

## RE: Meeting re: Mill District traffic, intersections and crossings

From: Fletcher, Steve

Sent: Fri, May 11, 2018 at 4:41 pm

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Cc: Zaffrann, David, Dorle, Laura

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Thank you to everyone who attended the community meeting last week about traffic in the Mill District at the Stonebridge! There were over fifty people in attendance and a good conversation between all of the neighborhood residents, city staff, and myself. Here is a brief summary of the meeting, the information presented, the concerns that were raised (with the caveat that we have undoubtedly missed some of the perspectives expressed), and the key points of follow-up for my office and city staff:

- Traffic Engineers Allan Klugman and Shane Morton presented historical information about the Mill District, including traffic counts from before and after the redevelopment of the area from surface parking lots to other uses.
  - Traffic counts dropped significantly from pre-redevelopment to post-redevelopment, to a low point in 2005. Traffic counts increased in subsequent years and peaked in 2010, then decreased by 19% to the latest traffic count data available from 2014.
  - Comprehensive traffic counts have not been taken since 2014 due to all of the major projects that have happened downtown in recent years that have changed “normal” traffic patterns.
  - Public Works staff committed to conducting traffic counts – including cars, bicycles, and pedestrians – during this summer season in order to collect up-to-date data for the Mill District to inform future projects.
  - Project-specific traffic counts are always taken as a data baseline to inform that specific project.
- Erin Feehily presented information on the planned 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bikeway Upgrade, which includes the installation of 2’ raised concrete curbs to separate bike lanes from moving traffic lanes and parked vehicles, as an upgrade from the existing bollards. Besides the obvious advantages for bicycles, we discussed some advantages for other modes of transit:
  - This project will result in a net increase in parking spaces on 11<sup>th</sup> Ave.
  - Removing the metered parking space on the west side of 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. nearest to 2<sup>nd</sup> St., while keeping the “bollard box” and adding the protected intersection, will slow down vehicles turning right onto 11<sup>th</sup> southbound and increase visibility for people leaving the Bridgewater garage.
  - The protected intersection will include a safer, more visible set of pedestrian crossings at 11<sup>th</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> by reducing conflicts between vehicles and people and clarify the walking and biking space through the intersection.
  - One follow-up item we promised was to clarify the procedural funding and next steps for this project. The project was approved as part of the Bicycle Master Plan by the previous council in 2015, and does not need to come before City Council again to proceed. That does not mean it

could not be delayed, but there is not an easy or straightforward opportunity to do that.

- A DMNA board member shared the DMNA resolution calling on the city to hit pause on this project until a traffic study can be conducted. There are significant costs involved in delaying the project on this block, and that raises questions about whether this is the right approach. I'm learning more about the costs, and also about whether or not there is a realistic possibility that traffic data could prompt a change to the bike plan, and I will keep everyone updated.
- Several people expressed a desire for a stop sign and pedestrian crossing at 2<sup>nd</sup> St. S. and 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. to increase pedestrian safety for people crossing 2<sup>nd</sup> St. to Gold Medal Park, and to slow down traffic on 2<sup>nd</sup> St. in general.
  - Public Works staff outlined the "traffic warrants" analysis that goes into decisions about the installation of stop signs. The warrants are based on vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian volumes at the intersection along with an analysis of recent crash history. For context, staff referenced the recently completed City of Minneapolis Pedestrian Crash Study that covered the 10 year period from 2007 to 2016. Out of 7,200 intersections city-wide, roughly 1,000 had one or more crashes. The City pays particular attention to the top 25-50 as those with the highest need for interventions.
  - It does not seem right to me that there should need to be a crash or other accident for the City to actively consider a stop sign that otherwise fits the traffic patterns of the area, and I heard that reaction from many others in attendance last week. With Gold Medal Park across the street and a 3-block stretch of 2<sup>nd</sup> St. with no stop or enhanced crossing, this feels like a natural place for a controlled intersection and I will continue to pursue that through conversations with Public Works staff.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue are currently scheduled to be repaved in 2022 as part of the Public Works Department's Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). This will be another opportunity for evaluation of district traffic patterns and adjustments based on community feedback.
- One other idea that some folks had for increased pedestrian and bicycle safety is greater enforcement. We will talk to MPD about appropriate follow-up.
- Several people expressed a desire for a more full-picture understanding of the plan for cars, bikes, and pedestrians together – and for things not to feel so siloed between those modes of travel. I agree, I think this is an area of improvement for the Public Works Department and the City as a whole, and it's something I'm committed to working on.
- Throughout the course of the evening's discussion, many people talked about a shared collective vision and identity for the District, which I summed up as primarily three things: a downtown residential neighborhood, a destination arts district, and a connection point to the Mississippi River. This resonated with a lot of people, and I also encourage you to share your vision for the neighborhood with me as we move forward.

#### **FOLLOW-UP & NEXT STEPS**

- **Regarding the bikeway project, based on the feedback from this meeting, we came up with a design modification that we think solves a lot of problems that we're exploring.** Removing the two metered parking spaces mid-block on the west side of 11<sup>th</sup> between Washington & 2<sup>nd</sup> St. would allow for the addition of a southbound traffic lane, starting at the Bridgewater driveway and

ending at a right-turn lane onto Washington, creating, in effect, a designated entrance lane onto 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. southbound for drivers coming out of the Bridgewater.

- **We're exploring the feasibility of that option, and will bring that design forward in a follow-up meeting very soon if it does prove to be feasible.** This seems to me like a best-case scenario if it can work, because it solves all (or nearly all) of the traffic problems discussed in the meeting, and works with the bikeway.
- **At the same time that we present on that option, I'll provide an update on the status of the concrete curb installation, including an update on whether there are sufficiently viable alternative plans that have emerged that seem worth incurring the costs of delay.** A few people have approached me about proposals to re-route bicycle traffic or make other significant changes to some mode of travel flow nearby. I'll admit I'm skeptical any of those proposals will take flight, but we'll take a little time to pull on those threads and see if anything seems promising over the next few weeks. If you've cooked up a solution you feel the city hasn't considered, now is the time to get in touch with our office and let us know.
- **Public Works staff committed to conducting traffic counts – including cars, bicycles, and pedestrians – during this summer season in order to collect up-to-date data for the Mill District to inform future projects.** We will hold a follow-up meeting later this year after that data collection has happened, so we can have an informed discussion about the traffic levels in the area.
- We're going to continue to work with Public Works on the need for an additional stop sign and pedestrian crossing at 2nd St. S. and 10th Ave. S., and additional traffic calming along the corridor.

Thanks again to everybody who came out to the meeting to have such a robust and respectful discussion. We all care about this neighborhood and want to make it better, and I think that was really clear to everyone in attendance last week.

En avant,

**Steve Fletcher**

*Council Member, Minneapolis Ward 3*

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