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**To:** [\\*CI-StPaul>Contact-Council](#)  
**Cc:** [Polly Heintz](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment to the Council regarding the upcoming vote to ban semi-trucks from the city limits  
**Date:** Monday, May 22, 2023 9:33:24 AM  
**Attachments:** [Public comment to St Paul City Council - semi-truck ban vote - Verme and Martin.docx](#)

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Dear City Council Members,

Attached is a public comment letter regarding the upcoming vote to ban semi-trucks from St. Paul. My husband and I wholeheartedly support a "Yes" vote as detailed in the attachment.

Please let us know if you have comments or questions.

Thank you.

Ann

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May 22, 2023

Dear St. Paul City Council Members,

I was disappointed to learn that I missed a meeting about the proposed truck ban but wanted to pass along my husband and my **strong support** for enacting this ban as we have been adversely affected by semi-truck parking (tractors and tractors and trailers) in our neighborhood for the past three years. In fact, I called in two violators – one a tractor and one a tractor and trailer – just this past Tuesday (May 17<sup>th</sup>).

The saga of truck parking in my neighborhood is way too long to detail here and besides, you know the issues and you know what it will take to remove them from the city, but I wanted to pass along a few tidbits anyway as follows:

- My husband and I actually live on a “border” street – Emerald. Our side of the street, Emerald St. SE, is in Minneapolis. The other side of the street, Emerald St., St. Paul, used to be the home of Weyerhaeuser Lumber Yard until they sold most of their property to a developer who then built three apartments – the Millberry (also known as a “workforce apartment”) and two senior apartments – The Legends at Berry. The city also installed two new streets, Van Buren and Myrtle, and last spring it completed a park between Myrtle and Van Buren. There is one vacant lot left that is reserved for a fourth apartment building and that lot is directly across from us (on Emerald) on the south side of Van Buren.
- Many of the residents of the Millberry apartments are independent truck drivers and once they moved in, semi-truck parking – mostly tractors – increased dramatically on these streets:
  - Emerald
  - Van Buren (most violations occur on this street and on one day in December 2020, nine tractors and one semi-truck tractor and trailer parked on this very small street). It continues to be a problem.
  - Myrtle
  - Eustis (Eustis is second to Van Buren in violations. When the trucks park there (in spite of “No Parking” signage, they are essential parking in a traffic lane, forcing cars to go around them).
  - Wabash
  - And two other streets at the edge of the neighborhood, Pelham and Cromwell. Each of these streets contains a large number of trucks. Many of the drivers parking on Pelham park too close to the four-way stop sign and in the winter, they stick out into the traffic lane.
- To try to combat the parking problem the city placed No Commercial Vehicle Parking signs on Van Buren and Emerald. They are regularly and willfully ignored. There are also No Parking (circle and slash) signs on Eustis and Wabash. They are regularly and willfully ignored. As you know, this has been happening all across the St. Paul city limits for years now and is not getting any better.
- As you may also know, drivers are not only getting bolder about parking where they shouldn’t, they are getting much more creative about the lies they spin to Parking Enforcement, my favorite being, “It was Ramadan and so I had to go in and eat.” I have yet to see a carve-out exception in any ordinance that allows for this but did award “style points” for creativity.

- Speaking of creativity, some drivers of semi-truck tractors and trailers have also taken to putting on their emergency flashers for as long as a hour while they run home, usually to the Millberry Apartments, to do whatever it is they do there. One driver did just that last week on Van Buren where he left his tractor and trailer parked there with flashers on from 11:00 until almost midnight. Never once have I see a tow truck, or a repair truck come to assist them and that's because there is not an emergency. And as per the usual, the drivers have parked right next to a "No Commercial Vehicle Parking sign."
- Based on my own experience with some of the drivers, I believe that many are now operating on a "we don't care, we don't have to" basis. In fact, years ago, after one driver texted me that I was a "F\*\*king Racist F\*\*king Bitch," he also texted me "I can park wherever I want." Signage doesn't matter, tickets and other enforcement doesn't matter, only their convenience matters and apparently the rest of us trying to park near our homes or near businesses like the Urban Growler are out of luck. As a result, many of the streets in St. Paul, this neighborhood included, looks like a truck stop, albeit a long one (see Concordia and St. Anthony Boulevard)! And until recently, Hunting Valley Road off Highway 280 looked like a trucking repair plaza as both streets were lined, bumper to bumper, with various and sundry commercial vehicles. It was an embarrassing eyesore and also difficult to drive on.
- Over the years, I have developed a fantastic working relationship with the SPPD's Parking Enforcement Unit, first with Sergeant Joshua Moore who recently left that unit, and now his replacement, Sergeant Heather Weyker. I also started keeping track of the number of times I've called for a PEO to come out, the number of trucks (this one is an approximate number) and have numerous photos of the trucks, mostly so I can include a license plate number when I call in. Although the trucks started parking on Van Buren as early as spring of 2020, I did not know who to call or how to report these violations until late 2020, and so starting from that point until May 17, 2023 when I reported two in one day, the numbers are:
  - Calls made to Ramsey Dispatch/Parking Enforcement – 148 (some were multiple calls on the same day).
  - Number of trucks reported – 192
  - I think that this is a lot given the small parking footprint I described above.
- In the articles that have been published about this problem over the past couple of years, the trucking association and some of its members have, in our opinion, whined endlessly about how this ban will adversely impact their business and their ability to own a business and that may be true but consider the following:
  - The ability to get to work has absolutely nothing to do with the city's ordinance prohibiting commercial vehicle parking in residential neighborhoods. I laughed out loud when I read that in the recent *Star Tribune* article because as I said above, they don't care.
  - The ability to get to work has nothing to do with the fact that the drivers regularly and willfully ignore traffic laws and posted signage. And I would posit that as holders of a higher classification of a driver's license than those of us who drive non-commercial vehicles, they have a higher duty to pay special attention to those items. But even in the absence of any signage, ignorance of the law is no excuse.
  - Most of us use our cars to drive to work and some people have to drive long distances to get to the office. Nothing in the ordinance, and nothing in the St. Paul city charter guarantees any individual a living, or that a commute to work will be easy, or that trucks have the unfettered right to park wherever they please.
  - I remain irritated with these complaints when I do not see any initiative on the part of the trucking association to educate the drivers on the importance of obeying the law or

to work with the city on solutions. This faux outrage doesn't even begin to match our very real inconvenience and annoyance that these violators continue to park on residential streets, ordinances be damned! And let me add that when I first reached out to Parking Enforcement in December 2020, it was because the drivers of at least four semi-truck tractors (out of nine parked on tiny little Van Buren) started their engines and let them run, unattended for, in one case, 10 hours! And even though Parking Enforcement came out, there was nothing they or we could do.

So, City Council Members, we encourage you to try to stop the insanity by voting "Yes" to ban semi-truck tractors and semi-truck tractors and trailers in the city limits, but we also want to warn you that you must – MUST – remain committed to enforcing this ban, to ticketing and if necessary, towing, and if necessary, educating these drivers via various organizations – the Trucking Association or perhaps even CAIR-MN as many of the drivers we've encountered are Somali - on the rules of the road and the importance of compliance. The lack of consistency and fairness in the application of ordinance violations between the truck drivers and drivers of non-commercial vehicles has created a reverse discrimination situation that needs to be corrected as we lowly car drivers often suffer greater consequences for violating an ordinance than they do including towing and in some cases, the issuance of a bench warrant. Finally, although in the perfect world, the City of St. Paul would render assistance to these drivers to help them find alternative parking so that they don't clog up city streets, it is not your job. Your job is to "return" the city streets to the residents and to make driving those streets less hazardous than they are now due to overzealous semi-truck parking.

Respectfully yours,

Ann M. Verme, Attorney at Law  
Andrew O. Martin