

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

956 Forest Street
St. Paul, MN 55106
Pastor's Office: 651-644-4383

August 14, 2018

To: THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE ST. PAUL CITY COUNCIL

From: JONATHAN PROCTOR, Priest in Charge

RE: PUBLIC HEARING ON FOREST STREET BIKE LANES AUGUST 15, 2018

*Our church lies on the east side of Forest St. and will be affected by **the proposed loss of parking** on that side of the Street. I was due to attend the public hearing tomorrow night, but have been called to Rush City to serve at a wake, and submit these notes instead.*

I reluctantly speak against the expansion of bike lanes on Forest Street.

General Use:

Actual use of our facilities is more than what is suggested by the times of the parking study. We have services on four days of the week, not counting weddings and funerals. Our hall, at 962 Forest street next door, is made available to community groups and to the neighborhood's immigrant and other families for free or at cost (not for profit). These events take place at least once or twice every week, usually Fridays and Saturdays, and bring parking traffic. We also maintain a community garden for both parishioners and neighbors.

Handicap Accessibility:

Most seriously, we stand to lose our already signposted handicap space on Forest Street. We have frail and handicapped members. Our elevator entrance is on the opposite corner of our building from our Case Avenue main entrance, and is located on Forest Street adjacent to its handicap parking zone. The elevator is a recent addition, and sidewalk surfaces and elevator location were designed around having access to Forest Street parking.

Safety:

Weekday services do not create parking issues, but Saturday evening has the service that is after dark much of the year. This makes the prospect of longer walking distances to and from the church a matter of anxiety for many (not an entirely irrational fear, based on violent incidents close to the church over the years).

Parking Conflicts:

We work hard to avoid parking conflicts with our neighbors but even with *current* parking, these occur every couple of years and are slow to heal.

Practicalities

Persons arriving at church or the hall are often laden with food containers for pot lucks or social hours. Longer walks to cars, especially after dark and in winter, would be a disincentive.

We do understand that our needs are only some of many needs for usage of the street, but city policy (at this stage at least) does not allow signage which would mitigate the effects of the loss of parking to a bike lane, such as “Pick up and Drop off only” signs which would educate drivers that it is indeed permissible to park in a bike lane while off-loading passengers or food items to our church or hall (we were told such signs are not permissible). We were assured this kind of drop off in a bike lane is in fact legal, but I believe most users would be hesitant to do so, or not be aware. (In St Paul I myself have had my car roof violently banged by passing cyclists apparently not aware of the fact.)

It would be possible for us to support the bike lanes if these (to me) small concessions were included in the bike lane planning, but at this point there is no reliable assurance that they will be included now, or in future. Without that, it is not possible for me to support the proposed bike lane plans.

I must commend city staff person Luke Hansen who has done a patient and diligent job addressing my concerns on behalf of many who would be adversely affected. Luke took the initiative in coming up with helpful proposals which at least to some degree were an attempt to mitigate the negative effects. He is a patient and effective city representative.

Your servant in Christ

Archpriest Jonathan Proctor
651-276-4044 (mobile).