

Memo

To: Council Member Glidden, Council Member Tuthill
From: Shaun Murphy
CC: Mark Hinds (Lyndale neighborhood), Sarah Linnes-Robinson (Kingfield neighborhood), Steve Mosing (Minneapolis Public Works)
Date: 5/26/2010
Re: Staff Recommendation for bike lanes on 1st Avenue S

Meeting with Neighborhood Representatives

Late in 2009 I began working with representatives of the Lyndale and Kingfield neighborhoods to draft a recommendation for improving conditions for bicyclists on 1st Avenue S and Blaisdell Avenue S. This work arose out of a \$150,000 grant from the federal Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTP). While the project runs along 1st and Blaisdell Avenues between 40th Street and 15th Street, the area of special attention in our meeting was 1st Avenue between 40th and 33rd Streets.

This section of 1st Avenue is challenging for two reasons:

1. The street width varies from 29 feet (40th to 38th) to 30 feet (38th to 36th) to 31 feet (36th to 34th) to 32 feet (34th to 33rd).
2. Parking is not allowed on the east side from Monday through Friday (40th to 36th) and from Monday through Saturday (36th to 33rd).

Our neighborhood – Public Works group evaluated the use of bike lanes versus sharrows, as well as the possibility of allowing parking on the east side on all days versus eliminating it on all days. In the end I carried forth a group recommendation for bike lanes, as well as allowing parking on the east side on all days.

Meeting with MnDOT Staff

As a result of the previous recommendation, Public Works staff met with MnDOT staff to discuss design exceptions. A design exception grants us the ability to install a bike lane without widening the street. The background for design exceptions was described in a memo to the May 18th T&PW committee (see pages 3 and 4): http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2010-meetings/20100528/Docs/NTP_Bicycle_Operations_RCA.pdf.

In order to accommodate a bike lane and parking on the east side on all days, three design exceptions were requested:

1. 7' parking (instead of 8')
2. A bike lane counting as 1 of 2 travel lanes (instead of 2 lanes open to motorists)
3. 10' travel lane (instead of 11')

MnDOT staff was amenable to design exceptions #1 and #2, but not #3. The idea of a 10' travel lane occurred between 40th and 38th Streets (in the 29' section). We presented a layout from west to east which was 7' parking – 10' travel lane – 5' bike lane – 7' parking, with parking available on all days on both sides.

In order to compromise on this issue, Public Works staff agreed to a new proposal which would retain a bike lane and not reduce parking compared to the parking available today. Parking allowed on all days was switched to the east side, and parking not allowed Monday – Friday was switched to the west side.

Thus the layout from west to east became 7' parking (not allowed Monday through Friday) – 10' travel lane – 5' bike lane – 7' parking (allowed on all days). The compromise satisfied MnDOT staff because the 10' travel lane would only exist on Saturday's and Sunday's. From Monday to Friday this would be a 17' travel lane.

Public Meeting & Neighborhood Organization Response

On March 17, 2010, a meeting was held to gather input from the public at-large. Input also came via e-mails, phone calls, and a letter, due to extensive outreach by the neighborhood organizations and Public Works. The attached document summarizes the feedback received. There was large support for a bike lane on 1st Avenue. However views were split on the idea of adding more parking along the street. The primary reason cited against adding more parking was the fear of bicyclists being “doored” by driver's side doors opening into the path of a bicyclist in the bike lane. Views were also split on the idea of reducing 1st Avenue from 2 to 1 travel lanes.

The Lyndale and Kingfield neighborhood organizations took respective positions on the Public Works recommendation presented at the public meeting (see attached letters).

Between 33rd and 36th Streets, Lyndale supported a revised layout which from west to east would be 8' parking (allowed on all days) – 11' travel lane – 5' bike lane – 7' parking (not allowed Monday through Saturday). Note that I have approximated those dimensions due to the changing width of 1st Avenue between 33rd and 36th Streets.

Between 36th and 40th Street, Kingfield supported the layout as presented by Public Works. View the following link for our original proposal which that neighborhood supported: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/bicycles/1stBlaisdellLayout.pdf>. The segment between 40th and 38th Streets mirrors the MnDOT compromise noted in the previous section of this memo.

Public Works Recommendation

Given the various viewpoints of individuals, neighborhood organizations, and MnDOT staff, Public Works staff is prepared to make the following recommendation (*background in italics*):

1. **Leave all parking “as is” along 1st Avenue between 33rd and 40th Streets.** Currently parking is allowed on all days on the west side of street, and is restricted on the east side of the street Monday – Saturday (33rd to 36th Streets) and Monday – Friday (36th to 40th Streets). No changes would occur.

Given the split opinions on parking changes, staff is recommending the status quo. We hesitate to recommend the addition of parking for two reasons – 1) Comments in favor of adding parking by residents were not received in significant number, and 2) Added parking would increase the risk of bicyclists being “doored,” particularly in this instance, where the parking lane would be 7 feet (narrower than the minimum standard of 8’). We also hesitate to eliminate all parking on the east side of the street. We have heard that parking demand is high on weekends near 40th Street, because of visitors to the tennis center and Martin Luther King Recreation Center. Parking may also be in high demand on the north end of the project due to nearby places of worship.

2. **Install a bike lane adjacent to the east curb.** The bike lane would be 7’ wide. Note that parking would be allowed in this bike lane on Saturday’s and Sunday’s (40th to 36th Streets) and on Sunday’s (36th to 33rd Streets).

When possible, we believe a bike lane is preferable to sharrows. Bike lanes result in greater use by bicyclists because of added comfort. While we would prefer to not allow parking in bike lanes at any time, we realize that the demand for weekend parking is high. Weekdays are generally the time of highest travel, particularly during the morning and afternoon rush hours. These parking restrictions would still give bicyclists the added comfort of a bike lane during the busiest times.

3. **Reduce from 2 to 1 travel lanes.** Also install a marked buffer zone between the travel lane and bike lane. The buffer zone would be either 4 feet wide (40th to 38th) or 5 feet wide (38th to 33rd).

While opinion was split on the idea of reducing from 2 to 1 travel lanes, the number of comments we received on this issue was low. We received several complaints about speeding and difficult pedestrian crossings in this section of 1st Avenue. We believe that reducing from 2 to 1 travel lanes will result in slower speeds, which will have benefits for the safety of all road users, as well as residents of 1st Avenue. The buffer zone proposed will further encourage slow speeds from motorists (by keeping the existing travel lane narrow), while at the same time providing an area of protection for bicyclists. On weekends the buffer zone will serve as a de facto bike lane for bicyclists, particularly between 38th and 33rd Streets where it will be 5’ in width.

Next Steps

If either of you has any questions or concerns about our recommendation, please let me know. Public Works staff will begin drafting To the Record letters regarding these changes in the coming weeks.

We currently anticipate making changes to 1st Avenue sometime between August and October.

Attachments: 1st/Blaisdell Avenue Public Feedback Summary, Lyndale Letter, Kingfield Letter