



# Payne-Phalen

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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August 19, 2022

VIA EMAIL

Melissa Barnes, PE, North Area Manager  
Minnesota Department of Transportation, Metro District  
Water's Edge Building  
1500 W. County Road B-2  
Roseville, MN 55113-3174

RE: Arcade Street Redesign Project, St. Paul

Dear Melissa:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council. Our Board met in community in our regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, June 28, 2022. The primary item on the agenda was the redesign of Arcade Street from East 7<sup>th</sup> to Larpenteur Avenue. The purpose of this letter is to articulate those issues discussed in community and to clarify the Board's adopted actions on various components of the project.

### **Background to the Community Council's decisions:**

This letter is sent to express our organization's continued interest in and support for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) project. This project presents a once-in-a-generation, transformative opportunity to address long-standing safety, connectivity and quality of life issues for people living and working along the 7<sup>th</sup> and Arcade corridors. If designed properly, the project will greatly benefit vulnerable roadway users through pedestrian crossing upgrades, sidewalk gap closures, speed management tools, streamlined regional trail connections and streetscape/stormwater enhancements. These investments will reinforce MnDOT's commitment to providing a safe, convenient and comfortable multimodal environment.

Pedestrian safety on Arcade Street (MN Highway 61) has been a high order concern for residents and businesses in the Payne-Phalen district for many years. Construction of the East 7<sup>th</sup> and Arcade Streets project will greatly benefit our district's many diverse communities. More specifically, these investments will be particularly helpful to the many multi-cultural merchants who struggling to operate small, family-owned businesses along this vital main street in our district. For too long, our businesses along Arcade Street and East 7<sup>th</sup> have been encumbered by the very challenging pedestrian environment as it currently exists. We also want to call your attention to the critical need for safer passage and crossings because of the many students walking to and from three schools in this corridor - John A. Johnson, Phalen Lake, Farnsworth Upper, and Metropolitan State University. With all of that in mind, PPCC convened an ad-hoc committee that

has been working specifically on this issue since 2019. We have been and will continue to work closely with our colleagues from MnDOT and the City of St. Paul in the coming years.

### **Actions taken by the Community Council:**

The actions taken by PPCC's Board at the Community Council are based on their review of the design proposals made on the project website and their conversation with Fay Simer in the meeting on June 28<sup>th</sup>.

The Payne-Phalen Community Council is generally in agreement with the overall intention to create a four-to-three lane conversion throughout the Arcade Street corridor in District 5 - from East 7<sup>th</sup> Street on the south to Larpenteur Avenue on the north. PPCC also supports the concept of a road diet or narrowing of the road in order to make traffic more legible and to slow vehicular traffic as a reliable means to improve and enhance pedestrian safety. We are glad to see the design of a three-lane roadway from East 7<sup>th</sup> to York and from Geranium all the way up to Larpenteur: One northbound lane, one southbound lane, and a center turn lane.

### **Section C: Arcade Street: East 7<sup>th</sup> to York Avenue**

*The Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council **voted to support** the following items and make the following statements:*

1. PPCC supports creation of a four-to-three lane conversion throughout this segment; One northbound lane, one southbound lane, and a center turn lane.
2. In the stretch of Arcade Street from East 7<sup>th</sup> Street up to York there is a strong concern that MnDOT plans don't currently accommodate for the Purple Line Bus Rapid Transit Project. The Purple Line is a high priority for District 5, and it needs to be accommodated through careful consideration – particularly given the complicated turning motions of transit vehicles to and from the Arcade Street Station to and from the BRT alignments east and west of the Arcade Street bridge over Phalen Boulevard.
3. At the Arcade/Neid Lane intersection and at the Arcade/York intersection, PPCC strongly encourages a robust, well-designed intersection at this station site to create strong, safe, and convenient connections to and from this station stop from the commercial/retail district, employment sites, residential neighborhoods, and community facilities nearby (such as the East Side YMCA). PPCC strongly encourages zebra- striped markings on pedestrian crossings at the Arcade Street Station and all BRT stations. We also call for single-phase pedestrian crossings with countdown timers. PPCC encourages the construction of pedestrian bump-outs/curb extensions in the vicinity for each station to help pedestrians and transit users get safely to and from each BRT station. Design of this intersection should be closely coordinated with MetroTransit's Purple Line project office which is now getting underway.

4. Arcade Street Station on the Purple Line: PPCC envisions a transit-oriented eco-village, and the station should be designed in such a way as to be compatible with new and existing stops on other bus lines, new electric car share service and charging stations ("Evie"), all bike and ped facilities envisioned in the *City of St. Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan*.

#### **Section D: Arcade Street: York Avenue to Geranium Avenue**

*The Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council **voted to support** the following items and make the following statements:*

5. Create a four-to-two lane conversion throughout this segment; One northbound lane, one southbound lane, two lanes of street parking, and a center turn lane. The Board agrees that the centerline should be a double yellow stripe and that both parking lanes are demarcated by solid white lines to clearly differentiate between parking and through traffic.
6. In the stretch of Arcade Street between York Avenue East and Hawthorne Avenue East, we understand that the proposed roadway alignment may require removing some on-street parking spaces. We are looking forward to seeing more detailed information about where street parking will be removed, and which blocks and businesses will be most affected. This is a concern for some of the business owners and/or business operators and we want to ensure that appropriate solutions are considered and vetted with the merchants, residents, and wider community alike.
7. The Board strongly supports the creation and installation of sidewalk extensions (in both directions) along this segment of Arcade.
8. Community members are concerned about whether buses should pull out of traffic (or not) when picking up or dropping off passengers. MnDOT should bring more definitive information forward about what recommendation they are making and what data and information that is based on. If MetroTransit does not already have relevant data from other commercial corridors, MnDOT should conduct a study to determine the differences in pedestrian safety between pullouts versus no pull outs.

*With Board actions and community input in mind, PPCC Staff makes these further recommendations for this segment based on the design proposals displayed by MnDOT's at their August 17<sup>th</sup> public meetings:*

9. Paint alone will not discourage vehicles from using the center turn lanes, or the shoulder to pass other vehicles. Because pedestrian safety is the highest priority for this redesign project, all curb extensions should extend into the street so that there is no ambiguity in where vehicles belong, where cars can be parked, and where it is safe for pedestrians to walk. The concern is especially present in the two blocks of Arcade Street between York and Case:

- a. The current design proposed on August 17<sup>th</sup> includes too many ambiguous areas – shoulders that are too narrow for parking but too wide to be delineated only by paint. The width of these shoulders – and the ambiguity that comes from that – will only recreate the conditions that currently exist, vehicles making illegal passing movements in the parking lane. These shoulders should be narrowed by extending curbs out to the edge of the parking lane or driving lane (thus eliminating left over ambiguous areas of blacktop).
  - b. Likewise, the current design proposed on August 17<sup>th</sup> includes ambiguous areas in the center of the street that are delineated only by paint; these should become concrete or landscaped islands so that traffic movements are more clearly delineated.
10. The relationship between driving lanes, parking lanes, curbs, and curb extensions makes sense in the stretch between Case and Geranium. The block between Geranium and Rose is problematic.
  11. Curb extensions could be tightened up at residential side streets (based on a conversation with Fay Simer and Ruben Collins at the August 17<sup>th</sup> morning meeting). Rueben indicated that the vehicle lane between curb extensions on side streets could be as narrow as 26 feet. If possible, this would add greatly to the walkability of the corridor – meaning that people may start to walk along Arcade Street and patronize businesses along several blocks, rather than coming and going by car to just one business alone.
  12. The tangent between parking bays and curb extensions needs to be tightened up on the NW corner of Arcade and Jencks so that cars don't mistakenly park on the diagonal at the taper.
  13. Flexible posts should be installed in the center line to prohibit cars from trying to pass buses that are stopped to pick up or drop off passengers.

**Section E: Arcade Street at Maryland Avenue East (Geranium Ave. to Hawthorne Ave.)**

*The Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council **voted to support** the following items and make the following statements:*

14. The Community Council needs to see more detailed designs for the Arcade/Maryland intersection.
15. The Council hears and agrees that there should be no street parking on Arcade between Geranium and Hawthorne. PPCC recommends the MnDOT work with St. Paul, ESABA, ESNDC, and PABA on parking and delivery options for the businesses on the NW corner of Arcade & Maryland.
16. Left turn arrows should be included (in all four directions) to the traffic signalization at Arcade and Maryland.

17. The Council calls for LPI – Leading Pedestrian Interval signaling at all signalized intersections in the Arcade Street corridor. Pedestrians should be able to cross the entire street in one light, not have to stop on the median. Eliminating right turn on red at certain intersections would also increase pedestrian safety. Adding ped activated crossing lights is especially important and several tough intersections in the Arcade Street corridor.
18. PPCC and our community partners envision transit-oriented development at and nearby this intersection. Design of this intersection should be handled in such a way as to be compatible with new and existing stops on other bus lines, new electric car share service and charging stations (“Evie”), all bike and ped facilities envisioned in the *City of St. Paul 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, and the possibilities outlined in the *Maryland/Arcade Feasibility Study* conducted by our partners at the East Side Neighborhood Development Corporation (ESNDC).
19. Its critically important for MnDOT to visit this intersection in the morning hours while school is in session to see and understand the numbers of students getting off MetroTransit busses and walking through the intersection north to Johnson High. The intersection needs to be designed for this reality. Otherwise, MnDOT and the County need to work with MetroTransit and SPPS on another drop-off location.
20. Flexible posts should be installed in the center line to prohibit cars from trying to pass buses that are stopped to pick up or drop off passengers.

*With Board actions and community input in mind, PPCC Staff makes these further recommendations for this segment based on the design proposals displayed by MnDOT's at their August 17<sup>th</sup> public meetings:*

21. Curb extension should be added to the SE and NW corners of the intersection to delineate the parking bays on Maryland Avenue east and west of the intersection. PPCC calls on MnDOT to coordinate with Ramsey County Public Works on this improvement to advance pedestrian safety in this very busy intersection.
22. The relationship between driving lanes, parking lanes, curbs, and curb extensions in the block between Geranium and Rose is problematic for the same reasons described in items 9 and 10 above.

### **Section E: Arcade Street: Hawthorne Avenue East to Wheelock Parkway**

*The Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council **voted to support** the following items and make the following statements:*

23. PPCC supports creating a four-to-three lane conversion throughout this segment; One northbound lane, one southbound lane, and a center turn lane.

24. The Community Council wants to see more detailed designs for the Arcade/Wheelock Parkway intersection.
25. Hawthorne to Wheelock: PPCC recommends zebra crosswalks and pedestrian lights. MnDOT needs to work out the bus transit location issues with Johnson High School and MetroTransit.
26. PPCC recommends that the Wheelock/Arcade intersection be comprehensively looked at in regard to the Grand Round Bike trail. MnDOT & St. Paul should work together. Ped activated pedestrian-crossing lights are critical here.

*With Board actions and community input in mind, PPCC Staff makes these further recommendations for this segment based on the design proposals displayed by MnDOT's at their August 17<sup>th</sup> public meetings:*

27. Paint alone will not discourage vehicles from using the center turn lanes and shoulders to pass other vehicles. Because pedestrian safety is the highest priority for this redesign project, all curb extensions should extend into the street so that there is no ambiguity in where vehicles belong, where cars can be parked, and where it is safe for pedestrians to walk. The concern is especially present in the two blocks of Arcade Street between Orange and Hyacinth:
  - c. The current design proposed on August 17<sup>th</sup> includes too many ambiguous areas – shoulders that are too narrow for parking but too wide to be delineated only by paint. The width of these shoulders – and the ambiguity that comes from that – will only recreate the conditions that currently exist, vehicles making illegal passing movements in the parking lane. These shoulders should be narrowed by extending curbs out to the edge of the parking lane or driving lane (thus eliminating left over ambiguous areas of blacktop). Because of the schools, this stretch should have the widest possible sidewalks anyway.
  - d. Likewise, the current design proposed on August 17<sup>th</sup> includes too many areas where turn lanes are too long – and therefore might be used by some cars to use the turning lane as a passing lane. Turning lanes for many side streets could be shortened and concrete or landscaped islands so that traffic movements are more clearly delineated.

#### **Section F: Arcade Street: Wheelock Parkway to Larpenteur Avenue**

*The Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council **voted to support** the following items and make the following statements:*

28. PPCC supports creating a four-to-three lane conversion throughout this segment; One northbound lane, one southbound lane, and a center turn lane.
29. The Board believes that there is a strong need for sidewalks to accommodate pedestrian traffic on both sides of Arcade north of Wheelock Parkway.

30. Also, the street, sidewalks, and intersections must be designed to accommodate transit patrons in the residential neighborhood to the west of this stretch of Arcade. We've heard many times that people would be more likely to use transit on a regular basis if the bus stops actually had a place to wait for the bus. Currently, these stops are MetroTransit signs standing in the grass or snow – and nothing more.
31. PPCC prefers the design option that shows the off-street trail on the east side of Arcade at the golf course.
32. This section of Arcade should have slower speeds than what's presently posted. Also, there needs to be ample signage that makes southbound drivers aware that they are entering a city and neighborhoods and helps drivers anticipate the narrower, slower conditions present on the stretch of Highway 61 that travels south through Payne-Phalen.
33. MnDOT should talk to the city about flying golf balls from the golf course.

*With Board actions and community input in mind, PPCC Staff makes these further recommendations for this segment based on the design proposals displayed by MnDOT's at their August 17<sup>th</sup> public meetings:*

34. The concrete islands are a good addition. These islands should be extended so that they discourage drivers from using the center turn lane as a passing lane. These islands should be planted with trees and other vegetation.
35. The drawings shown on August 17th indicate the MetroTransit bus stops, but they don't indicate that there's a pad of concrete that will accommodate the bus stop – much less a shelter or bench. These are things that need to be added into the project now; these stops need to be more than a sign plopped in a grass boulevard. It's not OK to replace the current poor conditions of transit stops with something that's only moderately better.

#### **Corridor-wide concerns:**

*The Board of Directors of the Payne-Phalen Community Council **voted to support** the following items and make the following statements:*

Based on community feedback, the PPCC Board detailed concerns about items that still need to be addressed by MnDOT in *specific segments* of the corridor or *along the entire length* of the corridor:

36. **EV Mobility hubs:** PPCC is concerned that it appears that the Arcade Street redesign team is not aware of and has not yet considered the current implementation of the Twin Cities Electric Vehicle (EV) Mobility Network and Evie Car Share. In particular, we are concerned that MnDOT does not appear to have considered the existence and creation of EV mobility hubs in Arcade Street corridor (both now and in future phases of that project). For Payne-Phalen, the EV hubs are not a luxury, nor are they an intrigue. They are an important, part

of the solution to our transit-dependent communities, an antidote to the pitfalls of a hub-and-spoke transit system, and a low-cost, easy access solution to filling out community-based transportation options. More information about this project and the service area can be found here: [https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/TCEVMN%20CE%20Report\\_Final%204.0.pdf](https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/TCEVMN%20CE%20Report_Final%204.0.pdf) and here: <https://eviecarshare.com/>

37. **Bus Stops:** So far, there's no clear evidence in the public presentations that MnDOT has been working closely with MetroTransit on the location and design of bus stops on both sides of the street. We are aware that the relationship between bus traffic running north and south, queuing at bus stops, curbside parking, and installation of curb extensions is a complex balance – one that should include detailed, robust public education and engagement *prior* to design decisions being finalized.
38. There are concerns about the bus stops not being cleared of snow in winter. PPCC recommends that MnDOT work with the city to make sure bus stops are cleared of snow in winter months.
39. **Traffic calming measures:** Arcade should be designed for slower speeds; the entire length of Arcade Street should be no more than the City's maximum speed of 25 mph.
40. MnDOT's plans should be specific as to where crosswalks will go. The PPCC Board calls for zebra stripe crosswalks at all intersections along Arcade Street.
41. The community calls for LPI – Leading Pedestrian Interval signaling at all signalized intersection along the Arcade Street corridor. Pedestrians should be able to cross the entire street in one light, not have to stop on the median. Eliminating right turn on red at certain intersections would also increase pedestrian safety. Adding ped activated crossing lights is especially important and several tough intersections in the Arcade Street corridor.
42. PPCC would like to see more detailed information about where bus stops will be located relative to curb extensions, especially in those locations where both are most needed.
43. PPCC feels strongly that the corridor needs a series of as many curb extensions as possible. Wherever possible, those curb extensions should run along the north/south pedestrian corridors to narrow the crossings at the side streets/cross streets for those walking along Arcade Street.
44. PPCC feels strongly that the stretch from Neid Lane on the south to Johnson High on the north, there should be curb extensions on every intersection, particularly that very narrow stretch of Arcade between York and Hawthorne.
45. Likewise, wherever possible, curb extensions should be built to narrow the length of pedestrian crossings east/west where pedestrians are crossing over Arcade Street; to



narrow intersections Fore pedestrians crossing Arcade.

46. For all signalized intersections, we encourage MnDOT to install “pedestrian first” crossing signals, pedestrian countdown timers, and zebra-striped crosswalks. We encourage pedestrian activate signals at appropriate locations along the length of the corridor.
47. We are eager to see in advance what signage is proposed to enhance pedestrian safety and at what locations such signage will be installed.
48. **Bicycle facilities:** We are mindful that concerns have been raised about the legibility of connections between different segments of bike facilities – facilities that are integrated into some parts of the corridor and not others. In some segments, there are on street bike lanes, in some places, there’s an off-street trail, and in many places, there are no lanes or trails at all. We are *not* making the case for all or nothing. We understand that Arcade Street is not part of the City’s bike plan. Instead, we seek to point out that that the matter of legibility is critically important to safety throughout the corridor and the patchwork of bike facilities in current proposals needs to be considered and addressed in a holistic, corridor-wide manner.
49. **Lighting:** We would like to see more information about street lighting. For stretches of the corridor where there might be a need for higher (taller) level lighting (particularly at the north and south ends of the corridor), we encourage streetlights to include pedestrian level lighting as well. We’d like to see more information on the actual kind of kind of quality of lighting.
50. Currently there is a lack of consistent lighting along Arcade. Neighborhood-scaled, pedestrian lighting needed to be included especially south of Wheelock Parkway.
51. We’d also like to see more information on street furniture such as bike racks, benches, trash cans, and the like.
52. **Streetscaping and beautification:** And we’d like to have more detailed information on streetscaping, beautification efforts, particularly greening and planting - which is something we support. And we’re looking for as much planting and as many trees as possible in the corridor to improve air quality and reduce the carbon footprint of the corridor – both for immediate public health reasons as well as climate and sustainability concerns.
53. What percentage of budget designated for street scaping? IN addition to what’s proposed north of Wheelock Parkway, landscaped medians and boulevards should be included in areas south of Wheelock Parkway too – especially large areas that would otherwise be unused, unprogrammed pavement.
54. PPCC recommends vegetation, planters and flowerpots on the bump outs and center islands.

55. St. Paul Public Works has an artist in residence that should be tapped to design and help implement public art in the corridor. .

56. PPCC recommends that MnDOT work with Public Works artist in residence for comprehensive streetscape for the entire project that includes all amenities and charging stations for electric vehicles.

***Construction planning and business loan program:***

57. The business community, the resident community, and the general public should have plenty of opportunity to digest, consider, and weigh-in on all these matters prior to final design decisions being made. We'd like more information about business outreach activities, what issues are being raised and considered. In particular, we'd like to hear about what efforts MnDOT and its consultants have made and what feedback has been received.

58. The impact of construction on businesses in and nearby the corridor is a great concern. PPCC calls for more information for business and property owners about construction staging, impacts, and mitigation. Of particular note, PPCC calls on MnDOT to form an economic development program that will compensate business owner and operators to ensure that they can make it through to the other side of the construction process.

59. PPCC calls on MNDOT to provide more information on construction timing and a communications strategy for the changes; Moreover, we call for construction grants to business owners and resources to offset assessments to business owners and residents.

***Relationship to other transportation facilities being planned in District 5:***

60. PPCC applauds MetroTransit's intention to meet our communities' increasing demand for reliable, high-frequency, clean-energy transit, particularly to help connect our residents to places of employment. This includes the Purple Line BRT as well as the intended high-frequency BRT along Maryland Avenue (the so-called "H-Line"). We are particularly excited by the MetroTransit's capacity to expand investments in new multimodal travel options and to help create and foster mobility hubs within our district and across the reach of the project. We strongly encourage MnDOT and MetroTransit to work closely with PPCC and our many diverse communities to develop more detailed plans for creating mobility hubs at each intersection as a way to foster strong connections between transit, bicycle, pedestrian infrastructure, and sharing services for driving, biking, and rolling.

61. Throughout the corridor and throughout the East Side, we support the Project's efforts to provide greater mobility for car-free and transit dependent households. We call on MnDOT, Ramsey County, and MetroTransit to join with the City of St. Paul, HourCar and the Payne-Phalen Community Council to ensure that the Electric Vehicle Car Sharing Program ("Evie")

now being installed in Payne-Phalen will be integrated and supported into the overall redesign of Arcade Street project in District 5.

In sum, PPCC supports this project with the knowledge that if done sensitively, improvements to Arcade Street will ultimately improve the economic circumstances of businesses, families and households in Payne-Phalen and on the East Side. That said, there is a level of detail that it's important for MnDOT to work through with other government agencies and with members of the community before it can be said that the expense of this project will ultimately bring the improvements intended.

We trust MnDOT will consider the community feedback offered in this letter very carefully. The Payne-Phalen Community Council remains committed to providing further input and information as needed as this project advances. We are grateful to MnDOT for taking the position of the Payne-Phalen Community Council into full consideration as you make your decision. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require further clarification.

Sincerely,



Jack Byers, Executive Director

cc. Fay Simer, MnDOT  
Carolyn Fackler, MnDOT  
Mai Xiong, MnDOT  
City Council President Amy Brendmoen, Ward 5  
Councilmember Nelsie Yang, Ward 6  
Councilmember Jane Prince, Ward 7  
Russ Stark, Mayor's Office  
Sean Kershaw, Public Works Director  
Rueben Collins, Public Works  
Jimmy Shoemaker, Public Works  
Nicole Goodman, Director of Planning and Economic Development  
Luis Pereira, Planning and Economic Development  
Bill Dermody, Planning and Economic Development  
Veronica Burt, Dayton's Bluff Community Council  
Anne DeJoy, ESNDC  
Claire Thomas, ESNDC  
Paris Dunning, ESABA  
Molly LaFleche, PABA  
Carol Carey, Historic St. Paul  
Frank Alarcon, Ramsey County  
Adam Harrington, MetroTransit  
Rebecca Nelson, PPCC Board President  
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