

JEFFERSON BIKEWAY HISTORY

The Macalester Groveland Community Council (MGCC) and its committees serve to improve life in our neighborhood by fostering citizen participation. The committee members are volunteer residents of our district. One becomes a committee member by participating in three consecutive meetings and requesting to join.

The Council often is called upon to ensure that residents have input into City planning decisions. The committees make advisory recommendations after listening to and considering the commentary at public meetings. Council volunteers announce such meetings by flyering the homes in the affected area as well as placing announcements in local media.

The history of the Jefferson Avenue Bikeway project has three phases: the overall St. Paul bikeway project, the Jefferson Avenue bikeway and the Jefferson/Cleveland refuge island proposal.

The City of Saint Paul, led by its Department of Public Works (DPW), Traffic Engineering Department, applied for and received funding from a Federal Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot (NTP) grant in 2008 or before. The grant funds were to be co-administered by Transit for Livable Communities (TLC). A prime objective was to connect currently fragmented bikeways in Saint Paul and to develop safe, well-designed bikeways in a grid of half-mile increments. These objectives are described in the 2008 City plan.

City engineers sought an appropriate river-to-river bike route and notified MGCC and the Fort Road Federation in February, 2009 of their intent to study Jefferson Avenue with the understanding that any actual proposals for change would be subject to public review. A DPW staff member met with the MGCC Transportation Committee in April to describe what would be proposed to the public. The public meeting was held in June, facilitated by Transportation Committee members. A similar large public meeting was held in September. The “complete streets” approach presented in these meetings included traffic circles, intersection diverters, modified parking and signage.

While the overall public reaction was mixed, many of the objections heard by the Transportation Committee had to do with these design elements and their effect on traffic flow and safety. At the February, 2010, Transportation Committee meeting, a DPW staff member presented a proposal that stripped out these elements, leaving only pavement markings and signs. The other elements could be considered later, based on public review. The Committee passed a resolution supporting the proposal.

DPW continued the public planning process with a public meeting in April 2010 at which they reviewed the design elements apart from signage and pavement markings. These included the idea of a diverter (or pedestrian refuge) at Cleveland and Jefferson. Most department consultation for the remainder of 2010 was with City Council, its members, and other agencies. A test diverter was built in August, 2010 and DPW administered a public comment period that extended through October, 2010. DPW staff members gave an update on the pedestrian refuge test and comment period to the MGCC Transportation Committee in January, 2011 and reported that they would “be in touch” regarding the diverter.

The Committee was next contacted three business days before its July, 2011 meeting with the request to discuss and issue a recommendation on the diverter at its upcoming meeting. MGCC volunteers flyered properties around the proposed diverter. Because of the last minute nature of the review, the lack of documentation sufficiently in advance of the meeting and inability to adequately advertise the meeting,

the Committee did not take a position on the installation of a permanent diverter at the intersection. The MGCC Executive Committee subsequently reviewed the record and recommended that the City not proceed with the diverter project based on the current process.

The Macalester Groveland Community Council exercises its advisory role in the City planning process with guidance from citizen input.

Joel Clemmer
President, Board of Directors
Macalester Groveland Community Council
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