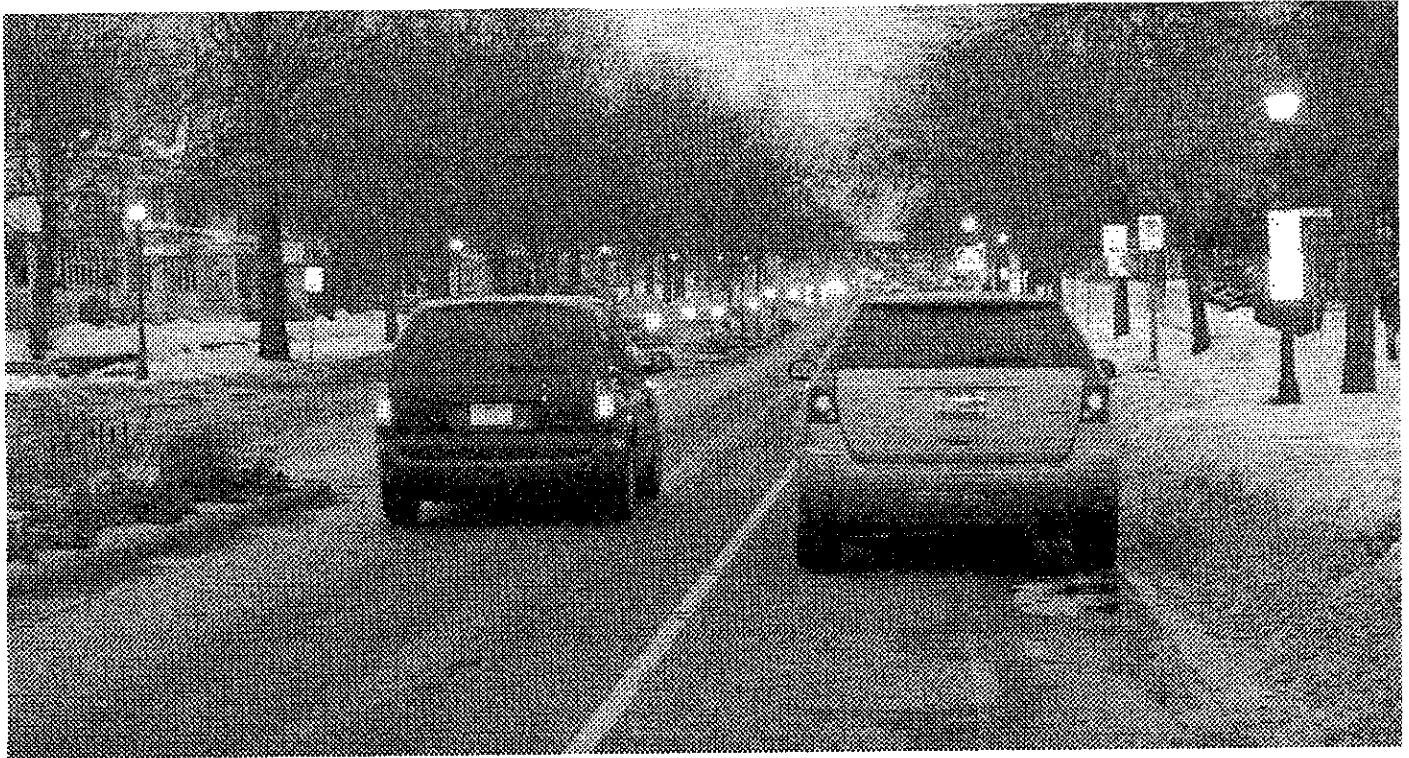


To the planning committee,

The medians on Marshall Avenue leave insufficient room for a bus or wide truck to pass by without impinging upon the bicycle lanes. There is insufficient room to ride a bicycle far enough to the left of the parked cars to avoid opening car doors and still be clear of vehicles passing by the left side of your bicycle. This creates a serious hazard for bicycle riders in the bicycle lane.



The problem becomes even worse in winter. I took this photo of Marshall Avenue on 02/26/2013 while riding my bicycle. Note the vehicle parked in bicycle lane because of the uncleared snow and ice near the curb. On this day nearly all of the vehicles parked along Marshall Avenue were parked at least partially in the bicycle lane.

Note the insufficient room for a bicycle between the two small cars. Now imagine a bicycle riding past the parked car and a wide bus or truck trying to go past the bicycle. Can you say SQUISHED? Hopefully a driver wouldn't try to pass a bicycle with insufficient clearance. But that also means that the bicycle will be holding up traffic if there isn't sufficient room to safely pass a bicycle.

Someone is going to be seriously injured or killed because of the medians on Marshall Avenue!

I am recommending NOT adding any more medians to Marshall avenue. I am also STRONGLY recommending the REMOVAL of the existing medians!!! If a bicycle rider is injured because of these medians, I believe that the city of St. Paul could be sued for negligence or perhaps even recklessness, as

this problem should have easily been foreseen by the civil engineer that planned it. Furthermore, the City of St. Paul has been made aware and warned of this problem. That sounds like a serious liability issue to me.

Adding medians can be helpful to avoid head on collisions. But are head on collisions even a problem on Marshall Avenue? Usually we only worry about making divided roadways for high speed travel. Marshall Avenue is only a 30 MPH street. We have undivided 30 MPH roads all over the Twin Cities and I don't hear anyone clamoring to make them divided roadways.

There is insufficient room to add medians on Marshall Avenue, unless you widen the road corridor, which would probably be cost prohibitive, visually unpleasing, and not acceptable to the residents along Marshall Avenue. Granted, you could eliminate parking on Marshall Avenue to make more room, but I suspect that the residents would form an angry lynch mob.

During a poor economy, the last thing you need to be doing is spending money on frivolous projects, and especially when the project creates more hazards than it cures. There are times when you need to say this is the best we can do that is practical and find better places to spend the taxpayer's money. Very few people are going to complain if you spend extra money on faster repair of potholes. Or maybe creating holding ponds around parking lots for water runoff, etc.

I am also opposed to planting trees in narrow median strips. The roots often get insufficient water, which may mean additional labor to water the trees. I'm not sure, but I think tree roots could eventually pose problems with the roadbed. Also dead branches and leaves will fall onto the middle of the roadway. Sometimes the trees can create visibility problems. Trees in narrow medians are not a great idea to begin with and a very bad idea in a poor economy. The Twin Cities is already blessed with an abundance of trees. Do we really need a few more trees in the medians? Why not use that tree money to plant some fruit trees in the parks?

Roadways need to be functional and safe first. Worry about the aesthetics AFTER you have made them safe and functional.

Keep in mind that every person that is riding a bicycle for transportation is one less person burning fuel leaving more fuel for everyone else. Not to mention the reduced pollution and reduced greenhouse gasses. People riding bicycles are also likely to be in better shape and are less of a burden on our already strained health care system.

While bicycle paths might be nice for recreational bicycle riders, a bicycle lane on the roadway will often be of more benefit for people actually using their bicycles for transportation.

I often hear from people that are afraid to ride a bicycle on the streets. Some of those fears are justified. I have had trucks pass by as close as 1" from my handlebars. I had one driver make a right turn on a red light and knocked my bicycle out from under me and severely damaged my bicycle. If I hadn't been riding all summer long and been in excellent shape, I probably would have been knocked to the ground and severely injured.

If you want more people riding bicycles, the roads need to be safer.

It should be noted that I'm 58 years old and I have used a bicycle as my main transportation for the last 3 years. I ride all year long, even in subzero temperatures, and in rain, sleet, and snow. My travels have ranged from Rockford, Anoka, Blaine, Lino Lakes, Maplewood, Eagan, Burnsville, Bloomington, Minnetonka, and every city and suburb in between. It's not unusual for me to ride 40 miles in a day. I frequently ride the entire length of Marshall Avenue from Minneapolis to downtown St. Paul.

Scott A. Novak