

a Volunteer Advisory Group to the City of Burlington's Dept of Public Works

<u>www.burlingtonwalkbike.org</u> listserv: <u>burlingtonwalkbike@googlegroups.com</u>

December 18, 2014

Honorable Miro Weinberger, Mayor City of Burlington, City Hall Burlington, VT

Re: Design of the Champlain Parkway Project

Dear Mayor Weinberger,

The Burlington Walk Bike Council (BWBC) respectfully submits to you a number of recommended modifications to the design for the Champlain Parkway Project (Parkway). These recommendations transform the current unacceptable design to a walkable and bikeable configuration with highest safety for all modes. We want to express in the strongest terms how urgently the design needs to be modified.

The Parkway, if built, will represent a major public investment in our community, with effects that will last far into the future. It is therefore essential that the design reflect current visions for the City and for the South End in particular, and that it promote the highest safety for all transportation modes as well as sustainable community principles. Certainly we do not want this project to build in features that later cry out to be modified or removed.

The Vision and Goals recently adopted as part of the North Avenue Corridor Study represent a new Burlington community standard for transportation, including walking and bicycling infrastructure. One particular goal summarizes this new thinking: "Achieve a world class transportation corridor that offers quality of service and highest safety for those who walk, bicycle, and travel by motor vehicle or transit." Support for multi-modal transportation and safety is also incorporated into many other city plans and documents, including Plan BTV, the Transportation Plan, the Climate Action Plan, and the recent Burlington "Go For Gold" Strategic Plan.

The current design for the Parkway does not succeed in reflecting this vision. While it does include a mixed-use path for cyclists and pedestrians for much of its length, it does not adequately protect safety for all modes, and also does not promote sustainable community principles. In particular, the major gaps in the current design include the following:

- Cutting off the end of Pine St., thus significantly reducing continuity of the street grid
- Lack of adequate accommodation for cyclists on Pine St. between Kilburn St. and Maple St.
- Use of combined paths for cyclists and pedestrians

- Intersection designs that do not fully protect pedestrians and cyclists
- Lane widths and other design elements that encourage motorist speeding

The long term vision for this corridor should be a complete street with separated sidewalks and protected bikes lanes/cycle track (preferably on both sides of the roadway), roundabouts at all major intersections, and safe pedestrian and cyclist crossings. It should also enhance connections with surrounding neighborhoods and create an attractive people-friendly streetscape. The attached document provides detailed recommendations for bringing the design in line with this long-term vision.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to accelerate meaningful walk-bike investment in our City to benefit the overall community and the neighborhoods directly affected. While improving the present design's safety, we can avoid isolating any of our existing neighborhoods and improve the connectivity and flow of all traffic modes throughout the South End. This in turn can help reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, increase economic activity along the corridor by slowing down traffic, and make it more pleasant for both walking and biking.

We insist on a safe and complete street Parkway design, incorporating sustainable community principles. As difficult as it may be to enlist the cooperation of VTrans, FHWA and other partners to work together to make design modifications within the restrictions of the federal funding, please know it is critically important to do so.

Thank you very much for your consideration of these issues. We will be contacting you shortly to set up a time to discuss our recommendations further.

Sincerely,

The Burlington Walk/Bike Council

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