

Dear Councilpersons Stark and Carter,

By an overwhelming number, Hamline-Midway neighborhood residents want safer streets with less traffic and greater opportunity to walk or bike to neighborhood destinations, including local businesses. The Charles Avenue Bike Boulevard has truly been an open, transparent process with the participation of Hamline-Midway stakeholders. Thousands of residents have offered comments and hundreds of people attended six block events last summer to provide input on the design of Charles Avenue project. In addition, the City has held public meetings and made project plans available at several locations (including their website) over a period of more than four years.

In the August 2012 *Hamline-Midway Monitor*, Mr. Purcell, owner of Holcomb-Henry-Boom-Purcell Funeral Home, suggests that making our streets more inviting and safer will be bad for businesses, specifically his. Even before LRT construction the area around Snelling and University has not only been blighted by high vacancies, but is also unpleasant and often dangerous to access by bike, on foot, or in a car. What could be worse for business than an area that is dangerous, ugly, and half vacant? Shouldn't he and area businesses be more concerned that Snelling and I94 was rated the second most dangerous intersection in the state by the Department of Transportation? Do business patrons enjoy sitting in stopped traffic on Snelling Avenue? No evidence, nationally or locally, has linked the development of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects with business closure and, in fact, such infrastructure has often been associated with a stronger business community. The canard that bikes are bad for business is tired and cannot bear to be trotted out again. By definition, people who bike or walk support local businesses.

As a mother who bikes with children, I want safe streets and easy access to University Avenue businesses. Biking on Minnehaha Avenue (eight blocks north of University Avenue) does not get me close to my favorite restaurants or shopping destinations. Removing design elements that promote less auto traffic waters down a strong and neighborhood-supported plan. Suggesting that pedestrians should walk four blocks out of their way while someone in a car cannot drive around the block is ridiculous. As a car owner and driver, I want less traffic. More people on foot, on bike, or on public transit makes my driving experience better, too.

Dana DeMaster
1642 Blair Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55104