

February 27, 2015

I just learned that the city is planning to add more traffic circles along Charles Avenue. I live near the intersection of Albert and Lafond, and walk from Albert to University every day. The traffic circle at Charles and Albert is nothing but a hazard. As a pedestrian, I feel unsafe every time I share that intersection with a vehicle. The traffic must enter the pedestrian walkway in order to navigate the circle, since there is not actually enough room in the intersection to accommodate the traffic circle. School buses can't even navigate the circle without bumping up onto the curb on one side or the other.

In the summer, the plant in the circle obscure visibility for both cars and pedestrians. In the winter, plows have a difficult time doing a good job of cleaning the roads, resulting in icy ruts that make walking difficult and unsafe. Installing a circle at Charles and Pascal would be especially troubling, as Pascal is a snow emergency route. The committed bike riders I know do not like the circles either, also finding them unsafe.

Please don't waste precious road maintenance funds on these silly traffic circles, which do not fit our older city streets. Instead, just repair the ruts and pot holes, and enforce the speed limit and stop signs.

Very sincerely,

Shelley Robshaw
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From: Jonathan Dregni
Sent: Wednesday, March 25, 2015 11:37 PM
To: Lehmann, Daley (CI-StPaul)
Subject: No to traffic circle at Pascal and Charles

Greetings,

I would like to ask that the proposed traffic circle at Pascal and Charles be scrapped. Traffic circles are an obstruction to traffic, they cause traffic to swerve into crosswalks, and are unsuitable for bike routes, emergency routes, or night plow routes.

I live on Charles Avenue and have been interested in traffic calming in St. Paul for two decades, since working on the Ayd Mill Citizens Advisory Committee, Midway groups dealing with traffic on Marshall and Selby Aves, as well as the Charles Avenue Friendly Streets. I advocated for bumpouts on Charles Ave by Galtier School when the RSVP program repaved my street.

Early in my career as a traffic calming hobbyist, during discussions of traffic bumps versus traffic humps, someone would offer the strategy of "log." Throw a log into the street at random times, and eventually drivers will tend to avoid your street. This is the obstructionist approach. It makes enemies, frustrates drivers, and helps no one.

I see traffic circles as obstructions in streets. As an alternative I see bumpouts as good traffic calming because while they constrict automobile space, they feel like they respect the need for ease in driving. They keep sight-lines open so they seem designed for safety.

Where traffic circles force cars to swerve into bike lanes and crosswalks, bumpouts make crosswalks up to 25% shorter.

Where traffic circles are small deserts, bumpouts offer a chance for raingardens. A traffic circle sits high in the middle of a intersection, and sheds all water to the far curbs. If you want to garden in a traffic circle you'll have to carry a lot of water into traffic just to keep plants growing. Bumpouts are often close to storm sewer drains, which means they are perfectly situated to redirect stormwater and recharge groundwater instead of losing it to the sewers.

Neither is perfect for snow plows, however traffic circles force cars to make turns on a road canted to the sides. Even with a little bit of ice it is easy to slide into the curb, as happened to me twice this winter.

Traffic circles are expensive and confusing: they are not roundabouts, instead they make an unregulated intersection which any driver could legally swerve through at 30 miles per hour. They are obstructionist and costly without increasing safety. A busy street like Pascal should not be obstructed: it is bad for traffic flow, creates ill will among drivers, and gives little if any benefit to the neighborhood.

Thanks for your attention.

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