



May 16, 2016

St. Paul City Councilmembers and Ramsey County Commissioners,

I am writing on behalf of St. Paul Women on Bikes, a program of St. Paul Smart Trips, in support of bicycle lanes on Upper Afton Road. St. Paul Women on Bikes (WOB) is a coalition of over a thousand women and families working to make it safer and easier to ride a bike in St. Paul through advocacy, education, and fun.

Adding bicycle lanes to Upper Afton Road is an equity issue for our city. The East Side of St. Paul is vastly underrepresented in St. Paul's bicycle infrastructure, and the Upper Afton project is an important first step to create safe, convenient routes for everyone to ride a bike. This part of the city deserves to receive its fair share of tax funds toward public improvements – the East Side has not seen the same investments that other parts of the city are benefitting from – and Upper Afton provides an important east-west connection.

St. Paul's East Side has the largest percentage of people without a vehicle. Completing this project creates better bike connections for people who have no other way to get to jobs, education or entertainment. Because the East Side is so vast, bicycle lanes that work in tandem with transit are vital, and the Upper Afton project would provide connections to existing and planned transit routes.

This project will address equity concerns on the East Side and increase safety for all road users along a highly residential street. The project as initially proposed narrows lanes and slows traffic, benefitting not just people riding bikes, but people driving and walking within the surrounding neighborhood.

The alternative design under consideration is not acceptable. A bike lane in one direction and signage in the other creates a false sense of safety and puts bicyclists at risk. Based on counts of parked cars being low, assumptions are being made that people riding bikes can use the parking lane when cars are not parked there. This is false, as it creates an unsafe environment for all road users by encouraging people to weave in and out of traffic and parked cars in an unpredictable manner. This treatment does not meet the needs of women, families, and other vulnerable road users.

Instead, we support the protected bikeway design that has been suggested by local community members (see attached). Providing a barrier between cyclists and people driving provides the safest route that will ensure the greatest number of users. Last year we held focus groups with over 100 women and families that didn't bike on a regular

basis. They told us they wanted to bike more often but didn't feel safe, and they universally preferred buffered, protected bike lanes.

Bicycling is a vital component of safe, vibrant streets that truly work for our city's dynamic communities, and the Upper Afton project is an important piece of infrastructure connecting people in our city. We look forward to your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Melissa Martinez-Sones
Interim Executive Director, St. Paul Smart Trips