

The proposed plan for Pelham Boulevard Reconstruction and Grand Round bike lane (Mississippi River Boulevard to 1-94): time for responsive leadership to reset the plans

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City of St. Paul staff members met with Desnoyer Park residents on January 12th to answer design questions about the proposed [reconstruction of Pelham Boulevard and installation of a bike lane \(Grand Round\)](#). The meeting was requested by neighbors in response to a meeting on 12/9/2025 with project leaders.

At the January meeting, Randy Newton who is a member of the City's Pelham project leadership team stated that *reducing cut-through traffic (on Pelham) was not a goal of the project or the project designers*.

This statement is significant for several reasons.

It was the first time after more than a decade of engaging the neighborhood in discussions about the proposed Grand Round bike lane and Pelham reconstruction that project leaders provided this vital information about the project's purpose.

From the earliest conversations with the City planners, neighborhood residents identified safety concerns and conditions generated by the combination the presence of trucks, the high volume of traffic on Pelham due to cut-through traffic and absence of any traffic regulation to counter these problems.

Conditions included the following: truck traffic, pedestrian safety, speed of traffic, impatient drivers passing cars (in both directions), inability of drivers attempting to safely access Pelham Blvd from intersections and driveways during several hours of the day due to high volume of traffic and drivers' unwillingness to stop, and air and noise pollution generated by high volume of traffic.

Every one of these concerns remain and neighbors have continued to share their experiences (with unsafe traffic conditions) and highlight them in the planning process for the 2026 reconstruction project.

In a process designed to offer an opportunity for residents to identify their values and concerns related to the design for Pelham, reducing the volume of traffic combined with requests to install stop signs to require traffic to slow down and stop and enforcement remain at the top of the list.

Yet, at no point until the January 12th meeting did the planners state clearly their intentions or their purpose. Only then did we learn that it was *never their intention* to design a street for the purpose of reducing the volume of traffic.

As a neighborhood, we were invited by the City planners to participate in a process to discuss the design plans for Pelham Boulevard. We can credibly argue that from the outset, planners should

have stated that the design for Pelham would NOT include measures to reduce the volume of traffic.

That information should have been disclosed as early as 2014 during the community engagement events organized to present plans for the Grand Round.

We engaged in good faith, but we were denied vital, relevant information which placed us at a disadvantage. To add insult to injury, the City has just issued assessments to homeowners on Pelham Boulevard to pay for their cut-through road and a bike lane and sidewalk of questionable value.

In response to learning that the city planners had finally revealed their intentions for Pelham, one neighbor commented that had City planners been transparent, the neighborhood could have pursued an alternative status for the street. Pelham could have become a residential street rather than serve the City's purpose as a major feeder road for cut-through traffic.

So where does that leave the neighborhood and the City Council which is set to vote on January 28th to vote to approve the proposed plan and the property assessments issued to homeowners residing on Pelham Boulevard for the cost of the reconstruction and bike lane?

It is unthinkable that the City Council would agree to take a vote after learning that City planners failed from the outset to provide crucial information relevant to design plans.

Neighbors are just learning about this failure. It is an uncomfortable truth that planners, the City Council, and the neighborhood must reckon with.

We need to take account of our circumstances. Here is what is clear.

The plans for reconstructing Pelham Boulevard have been driven by the plan to install an off-street bike lane and sidewalk as part of the Grand Round. The design for this very brief section of the Grand Round is financially burdensome and comes at a cost to the neighborhood's landscape and to the homeowners (Pelham Boulevard). From the outset of the planning process, neighbors offered less costly alternatives to the design that aligned better with the City's stated objectives for the Grand Round. These were dismissed in favor of the proposed plan. Consequently, design decisions for reconstruction continue to be determined by the design for the bike lane and the addition of a sidewalk on the east side of Pelham (from the river boulevard to Beverly Avenue) The addition of the sidewalk into a landscape that cannot easily accommodate it reveals the lengths the design plan must go to achieve the planners' objectives. Planners propose to move the street bed 14 feet west of its current location to provide space for the sidewalk on the east side. This design moves the street closer to homeowners and reduces the green space and tree canopy overall. It should be noted that a sidewalk on the west side of Pelham exists which the City struggles to maintain.

The condition of Pelham Boulevard has been deteriorating for years. The high volume of traffic (including the presence of trucks) has contributed to its deterioration. There is agreement that it needs to be replaced. There is also agreement that it needs to be narrowed to 24 ft-the narrowest width permitted to accommodate traffic in both directions and access for emergency vehicles.

Neighbors who are well acquainted with the patterns of driving behavior of cut-through traffic have asked for stop signs to require drivers to stop so that they can navigate the neighborhood streets safely. Given the City's intention to welcome cut-through traffic, these stop signs are even more important for neighborhood safety and livability.

The proposed plan for Pelham is tied to a costly bike lane and sidewalk of questionable value and design. The alternative is to construct a street as described above, replace the current bike lane with a green space landscaped to manage rainwater effectively and install signs welcoming cyclists that direct them to bike on residential streets in our neighborhood. Otis Avenue will take riders to Eustis Avenue. At the top of Eustis, cyclists can take Beverly (turn right) to the park and stop for a drink of water and conversation with residents enjoying time with their children on the playground. Or stop to eat a bag lunch. Or watch the frisbee games organized by the students from Avalon School. Or play a game of pick-up basketball before resuming their ride. As a neighborhood, we are prepared to welcome cyclists (and pedestrians).

It is important that the City Council recognize Desnoyer Park as a St. Paul neighborhood. In recent years more young families have made it their home. Nearly thirty per cent of Desnoyer Park residents are children. The residents value the public park in every season, the wealth of green spaces, and our neighbor-the Mississippi River. And like every other neighborhood, they want to be able to navigate streets safely.

Desnoyer Park residents are counting on the City Council to acknowledge the failure of leadership on the part of City planners and reject the proposed plan in favor of an alternative design that is responsive to the neighborhood and be fiscally responsible. It provides a new street, honors the neighborhood's requests, and closes a chapter on a decade long community engagement process that we hope will never be repeated.

January 25, 2026

Marita Bujold and Paul Philpott
325 Pelham Boulevard
St. Paul, MM 55104

Via U.S. Mail and Email

Shari Moore, City Clerk
City of Saint Paul
15 Kellogg Blvd. West 310 City Hall
Saint Paul, MN 55102

cityclerk@ci.stpaul.mn.us

Re: Pelham Blvd. Reconstruction from Mississippi River Blvd. to Franklin Ave. (the
"Project")

As owners of the property located at 325 Pelham Boulevard, we object to the proposed design for Pelham Boulevard Reconstruction and we object to the \$10,154.25 special assessment to pay the cost of proposed design.

Under Minnesota law, a special assessment must confer a 'special benefit' on the property to be assessed and the amount of the special assessment may not exceed the special benefit conferred on the property. "Special benefit" is defined as an immediate increase in the property's market value resulting from the project. In other words, the City must establish that the assessed property increases in value by at least as much as the assessed sum.

We reject the claim that our property will obtain special benefit from implementing this redesign project. On the contrary, the project design makes permanent the loss of value to our property generated by the implementation of the interim bike lane in 2017. With the implementation of that bike lane, we lost access to on-street parking and 'gained' a bike lane of questionable value. This combined with the City's failure to respond to conditions created by the road's current design decrease the value of our property. Conditions include truck traffic, speed of traffic, inability of drivers and pedestrians to access Pelham at intersections and from driveways during several hours a day due to high volume of traffic and driver behavior and expectations (to move swiftly unimpeded on Pelham), absence of stop signs requiring drivers to stop, air and noise pollution generated by on average more than 5000 vehicles daily.

The proposed design will not alter those conditions. The noise and air pollution generated by traffic will continue. The volume of traffic, and safety issues will continue.

In fact, City planners stated only as recently as January 12th, 2026, that it was never their intention to design a road that would reduce the volume of traffic. During an engagement period extending from 2014-the present, neighbors engaged in good faith, but planners never disclosed their intentions and purpose for Pelham and our neighborhood. The City's plan is to reconstruct Pelham to accommodate cut-through traffic. Their street design supports our case that our property will not benefit from the proposed project.

It must be noted that the design plans for reconstructing Pelham have been driven by the plan to install an off-street bike lane and sidewalk as part of the Grand Round. The City has failed to demonstrate that the addition of a permanent bike lane and sidewalk adds benefit or value to the properties on Pelham. Again, it must be noted that the City struggles to maintain the interim bike lane and the sections of the sidewalk they are responsible for on the west side of Pelham. When asked if the City had funding to maintain the proposed bike lane and sidewalk, they were unable to answer in the affirmative.

A design plan that adds more infrastructure that the City may not be able to maintain, does not add value to our property or benefit the neighborhood. The proposed plan includes the addition of the sidewalk from Otis to the Mississippi River Road on the east side which requires moving the street bed 14-feet west of its current location destroying green space and tree canopy and locating vehicle traffic and noise and air closer to homes.

We reject the costly proposed design as it makes permanent conditions that do not benefit us and propose that the City omit the bike lane and sidewalk and construct a less costly 24-foot street-the narrowest width permitted to accommodate traffic and access for emergency vehicles. Add the stop signs requested by neighbors to require drivers to stop so they can navigate the neighborhood safely. Given the City's intention to welcome cut-through traffic, these stop signs are even more important for neighborhood safety and livability. Cyclists directed to bike on the neighborhoods' residential streets will find the safe conditions they need to navigate from the river to the bike lane on the I-94 bridge and beyond.

Sincerely,
Marita Bujold. Paul Philpott

Marita Bujold Philpott

P. D. Philpott