Things Have Changed – Time to Adapt

Some significant changes have occurred since the proposed Summit Avenue Regional Bike Trail (SART) was approved in 2023. These changes challenge the assumptions used to justify this project. I see five major changes that should warrant a reconsideration of this project.

First, the City of St. Paul has now agreed to do an environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) to determine the actual impact of building this trail on the historic tree canopy and character of Summit Avenue. No actions should be taken and no funds should be spent to advance this project, until these impacts are fully understood.

Second, the DEMAND FORECAST section of the proposed plan (Pg. 35) bases the expected growth of Summit Avenue cyclists on a forecast that St. Paul's population would grow by over 9% by 2040. The actual population growth since the last census in 2020 is a NEGATIVE 1.13%. The St. Paul population growth trend that was supposed to fuel the demand for this bike trail is not going to reach their projection. This adds to the absence of any real, data driven estimates of increased bike usage expected to result from building this trail.

Third, E-bike and scooter usage has exploded (quadrupled) since 2019 and is now expected to double by 2030. The proposed plan does not factor in these high-speed two-wheel vehicles. In fact, E-Bikes are not mentioned once in the 277 pages of the document. Do people want these unregulated vehicles that can travel up to 28 miles per hour (or more), racing down a new, separated strip of asphalt in front of their homes? Any new bike facility needs to include plans for ways to manage this traffic. The plans need to go beyond relying on the 'goodwill' of E-bikers. Automobiles are regulated since it often doesn't work out well to only rely on the goodwill of car drivers.

Next, the flow of federal and state funds is drying up. This places a greater demand for local tax dollars to repair streets and maintain parks. The City's budget should only focus on the 'must have' needs of its citizens. Taking 1%

tax revenues to pay for this new bike facility to replace existing bike lanes leaves other needed projects unfunded.

Lastly, per this year's submission by the City to the Capital Improvement Board Committee (Page 20 – Tentative Funding Recommendations - 2026-2027 – Department Process), the maintenance backlog for Parks has grown from $100M at the time the 1% sales tax was approved to now over $235M. This has occurred even after Parks has spent around $60M in an attempt to address this backlog. The 1% sales tax was supposed to address this backlog. No 1% tax revenues should be spent on anything other than clearing this backlog and repairing streets. No new Park facilities, including bike trails that add to this maintenance backlog, should be built until the City demonstrates that they can maintain our existing facilities. Repeated, annual property tax increases are an unrealistic and unsustainable scheme to address this growing backlog.

No actions should be taken and no more tax dollars should be spent on the proposed Summit Avenue Regional Trail (SART) until the results of the EAW are known, the population trend justifies this huge expenditure (recall that the existing bike lanes on Summit are as safe as any bike facility in the City), they have a plan to manage E-Bikes, the withdrawal of federal and state funding is fully accounted for in budget forecasts and Parks can demonstrate that they are able to maintain existing facilities.

Approved Summit Avenue Regional Plan

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