April 13, 2023 - Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting Recap

The information below summarizes feedback heard at the April 13th, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting. City staff gave a presentation to Commissioners on the Summit Avenue Regional Trail Plan. A representative from both SOS (Save Our Streets) and the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition gave 4 minute remarks to the Commission, followed by a comment period where over 60 individuals provided comments.

1 Safety

- ***Priority for Safety*** - Points about safety brought up by people who both support and oppose the Regional Trail Plan
- ***Engineering & Safety*** - Questions about whether or not a separated facility is safer than the current conditions on Summit Avenue
- ***Vehicle Conflicts*** - Safety of crossing driveways and intersections; safety for drivers
- ***More Vulnerable Users*** - Safety of trail for people who are young, elderly, or living with disabilities. Interest for those who are not currently using the bikeways on Summit Avenue

2 Tree Canopy

- ***Data Discrepancies*** - Concerns about discrepancies between City estimate and independent arborist estimate regarding potential tree loss due to construction
- ***Value of Trees*** - Importance of trees in for history, shade and cooling, climate resilience, and the aesthetic beauty of the roadway
- ***Balance of Needs*** - Balance of tree loss and once in a generation opportunity for infrastructure upgrades to meet future needs
- ***Priority for Preservation*** - General consensus that tree preservation is important.

3 History

- ***Historic Preservation*** - Concern for the effects relative to historical elements along Summit Avenue with the implementation of a trail
- ***Historic Destination*** - Importance of Summit Avenue as a historic destination

4 Parking

- ***Economic Impacts*** - Concern about how a parking reduction will negatively impact businesses and institutions along Summit Avenue.
- ***Safety and Accessibility*** - Discussion about safety of residents having to walk farther distances from their car to their home if parking is reduced
- ***Land-use Priorities*** - Ideas about alternative parking strategies - private partnerships, prioritizing parking for residents, better snow plowing

5 Process and Community Engagement

- ***Frustration*** - Concern that voices in opposition to the trail are not being taken into consideration or heard.
- ***More Time*** - Desire among some for more time to engage with more of the local community; concern that the length of time and amount of engagement has not been sufficient
- ***Inclusion*** - People at the meeting advocating for people who are very young, elderly, and disabled or those for that could not attend the meeting
- ***Process Clarity*** - Feeling that Plan has been predetermined - input and responsiveness is not being seen in the Plan
- ***Priorities*** - Why is this being proposed here and not somewhere else in the City? General concerns about funding priorities and equity

6 Climate Change and Future Planning

- ***Investment in Climate Resilience*** - Importance of investment in climate resilient infrastructure that allows residents and visitors to be less car dependent and feel safe in all modes
- ***Future Infrastructure Planning*** - Think about infrastructure in the future when cars may not be the most viable transportation option
- ***Youth and Future Generations*** - Discussion about infrastructure investments that benefit the youngest generations, and future generations that will bear the greatest burden of climate change