

**From:** [Renee Schaefer](#)  
**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul Contact-Council](#); [#CI-StPaul Ward4](#)  
**Subject:** Comments on proposed bike lane on Wabasha in Downtown St. Paul  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 12, 2021 4:24:56 AM

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Dear City Council and Councilmember Mitra Jalali,

I am a St. Paul Ward 4 resident, avid cyclist, independent concert promoter, and avid concert goer. For my independent concert promotions business, I occasionally book shows at Amsterdam Bar and Hall on 6th and Wabasha and frequent shows at Amsterdam as a non-working attendee. I also sometimes bike to Amsterdam from my home in St. Paul.

While I am happy to hear that the City wishes to improve biking Downtown, I have significant concerns about the segment of the proposed route on Wabasha. I urge you to vote no on the current bike lane proposal on Wabasha St. for these reasons:

- Cyclist safety concerns on Wabasha
- Detrimental effects to the business at Amsterdam Bar and Hall (a business I occasionally partner with as a business owner)
- Traffic and traffic safety concerns on Wabasha

If the current proposal can be modified so the bike lane is implemented on a less busy street like St. Peter, or find a route that better balances safety for everyone while retaining Amsterdam stage door parking on Wabasha, then I would support the measure.

I fully agree with all comments made by Brenda Peters in Amsterdam's full official statement, excerpts of which were published in the May 11 Pioneer Press.

Below, I have included additional contextual information about the effect the loss of the parking on Wabasha would have on Amsterdam as a business, as it may not be obvious to people outside of the music industry how the loss of a little parking begins a domino effect, as well as how the loss of those specific parking spots may affect my decisions as a business owner.

#### CASCADING EFFECTS OF WABASHA ST. PARKING ON AMSTERDAM'S BUSINESS

Amsterdam is a wonderful and unique local business that brings people from across the Metro area and region to Downtown St. Paul to see high-quality touring artists. As a promoter, when I bring touring acts to Amsterdam, attendees come from the Metro area, as well as across the state and into Iowa, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas. I bring in national touring acts that rarely stop in places like Des Moines, Rochester, Eau Claire, Fargo, Duluth, Sioux Falls, or other smaller markets in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, or the Dakotas. These are typically niche national touring artists that have dedicated fans that will travel. This is true of many of the artists that Amsterdam books, regardless whether it's my show, another promoter's show, or their in-house show. Many of the artists and people who travel stay overnight in hotels in St. Paul, as well as spend money Downtown at Amsterdam and other area businesses.

The current bike lane proposal would permanently remove Amsterdam's street parking on Wabasha immediately adjacent to the stage door. These parking spots are used for band vehicle parking, usually busses or large 15-passenger vans with trailers, and for loading instruments and equipment in and out. If the current bike lane proposal is implemented, tour vehicles will have to park farther away, with the tour party potentially transporting gear across very busy intersections or through pedestrian traffic. Imagine a three band tour with a bus and a trailer having to park a block or more away, rolling their heavy road cases along the city sidewalks for a 5 pm load in time, on a day when the Wild are playing the Xcel, there are concerts at the Roy Wilkins and The Palace, a Broadway musical is at the Ordway, and there's a dog show at River Centre. Now imagine that same scenario in early February, when it's 0 degrees F, and there's salt everywhere gumming up the wheels on all the road cases (also note, extreme cold is very bad for some musical instruments, particularly acoustic wooden instruments).

Losing band parking on Wabasha would have cascading negative effects on the rest of Amsterdam's business. Competition for talent is stiff among venues within the Minneapolis and St. Paul city limits. Amsterdam is unique in size within St. Paul and thus competes with mostly Minneapolis venues for shows and tours. Artists expect, and in particular contracts for larger or more established artists often require, a safe parking spot for their touring vehicle(s) adjacent to the venue. In some cases, they also contractually require that this parking is contiguous. This is very important to them. They are loading in and out thousands and thousands of dollars worth of musical instruments and heavy gear that is their livelihood. The safety and security of the touring party as well as mitigating the business risks associated with transporting instruments, equipment, and merchandise is paramount. If a venue like Amsterdam cannot accommodate a tour's parking requirements, artists and booking agents have several other venues in Minneapolis to choose from that can accommodate their requirements, taking money away from Amsterdam and St. Paul. This has cascading effects.

The live music business is an ecosystem. Booking agents tend to be creatures of habit and like to book their artists at the same venues, with the same people, and use similar tour routes from city to city for multiple tours. Once you lose out on one artist from one agent for any reason, you may lose future shows with artists that also book with that same agent. In addition, the music industry is very chatty. Word gets around if a venue is difficult to work with for any reason, including a difficult or dangerous parking and load in/out situation. This would be detrimental to Amsterdam's core business - high quality live music - as they won't be able to book the same high caliber talent they have built their business and their reputation upon. That will send money away from Amsterdam and St. Paul and to Minneapolis on a systemic level. And remember, there's already very stiff competition for talent before the loss of the Wabasha parking spaces.

It's not about losing one act here or there, it's about Amsterdam losing entire talent pipelines (and thus business pipelines) to our neighbors across the river, because of an unacceptable parking situation. Or even worse, because venues are in high demand in the Twin Cities, and because our geography already makes it often inconvenient and sometimes very difficult to route tours to our metro area, if booking agents write off Amsterdam because of an unacceptable parking situation and no other venues of appropriate size are available in the Metro area on the dates they need, then booking agents decide it's too much bother to play Minnesota, instead opting for an a city closer to or more "on the way" to other tour stops at a venue that can accommodate the date AND their professional needs.

As a promoter, I love booking shows at Amsterdam and the bands I've booked like playing there. However, if artists or the tour party are unhappy with their experience in our city, including because the tour party had a bad experience resulting from a sub-par parking situation, I will have to take future shows to other venues that can better meet the demands of a professional tour. That means going to Minneapolis. I am just one small promoter that does a couple shows a year, but I guarantee that I am not unique.

It would be a terrible shame if a City parking change ultimately killed a very well-run, professional venue that bands love playing, and is the only venue of it's size in Downtown St. Paul. Please take all the concerns that Amsterdam has raised very seriously and work to find a solution that both improves biking in Downtown St. Paul while retaining parking adjacent to Amsterdam's stage door.

Thank you,  
Renee Schaefer  
Cyclist  
Owner, Darkling Sounds, LLC  
St. Paul Ward 4 Resident