

March 15, 2016

Russ Stark
St. Paul City Council
City Councilmember, Ward 4
Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Chris Tolbert
St. Paul City Council
City Councilmember, Ward 3
Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Re: Cleveland Avenue Bike Lane Project – parking mitigation proposal
Hearing: March 16, 2016

Dear Councilmembers Stark and Tolbert:

I am writing to express my opposition to a specific piece of the **parking mitigation proposal** related to the Cleveland Avenue Bike Lane Project, described as:

“Permit Parking Area 22 is proposed to be modified to include 57-115 Cleveland Avenue, which will be eligible to purchase up to 4 vehicle permits and 2 visitor permits per household.”

I can't attend the hearing on Wednesday, March 16 2016, so please include my written comments in the public record.

Summary

I am not opposed to the bike lanes on Cleveland. However, I object to the City: (1) basing new parking policy on a false premise (a premise contradicted by the City's own data) that the bike lanes will cause a loss of residential parking on this two-block section of Cleveland Avenue; (2) proposing to modify Area 22 permit parking for 12 houses on Cleveland near Grand; and (3) creating new problems for the already beleaguered residents on the adjacent side streets of Lincoln and Goodrich Avenues. **It would be incorrect for any City official** to assert that the 12 houses on the west side of Cleveland Avenue on the two-block stretch between Grand Avenue and Goodrich Avenue (57 – 115 Cleveland Avenue) are “losing” parking because of the bike lane and therefore should be “compensated” for this loss by adding them to Area 22 parking and giving them access to 6 permits per house (four permanent and two visitor permits). Residents of these 12 houses are not losing parking. They generally do not park in front of their houses on Cleveland Avenue (most certainly not to come and go during the day) and haven't for years, ever since UST users by day and Davanni's customers by night began to dominate Cleveland Avenue parking near Grand. Residents of 11 of these 12 houses have already “mitigated” this reality of life on Cleveland Avenue by parking behind their houses. Some have added asphalt parking pads adjacent to their garage parking for this reason. Providing permits for off-street parking on Lincoln and Goodrich to these houses, especially the six houses that are student rentals, will not solve a problem (because a problem doesn't exist), but it will create new problems for people living next to Cleveland on Lincoln and Goodrich.

- 1. City parking studies confirm the common understanding that the west side of Cleveland Avenue between Grand and Goodrich is primarily used by the UST community by day and by UST users and Davanni's/Coffee Bene customers by night and on weekends, not by Cleveland Avenue residents.**

Data on parking patterns collected by the City indicate that the two-block stretch of Cleveland between Grand and Goodrich is most heavily used in middle of the day on weekdays. (See Attachment A). Weekday parking counts between 4:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. show generally no-to-low to occasional moderate use between Grand and Goodrich. That picture changes dramatically by midday. Weekday counts between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. switch to high use (85 – 100%). Any resident around here will confirm that actually means 100%. On both of the counts provided, this high use extends as far as Goodrich, and on one day, it extends all the way down to Princeton. By weekday evenings and on Saturdays, parking counts remain high between Grand and Lincoln, but completely drop off as you move further south on Cleveland. This pattern of use describes the heavy parking we in the neighborhood see on Cleveland during the day by UST users (students, faculty, staff) and moderate to heavy parking we see during evening and weekend hours, some by UST, but mostly by Davanni's/Coffee Bene customers. This pattern of use and this common understanding is consistent with our summer experience here in this neighborhood –there are far fewer cars on our streets in the summer when UST is not in session. That is when UST use of the Cleveland Avenue “parking lot” drops dramatically.

- 2. Residents with cars living in the 12 houses on Cleveland Avenue have already “mitigated” this reality of living on Cleveland by parking behind their houses.**

There are 12 houses on the west side of Cleveland between Grand and Goodrich– five between Davanni's and Lincoln, and seven between Lincoln and Goodrich. (See attached Google maps view of the area). Six of these 12 houses are student rentals that house UST students, one house is a non-student rental and five are believed to be owner occupied. The residents of these houses on Cleveland Avenue have not been able to park on the street in front of their house for years, given the proximity to UST and Davanni's so have developed alternatives to on street parking.

Non-student rental:

One of the 12 houses is a non-student rental (and because of a restrictive covenant on it, it cannot become a student rental). This non-student rental uses off-street parking for its tenants.

Owner occupied homes (?):

Five houses are believed to be owner occupied homes. The five owner occupied homes have off-street parking for the residents (garages, asphalt parking pads or both).

Student rentals:

Five of these 6 student rentals have off-street parking for the legal number of tenants. Below are photos taken on weekdays in past two weeks at several of these houses.





The houses on Cleveland Avenue between Grand and Goodrich, and particularly the six homes that have been converted to student rentals, have off street parking and utilize that off street parking. **It is flat out wrong** to claim that all of these houses are losing parking and must be accommodated by giving them access to 6 permits per house (4 residence and 2 visitor permits).

- 3. Where data and daily experience confirms that the residents of the 12 houses don't park on Cleveland, there is no rationale for changing the current status of 0 resident cars parked on the street to up to 72 cars parked on the street.**

Even if residents were accustomed to parking on these two blocks and had to find new places to park their cars after completion of the bike lanes (which the data shows is not the case),

providing these 12 houses a total of six permits each moves the dial from approximately 0 cars currently parking on the street to up to 48 resident cars and an additional 24 visitor cars parking on the street. That makes no sense, particularly in this “transit-oriented” world that City policy now is made in. It also makes no sense to increase the parking demand in Area 22 by up to 72 cars when eliminating only 22 on-street parking spaces from this two-block stretch of Cleveland Avenue.

Look at the numbers from this perspective: Parallel parking spaces are typically 18-20 feet. That means it will take 864 – 960 feet of curb to accommodate the 48 cars to be parked by residents, and another 432– 480 feet for their visitors. That’s a total of 1,296 – 1,440 feet for these cars, which is roughly the length of a city block (350 feet) x 4.

The numbers behind this proposal just do not add up.

4. Where exactly would these 48-72 cars now park? They would have to compete for parking in an already congested area.

Behind their homes?

If the answer to the question “Where will all these cars park?” is “Well, the City doesn’t really expect Cleveland Avenue residents to park on the side streets. We expect the residents will just keep parking behind their homes” then the point of this opposition has been made and there is no need to “mitigate lost parking” and fold these houses into Area 22.

On Grand?

Not likely. Grand Avenue is currently full of cars using Area 22 permits, either from existing residences or from the apartments at Grand & Finn. Some of this parking pressure already flows onto Lincoln Avenue, particularly between Finn and Cretin (which is now often filled with cars). Parking pressure on Grand will only increase when residents start having to share Grand Avenue street parking with new students parking at the second private dormitory to open up on Grand this fall. They will also have to share limited parking space near Cleveland with customers of Davanni’s and Coffee Bene. This is because the parking mitigation proposal also includes a provision to change Grand Avenue parking to accommodate these nearby businesses.

Permit Parking Area 22 is proposed to be modified to create some short-term parking for nearby businesses. Area 22 street regulation on the south side of Grand between Finn and the alley west of Cleveland will be revised from “No Parking 8am-8pm, Monday-Friday, Except by Permit” to “1 Hour parking from 8am-6pm, Except by Permit.”

Again, this part of the mitigation proposal proves that the parking south of Grand on Cleveland is used by customers of Davanni’s and Coffee Bene, not by residents.

Remember also that UST is in the middle of a campus planning process for the two blocks between Summit and Grand, Cretin and Cleveland. There will be at least one new academic building on Summit Avenue and up to 450 beds dedicated to the two block area of Grand between Cleveland and Cretin. **It is the ultimate pie in sky thinking to suggest that Grand Avenue near UST can absorb more parking.** The parking demand will increase, and will continue to go south of campus, starting at Lincoln Avenue. This is no different than other parts

of Grand Avenue, but unlike other parts of Grand Avenue, the pressure on the neighborhood south of the area will only increase because of these continuing developments.

On Finn south of Grand?

Not likely. After the 80-bed private dormitory at Grand & Finn was completed, Finn became congested with cars that had access to the new Area 22 permits for that residence. A second private dormitory on Grand Avenue between Finn and Cretin is nearing completion and additional pressure for parking will occur once that building is occupied by UST students this fall. This overflow cannot go north or west because that is UST's campus, so it will go where it naturally must go – south to Lincoln Avenue, then further down Finn and on to Goodrich.

On Lincoln and Goodrich between Cleveland and Finn?

If the entire rationale for this proposal is that all these cars cannot park on Cleveland so must now be afforded the opportunity to park elsewhere, **the first place all these new cars will park is Lincoln Avenue, then on to Goodrich.**

I live on Lincoln Avenue between Cleveland and Finn. Since I moved to this block in 1999, five owner occupied homes or duplexes have been converted to student rentals, bringing the total on my block to seven student rentals. That's 28 students with cars who want to park on this stretch of Lincoln Avenue. Some of the students park behind their rental houses, but some of them park on the street, as do long-term residents like me who don't have garage space. Now, residents of Lincoln Avenue are being asked to accommodate Cleveland Avenue parking. In the future, we will be asked to accommodate parking for the continuing private and UST developments on Grand Avenue. Where are we supposed to fit all these cars, and is the City prepared to fund me when I am forced to rebuild my old single stall garage into a 2 ½ stall garage?

5. The City has given no thought to the problem it would create by providing UST students with parking permits that they don't need, so can readily to share or sell.

Because I live on a street with 7 student rentals, I have direct (not anecdotal) experience with UST students sharing their permits with friends. Last year, we had problems with a student rental across the street sharing parking their visitor permits and off street parking with friends. I routinely tracked six cars to the house (typically with 2 parking behind the house and 4 on the street). Unfortunately, the landlord rebuffed my request for help. This fall, there was a student who was routinely parking in front of my house using a visitor permit from the student rental next door to me. One morning when we were both getting into our cars at the same time, I introduced myself and asked him where he lived and he told me 103 S. Cleveland (one of the 6 student rentals that would be given access to a total of 6 permits under this proposal). I said "But you already have four parking places behind your house. Why don't you park there?" He paused, smiled sheepishly and replied: "My roommates park there, so my friends down here gave me one of their passes that they don't use." Those of you familiar with City code will realize, as I did, that this young man had unwittingly acknowledged to me that two codes provisions had been violated: (1) his rental house was over occupied (later confirmed by DSI), and (2) a visitor parking permit was being illegally used.

If you give the student rentals on Cleveland Avenue access to parking permits that they don't need because they already have adequate off street parking, some amount of permit abuse will occur. I have seen no acknowledgement whatsoever by City officials leading the development of

the new bike lane that this is a problem, let alone have I seen any suggestion on how the City will mitigate the new problem it creates if this proposal is approved.

Summary: Why parking mitigation for residents of Cleveland Avenue is NOT needed between Grand and Goodrich.

- 1. City parking studies confirm that the west side of Cleveland Avenue between Grand Avenue and Goodrich Avenue is primarily used by the UST community by day and by UST users and Davanni's customers by night, not by Cleveland Ave. residents.**
- 2 Residents with cars living in the 12 houses on Cleveland Avenue have already "mitigated" this reality of living on Cleveland by parking behind their houses.**
- 3. Where data and daily experience confirms that the residents of the 12 houses don't park on Cleveland, there is no rationale for changing the current status of 0 cars parked on the street to up to 72 cars parked on the street.**
- 4. There is no place for 72 new cars park, other than they would have to compete for parking in an already congested area and an area that will become more congested over time due to planned private and UST developments.**
- 5. The City has given no thought to the problem it would create by providing UST students with access to parking permits that they don't need.**

One final note: Where is UST in all this?

If anyone at City Hall is really concerned about a perceived loss of parking on this stretch of Cleveland Avenue due to the bike lane, mitigation efforts need first and foremost to be shouldered by UST, not surrounding streets. The first real mitigation effort (which has been called for by neighbors for as long as I have lived in Area 22) is to require UST to lower the cost of existing parking so its users (faculty, staff and students) will start parking on campus and not on Cleveland Avenue. Councilmember Stark knows that UST parking facilities are not fully utilized. That is the first thing that has to change if we are going to reduce parking pressure in the neighborhood.

The Cleveland Avenue Bike Plan doesn't need this particular proposal to work. I know the Council can appreciate these many reasons why this piece of "parking mitigation" is poorly conceived and unnecessary, and why it should be eliminated from the Bike Plan. Please do not approve something that solves a phantom problem and creates real problems in an already stressed neighborhood.

Thank you.

Alyssa Rebensdorf
2096 Lincoln Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55105

