

A public meeting was held on June 1 about the planned Cleveland Ave. bike lanes. The Pioneer Press on June 7 gave deceptively inaccurate coverage, ignoring strong opposition by residents. In protest, the following Letter to the Editor was sent (and acknowledged) on June 10, but was not published.

Cleveland Bike Lane Meeting Coverage Biased

Contrary to the June 7 Pioneer Press headline "Cycling lanes on Cleveland get lukewarm welcome", the proposal was opposed by 90% (as estimated by the non-partisan moderator) of the attendees at the crowded June 1 public meeting. Yet 60% of the report was devoted to the few businesses along that stretch, and their speakers hardly gave "lukewarm welcome". Residents along Cleveland Ave. were only noted by being wrongly described as "feuding". But they, the majority of attendees, were nearly unanimous in opposing the plan! The reason was simple - all parking would be banned 24/7 from Grand to James, to enable creation of dedicated bike lanes occupying a third of the street width! This would deny front-door vehicle access to an estimated 70 to 80 households, and to their guests and visitors. This seizure of 1/3 of Cleveland Ave. for the EXCLUSIVE benefit of cyclists is "part of St. Paul's recently adopted bike plan". It's a power grab that caters to cycling organizations, whose membership is unlikely to travel often on Cleveland Ave. Unlike residents, the cyclists pay no assessments for snowplowing, street cleaning, leaf removal, street lighting, or storm sewer upkeep. Clearly unfair, this plan is unworthy of a decent city. Perhaps there is a laughably vain hope of joining Minneapolis to become the second U.S. city on the Copenhagen list of the "world's bicycle-friendly cities".

Cyclists are promised "Safety" (the magic word!) by owning - 24/7 - bike lanes protected by painted stripes. This is unrealistic. Actually the lanes create new "Hazards To Bikers": (1) Winter. Snowplowing has NEVER been "to the curb" or "to the pavement". The resulting frozen slush in the bike lane will cause the (few) bikers to avoid its risk of injury. (2) Unseen lane marking. Snow and dirty ice conceal lane striping. Even with signs, in bad weather non-local drivers may not see bike lanes. (3) No safe haven. Currently, bikers can pull over in front of parked cars and be safe from passing cars and large trucks. The air blast from such vehicles can destabilize a biker. This is worst in winter. (4) Open road effect. Without parked cars to induce driver caution, the careless, distracted, aggressive, or impaired drivers are certain to veer into the bike lane. Smart bikers will use alleys, other streets, or sidewalks. (5) Biker Complacency. Feeling safe even next to the lane stripe, bikers may be injured when a vehicle passes rapidly near the stripe. Injuries seem inevitable. (6) Vehicle lane shrinks to 8 ft. The 3 ft. leeway required for passing bikers, who may be close to the lane stripe, cuts the usable vehicle lane to 8 ft., not enough for trucks and buses. (7) After sunset, Bikes NEED large bright tail lights and turn signals. (8) Bikes are vehicles and must obey all traffic laws. This includes stopping for pedestrians IN crosswalks. Requiring visible license plates would help identify violators.

No Parking 24/7 means that in a Snow Emergency residents on side streets will have no practical alternative to moving cars to Cleveland Ave. A Realtor's guess is

that on Cleveland property values may lose 5% or more. And, Permit Parking will be expanded on the side streets to ward off the flood of St, Thomas students now parking on Cleveland Ave,

THE SOLUTION - retain parking, and paint "sharrows" (share-the-road arrows) in the vehicle lane next to the parked cars. Winter traffic partly or fully exposes the sharrows, which should be wet-and dry reflective. Sharrows remind bikers to remain vigilant, a positive safety factor.

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