

From: Shelley Robshaw
Sent: Friday, February 15, 2013 2:42 PM
To: McCarthy, John (CI-StPaul)
Subject: Traffic circles in St Paul

I understand that part of the planning process for new projects in St Paul include additional traffic circles on Charles Avenue. As a 35+ year resident of the Midway neighborhood, I have lived through many changes and adjusted to them all, good and bad. I work in downtown St Paul, and take the bus to work every day. That means that I walk from my home on Lafond Avenue south on Albert Street to University Avenue. The most dangerous stretch of that walk is the traffic circle at the intersection of Albert and Charles. In the summer, the lovely plantings in the circle are so tall that they obscure the view of oncoming vehicles. As an adult of medium height, it is difficult for cars to see me until they are already part way around the circle. I have had to take evasive action on more than one occasion. Children and the disabled are in much greater danger. In the winter, the city plows have a difficult time clearing the ice and snow around the traffic circle. Any time ice or snow ruts build up on the street in general, they are twice as bad at that intersection. So again, I must take extra care to watch for oncoming traffic, as the vehicles will be less able to stop and I will be more inclined to slip and fall. Plus, since there is no clear rule about stopping for pedestrians in this type of intersection, those of us who are walking are especially vulnerable.

I understand the desire for traffic calming on local streets, and even the interest in establishing alternate bike routes now that University Avenue has been taken over by the light rail, but these traffic circles are not a good solution for our small inner city streets. If the goal is to make ours a more walkable community, adding dangerous conditions for pedestrians makes no sense. The dedicated bike riders I know dislike traffic circles as well. Regarding ADA compliance, I must comment on the terrible maintenance of the sidewalks at the crosswalks. If homeowners are to be held responsible for clearing the walkways, including the handicap access at the corners, then the city must do a much better job of enforcing that. Otherwise, the city needs to maintain those intersections. It is difficult for an able bodied adult to clamber over the ridges and ice along the entire stretch from Lafond to University.

I must make a positive comment about the sidewalk on the southeast corner of University and Albert leading into the Midway Marketplace. Unlike years in the past, this year the plows clearing the parking lot have left the sidewalk area clear for pedestrians. Unfortunately, the entire design of that development was not very pedestrian friendly. Considering the tax increment financing provided to the developer, it is too bad that the neighborhood residents weren't taken into greater consideration when that development was approved. And neither the landlord nor the tenants nor the city take good care of the property. The many trees, which were a big requirement of that project, have been neglected, and a good number have died from lack of water. The quaint street lights, which were to make the area inviting and neighborly, have burned out or been broken and also not maintained.

It will be interesting to see how much care is given to the light rail stations, and how quickly they deteriorate, especially considering the shoddy materials and workmanship that has gone into the project so far. When I inquired about the substandard concrete work, I was told it would be addressed in the punch list. How silly – why allow the contractor to continue with poor materials and work when it could be addressed early on. I was also told that the city of St Paul would be responsible for keeping the weeds out of the brick accent areas along the sidewalks. When that didn't happen, I made it my daily project to and from work to pull them. I was able to keep both sides of University Avenue from Albert to Hamline looking respectable during the summer. I also replaced disturbed sod and picked up trash

around the bus stop at Albert. If the city expects the new light rail to attract riders and businesses, the maintenance budget will need to be stepped up, and we both know that isn't likely in this economic environment.

You are welcome to share all or some of my comments and opinions with the mayor and city council members, as well as the Capital Improvement committee.

Shelley J Robshaw