



June 17, 2014

Ms. Erin Laberee, Mr. James Tolaas
Ramsey County Commissioners

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the District 10 Como Community Council, one of Saint Paul's citizen participation districts, representing the 15,000 residents of the Como Park neighborhood. Our purpose is to provide a voice for the neighborhood in shaping decisions made by the city and other governmental agencies. The District 10 Community Council opposes the proposed Dale Street road diet, as currently proposed, for three reasons.

1. There has been a lack of process and inclusive community involvement in the development of the plan.
2. The current plan does not focus on or attend to specific neighborhood needs at different points along Dale Street.
3. The current plan is not compatible with the concept of "Complete Streets."

Any significant modification of Dale Street will have an equally significant impact upon the local neighborhood and surrounding community. Yet, the current plan was developed without any input from local residents. The public meeting held on May 28, 2014 by the Ramsey County traffic engineers cannot be described as involving the community when the grant funding the project had been applied for in 2013. The limited number of homes that received the mailing advertising the meeting is only a small portion of those who will be affected by the proposed plan. No media carried any story regarding the project or the meeting, so it's assumed they weren't notified. The engineers had very few answers to the many questions that community members posed at the meeting. They commonly responded that they were listening and recognized the importance of receiving feedback from local residents, yet they also repeatedly responded that modifications to the plan would not be made. While we were told that a decision was to be made by June 30, the meeting left the distinct impression that a decision had been made long before the May 28 meeting. The Council is quite concerned about the lack of community involvement.

Studies have shown that road diets can lower speeds and make them safer. However, arbitrarily applying a road diet to a street, without studying and treating the individual physical characteristics of a specific area, could have a detrimental effect on the functioning of the road and the neighborhood through which it runs. A traffic study on Dale Street has not been completed at this point. There are many questions that still need to be answered prior to changing lane markings. How will lack of parking affect the neighborhood? How difficult will it be for residents to back out of their driveways when there is only one lane on which all traffic travels? How will a road diet affect traffic on neighboring north/south streets? How will a road diet affect trash & recycling pick up? How will traffic be affected when a Metro Mobility bus needs to park in front of a house for up to 10 minutes for a pick up? What will happen to traffic when a funeral procession makes its way to one of the three cemeteries along Dale? How will traffic make its way around buses?

The engineers at the May 28th meeting mentioned the plan being compatible with the concept of "Complete Streets." On the contrary, we believe the plan does not mesh with my understanding of "Complete Streets." The current plan addresses only motorized traffic. Dale is considered a major north/south bicycle route in the newly proposed Saint Paul Bikeways Plan, yet hardly any consideration is given to accommodate bicycles. Additionally, the plan practically gives up on allowing pedestrians to cross Dale. Part of the success of road diets has stemmed from combining motorized vehicles with bicyclists and pedestrians. Motorists tend to slow down and be more cautious when they know bicyclists and pedestrians are or could be sharing the road space, yet without adequate visual and physical features to alert vehicle drivers to the probability of sharing the road with bicycles and allowing for pedestrians in crosswalks, we do not believe this road diet plan will achieve the "Complete Streets" goal.

The District 10 Como Community Council believes that the current road diet plan is a good starting point, but until some of these issues are further studied and discussed with the community, it needs to be put on hold. If June 30th really is a drop-dead date, then the current plan should be dropped. We would like to see a discussion between Ramsey County, The City of Saint Paul, District 6 and District 10 prior to any changes being made to Dale Street.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me or anyone on the District 10 board with any questions.

Sincerely,

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CC: Saint Paul City Council Members,
District 6 Community Council