

SOS – Save Our Street Information Session

City of St. Paul's Plans

Impact of Summit Avenue Regional Bike Trail
(SART) from Mississippi River Blvd to Fairview

July 10, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Roddie Turner – SOS Steering Committee Member

- Why SOS was formed
- The City's process on SART has not been transparent
 - Design Advisory Committee input was a sham
 - Comments were 20:1 against SART – so the City turned off that function on its website
 - “How do we shut this down”

The City is Hiding the Impacts of SART

- Independent arborist study: ~ 950 trees will be destroyed
- City's consultant Bolton & Menk: Keep existing curbs in place
 - Protects critical and structural root zones
 - Preserves Summit Avenue's historic symmetrical streetscape
- City's Project Manager admitted: an off-road trail can't be constructed under Bolton & Menk's recommendations

Here's How SART Will Impact You

- Your trees will be decimated.
- Your driveways will be dug up and rebuilt.
- Your sidewalks will be dug up and rebuilt.
- Your curbs will be removed, and existing granite curbs discarded.
- Your boulevard and medians will be dug into 3-4 feet.
- Every intersection and storm sewer will be rebuilt.
- Snow removal will be a nightmare
- And the City will demand you pay up to 25% of SART's cost!!

The Impacts of SART on Summit Avenue

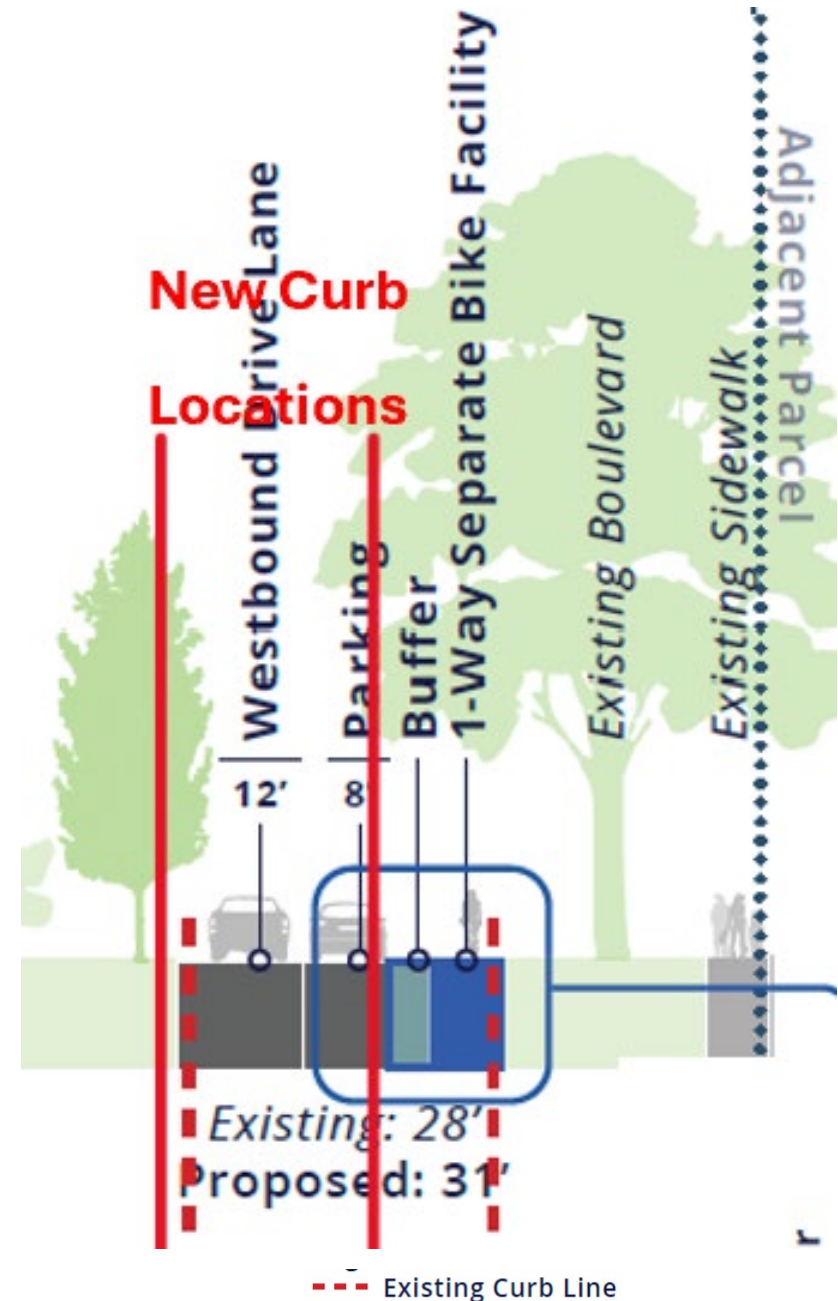
Gary Todd, Steering Committee Chair

- Plan will destroy the Summit tree canopy
- All curbs will have to be moved to build trail
- MRB to Fairview – 2028; Fairview to Hamline - 2029
- Trail design at intersections also removes ~ 100 trees
- Plans for closing as many as 14 median crossings

All Curbs Will Have to be Moved

- Existing = 28 ft.; Proposed = 31 ft.
- 8 ft. trail – 3 ft. buffer
- Trail requires moving all storm drains
- Dramatically increases impacts of construction
- Severely increases trees with root systems damages

Source: Pg. 125 – Approved Summit Avenue Regional Trail Plan



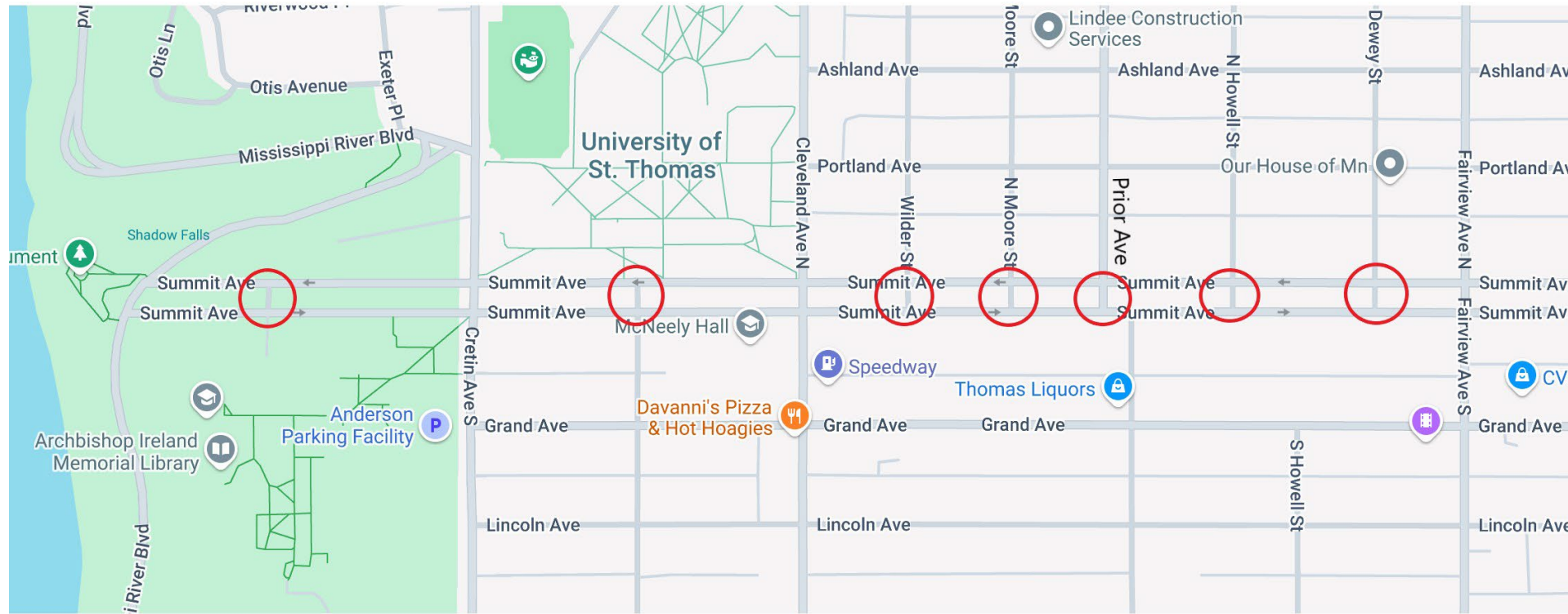
Trail Crossings At Intersections



- 46 intersections – MRB to the Cathedral
- Approximately 100 corner trees will be sacrificed for this design element alone
- Existing on-street lanes don't require this irreversible loss of trees

City's Plans for SART

Source: Pg. 147 – Approved
Summit Avenue Regional
Bike Trail Plan



Median Closures Under Consideration

- Plan considers closing up to 14 median crossings
- Emergency vehicles will have to re-route, delaying access to homes and businesses
- Increasing traffic on side streets and major intersections

There Is No Space East of Lexington to Construct SART

- City initially rejected this design: “NOT RECOMMENDED”
 - No explanation ever given for reversing course
- Requires eliminating roughly 50% of the parking
 - Remaining parking will shift sides every few blocks
 - Produces a zig-zag “chicane” in the roadway from north to south and back
 - Completely destroys Summit Avenue’s symmetrical streetscape
- The City refuses to identify any of the specifics of these impacts of SART, individually or in the aggregate on Summit’s tree canopy

Environmental Impact of SART



Tree near 1208 Summit

- 30 inch diameter
- Pin Oak
- Annual value - \$371*

Versus 5 inch sapling
replacement

- Annual value - \$28

*Source: arborday.org/value

Total environmental cost estimated for the community

950 trees with 40 years to regrow

$$\$350 \times 950 \times 40 = \$13,300,000$$

Make the City Follow the Law

Bob Cattnach, Pro Bono Counsel for SOS

- City refuses to disclose the impacts of SART
 - SOS has submitted requests under Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA)
 - City is stonewalling identifying SART's impacts
 - City's plan: stall until it's too late to stop SART
- City response: PR campaign attacking SOS motives

City's Standard Playbook: Deny, Delay, Then Claim It's Too Late to Change Anything

- Feel good – but phony – engagement process as Roddie noted earlier
- Empty (and legally unenforceable) promises to protect trees *to the extent practicable*
- City unilaterally decides – its never practicable
- But their promises to the Court of Appeals should come back to haunt them

How We Make the City Comply With the Law

- Make a record: City refuses to identify impacts for all of SART
 - Connected action doctrine requires them to do so
- SOS can sue under MGDPA if necessary.
- Requested Order: City must produce all data showing the impacts of SART **before** finalizing the design – as it promised to the Court of Appeals

SOS Will Petition the City for an EAW (Environmental Assessment Worksheet)

- Standard for an EAW:
 - “The project may have the potential for significant environmental effects”
 - SART cannot proceed unless petition dismissed
- City has claimed there is no potential for adverse impacts – ignoring all facts to the contrary
- SOS will have to file a Writ of Certiorari with Court of Appeals – process will take ~ 9 months

MERA Prohibits the Destruction of the Trees and Historical Streetscape of Summit Avenue

- Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA) Mn. Stat. 116B, protects the natural resources of the state – defined to *include historic resources* - from destruction.
- City [must] establish that there is “**no feasible and prudent alternative.**” Minn. Stat. 116B.04(b)

Key Take-Aways

- Summit is already safe for cyclists
 - It is not listed as a high crash corridor
 - It can be improved, but no need to waste taxpayer dollars on a gold-plated trail
- City is already under financial strain
- Too many other areas of the City do not have *any* bike facilities
- All of Summit does not have to be reconstructed
 - City's own data shows infrastructure in good condition
 - Modern construction methods available to address those parts in need of repair
 - Other streets are in dire need of repair (e.g. Shepard Road)
- Prioritizing Summit makes a mockery of the City's commitment to equity

What Can You Do to Help?

- Contact the City and demand that the environmental impact of SART on the full length of Summit be identified before final design
 - The City committed to the Court of Appeals to do this
 - Handout has contact information
- Give your time (and treasure)
 - We need more volunteers as the City fast-tracks SART
 - We will hold a fund-raiser in the fall to cover legal costs
- Take a sign (and one for your neighbor!)
- Scan the QR code for the SOS website