

Councilmember Russ Stark
310-D City Hall
15 Kellogg Blvd., West
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Councilman Stark,

By now you've heard of the St. Paul Bicycle Plan's resounding approval by the city Transportation Committee, the Planning Commission, and the people of St. Paul. After the City Council's public hearing this week, I urge you and your fellow councilmembers to pass the plan and send it to Mayor Coleman's desk.

I hope that the St. Paul citizens who bike for transportation and recreation, and especially the [53 percent of adults](#) who wish that they could bike more but are discouraged from doing so (in part because of inadequate infrastructure) can count on your support. After all, more people biking for trips where they'd normally drive is [good for business](#), [good for public health](#), and reduces the wear and tear and maintenance costs on city streets. Clearly the benefits of more biking in St. Paul will more than pay for the initial investment.

However, once the Plan is passed, there's more work to be done. Simply passing a non-binding plan is one thing – implementation is another. Without accountability and firm deadlines for identifying funding sources, creating infrastructure, and gathering feedback, the Bicycle Plan could languish for decades, while other cities (especially our friends across the river) surge ahead in bicycle friendliness and all the benefits that come with it. I urge the City Council to encourage the Transportation Committee, the Planning Commission, the Department of Public Works, and their counterparts at Ramsey County and MNDOT to work together to set goals to implement this plan as quickly as possible and with maximum accountability.

Ward 4 presents a number of unique obstacles and opportunities to bicycling. Bicycling connections between Ward 4's neighborhoods are blocked by a number of barriers mentioned in the plan – mainly railroads, but also University Avenue. The Plan identifies a number of short- and long-term solutions to these barriers, but all of us need to work quickly to start negotiating with property owners in order to start planning for bridges and dedicated bike/walk paths. At the same time, Ward 4 is lucky to have a lot of streets that are wider than in the rest of St. Paul, making it far easier to create new infrastructure with minimal impact on existing traffic. The industrial area near the railroad facility (recently named the Creative Enterprise Zone) is a perfect candidate for this, with extremely wide streets and a burgeoning community of artists and breweries. In many cases, implementation in Ward 4 can start as soon as this spring – striping for bike lanes can be integrated into this year's mill-and-overlay projects with negligible cost and effort.

I'm excited for the future of biking in St. Paul and all the benefits it can bring to the city. Throughout the next steps in this process, let's all work together to pass and implement the St. Paul Bicycle plan. Engagement between Ward 4 citizens and the city will be crucial, but so will input from other groups, such as St. Paul Smart Trips, St. Paul Women on Bikes, and all of the neighborhood groups in Ward 4. We all have plenty of ideas and answers about biking in St. Paul, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



George Roth
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