

2-17-2015

Re: Vote on Snelling Avenue Project and Decorative Lighting

Dear City Council Members

I was finally able to procure a copy of the Hwy 51 Final Modal Report and download it in the area where I am traveling outside of the country. The report is over 118 pages long. The surprising thing to me is that in all of the sign in sheets for all of the task force meetings there was not one single business owner or property owner who was involved in the meetings. However, on Page 25 the task force reports it was recommended that the task force needs to "Contact business owners sooner rather than later if project is going forward." However, we as property and a business owner do not ever recall receipt of any such invite or a notice of any meetings to discuss the Snelling Avenue project. Our address is the same as what is on the tax statements and your notice of the meeting was delivered so the city obviously knew how to get hold of us.

The report confirms that one of us (i.e. Steve) did attend two (2) of the meetings and his comments are noted. However, we would like to make it clear that at neither of the two meetings that Steve attended was it ever mentioned that decorative lighting was going to be installed or that the width of the parking bays were going to be reduced so that none of his comments addressed this issue. In fact the concept plans attached to the report even show the parking bay widths were to remain at 10 feet.

We now understand that a part of the concrete apron from the curb to the bituminous surface is considered to be part of the 11 feet wide lane of traffic so that none of the parking areas are 11 feet wide as noted in Steve's last e-mail. Thus, if you take 2 feet from the parking area you will have only 8 feet remaining so that when snow is plowed the parking area width will be left at only 6 feet wide. On such a busy high traffic street you will have to admit that this is extremely dangerous. However, during snow emergencies people will be forced to park in the areas on Snelling Avenue until the side streets are plowed because there is no other reasonable option. This was one of the reasons several years ago we tried to put in a parking lot for our tenants but were turned down.

For your information I would like to note the following from the Snelling Avenue Multi-Modal Transportation which included reports of the various task forces:

1. Promote safety of all users.
2. It does not mention or recommend narrowing the parking areas from 10 feet to 8 feet. The concept plan showed the continued width of the parking areas to be 10 feet wide as noted on page 98.
3. In three places it is mentioned that parking on Snelling Avenue is important to for businesses (Page 29 – “Parking is useful for small businesses,” Page 38 – “small businesses depend upon street parking,” and Page 48 – “Parking is critical to those businesses (i.e. between Englewood & Minnehaha – but applies to all businesses).
4. There is no planned reduction of truck traffic on Snelling Avenue south of Pierce Butler. It was noted that more and more heavy commercial vehicles use Snelling Avenue each year. The report also states that there will always be a need for capacity to handle the high truck traffic and lane widths are important (reason being is that trucks are very wide compared to cars). It was further noted that Snelling south of Pierce Butler is too important as a freight carrier route. (see pages 4 & 74).
5. There was an observation made that the taller lights spread more light than “St. Paul Historic Style Lighting” but I cannot remember the exact page.

We would again request that for the safety of all those parking on Snelling Avenue that the 10 feet wide parking bays be retained. Decorative lighting is not needed and will do nothing to improve the business climate and only add additional financial burdens to the remaining businesses. Decorative light standards were estimated in 2012 to cost \$7,000.00 a piece (which I am sure has gone up since then) and is a luxury that the businesses cannot afford. This did not include the cost of removing the curb, part or all of the apron and replacing the concrete blvd. If additional light is needed, spend some money to figure out how to get additional light out of the current lights. Our recollection is that a few years ago the type of bulbs in the light fixtures were changed in order to conserve energy which in Steve's opinion reduced the amount of light being thrown out by the lights. Thus, we are sure there is a way to increase the amount of light emitted by each light by merely changing the bulbs in the current light standards.

We know the decorative lighting will do nothing to improve Steve's business and that he will not get any additional customers/clients because of the upgraded lighting. The decorative lighting will not increase the value of our property and the additional annual cost will make it harder to lease out the rental space the next time we have a vacancy. Snelling will never be a Selby or Grand Avenue.

If decorative lighting is installed it should be installed in the 2 feet blvd that now exists. If a car door gets occasionally dinged, too bad. The photograph of Selby Avenue in the modal report used to depict the light standards to be used showed that they could be installed in a fairly narrow area plus it also showed several other objects such as trash receptacle in the space which would impede opening a car door. The side walk at 6 feet together with the 2 feet wide blvd is more than adequate for ADA compliance and two wheel chairs can safely pass each other. However, in the 40 years on Snelling Avenue I do not recall ever seeing two wheel chairs pass each other.

Please vote "NO" for the decorative lighting and preserve our 10 foot wide parking bays for the safety of those of us and our customers who park on Snelling Avenue. We also do not need any additional financial burdens placed upon our building to make it more difficult to rent.

Thank you,

Steve & Kathy Nelson