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To: The District Four Commission
From: Local Motion
Date: July 26, 2011
Re: Analysis of the Conformance of the Proposed Champlain Parkway Design with the City of Burlington's Transportation Plan

Local Motion appreciates the opportunity to present the following information to the District 4 Commission for the July 26, 2011 hearing for the Champlain Parkway project. This information is offered as part of Local Motion's role as a "Friend of the Commission," and is intended to highlight specific issues related to Criterion 10 that may be of interest to the Commission.

Our primary concern with regard to Criterion 10 is conformance of the proposed design for the Champlain Parkway with the "Transportation" section of the City of Burlington's Municipal Development Plan (MDP). Before we detail our concerns, however, it is important to note that the version of the MDP available on the Planning and Zoning section of City of Burlington's website does not contain the up-to-date version of the Transportation section. The current version is available on the Burlington Department of Public Works' website as a stand-alone "Transportation Plan." This plan was duly adopted by the Burlington City Council on March 28, 2011 as part of the City's MDP, and should be referenced in any assessment of the conformance of the Champlain Parkway design to duly adopted municipal plans.

That said, we would also like to note that the City of Burlington's transportation plan, as adopted, is an excellent plan. Together with the Design Guidelines that are included with the plan, this document lays out a vision for the future of Burlington's transportation infrastructure that Local Motion wholeheartedly supports.

There are several elements of the Transportation Plan that have direct bearing on the Champlain Parkway project. The most important element is the concept of a "Complete Street." According to the plan, "the only essential element of a complete street is accommodating all travel modes safely and efficiently." See page 8 in the Transportation Plan. In the map

included in the Transportation Plan, Pine Street between Lakeside Avenue and Kilburn Street is designated as a "Complete Street." In addition, the plan identifies Pine Street from Kilburn Street to King Street as a "Bicycle Street," which is intended to "give bicycles priority treatment through street improvements intended to enhance bicycle convenience and safety." *See page 39 of the Design Guidelines.* These two designations are complementary and forward-thinking, and together serve as a foundation for remaking the Champlain Parkway corridor into a true multi-use urban thoroughfare for the twenty-first century.

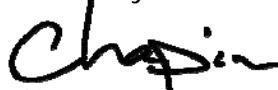
We were pleased to see City Planner David White reinforce and expand upon this commitment in his pre-filed testimony submitted in advance of this hearing. On page 6 of his testimony, Mr. White indicated that the Champlain Parkway "will serve as a 'Complete Street.'" This testimony builds upon the designation in the Transportation Plan. We applaud this commitment and call on the Commission to ensure that the final design for the entire Parkway conform with Mr. White's statement. In particular, we would like to see an explicit commitment to making the entire Parkway corridor from Home Avenue northward accessible to bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that we have been impressed by the commitment of the planning and engineering department at Burlington Public Works to ensuring bicycle and pedestrian safety and access in this project. Our comments in this document should be taken as an appreciation and reinforcement of their good work, in hope that their commitment will manifest in every aspect of the final design.

The attached document outlines several areas where the current design of the Champlain Parkway project (including affected areas on adjacent streets) does not conform to what constitutes a "Complete Street" (or, where appropriate, a "Bicycle Street") as outlined in the Transportation Plan. We urge the Commission to give serious consideration to these issues in its evaluation of Criterion 10.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chapin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Chapin Spencer
Executive Director

Issue 1: Lane Width

Relevant Plan Element	The design guidelines included in the Transportation Plan indicate that, on a Complete Street, lanes should be a minimum of 10 feet wide, typically 10 to 11 feet wide, and a maximum of 12 feet wide so as to ensure slow traffic speeds and enhance safety for pedestrians and bike riders. <i>See page 8 of the Design Guidelines.</i>
Current Design	Lane widths along the Parkway range from approximately 12 to 14 feet.
Recommendation	Reduce lane widths to within the recommended typical range and use the surplus width to improve facilities for bicycles (see below).

Issue 2: Missing Crosswalks

Relevant Plan Element	The design guidelines included in the Transportation Plan indicate that, on a Complete Street, pedestrians should not be expected to walk more than 300 to 400 feet out of their way to reach a crosswalk so as to reduce the incidence of jaywalking. <i>See page 9 of the Design Guidelines.</i>
Current Design	The proposed design lacks a crosswalk across Pine Street at Marble Street, which would result in a 1400 foot (1/4 mile) gap between Howard Street and Kilburn Street without a place for pedestrians to cross. Residents of the Marble Street area will have no direct access to the shared use path on the west side of Pine Street, and pedestrians will be unable to patronize businesses on both sides of this portion of Pine Street safely and conveniently.
Recommendation	Add crosswalks across all legs of the intersection of Marble and Pine streets; and ensure that the design includes other "Complete Streets" elements as recommended in the Burlington Transportation Plan (such as medians, bump-outs, and the like).

Issue 3: Incomplete Crosswalks

Relevant Plan Element	The design guidelines included in the Transportation Plan indicate that, on a Complete Street, "pedestrian crosswalks should be placed at each intersection" in order to facilitate smooth flow of pedestrian traffic. <i>See page 9 of the Design Guidelines.</i> Illustrations in the plan and the design
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guidelines almost always show crosswalks included on all legs of every intersection.

Current Design

A number of intersections lack crosswalks on one or more legs of the intersection, including: Home Avenue and Champlain Parkway; Sears Lane and Champlain Parkway; Lakeside Avenue and Champlain Parkway; Pine Street and Locust Street; Pine Street and Howard Street; and Pine Street and Kilburn Street.

Recommendation

Include crosswalks on all legs of all intersections in the project area; and incorporate other "Complete Streets" design elements as noted in Issue 3 above.

Issue 4: Gaps in Sidewalk Network

Relevant Plan Element

The Street Design Guidelines included in the Transportation Plan state, "Sidewalks represent the most basic element of pedestrian circulation. The location, configuration, and design of sidewalks should reflect the land use context of the roadway. On Complete Streets, sidewalks should be provided on both sides of the street." *See page 5 of the Design Guidelines.*

Current Design

There are several key locations where sidewalks are missing including along Home Avenue (north side), Briggs Avenue (both along the street and connecting to Home Avenue), Batchelder Street, and Sears Lane (one side within project area and both sides beyond).

Recommendation

Add sidewalks to the design at all of the above locations.

Issue 5: Curb Radii

Relevant Plan Element

The design guidelines included in the Transportation Plan indicate that, on a Complete Street, curb radii should be 10 to 15 feet so as to create tighter corners at intersections, which slows turning cars and reduces pedestrian crossing distances. *See page 9 of the Design Guidelines.*

Current Design

Curb radii in the "new construction" portion of the Champlain Parkway are very large. Though exact measurements are not given in the plans, they appear to be in the range of 25 to 40 feet. These radii result in excessively long crosswalks (longer than 60 feet at Flynn Avenue intersection). While 10 foot radii would not be workable given the volume of truck traffic expected in this segment of the Parkway, the current design favors truck

convenience at the expense of pedestrian safety to a greater degree than would be expected given the "Complete Street" designation of this roadway.

Recommendation

Reduce curb radii throughout the project area to a size that is consistent with standards specified in the "Complete Streets" section of the Transportation Plan.

Issue 6: On-Street Bicycle Facilities (Kilburn to King)

Relevant Plan Element

Enhancement of bicycle facilities - and particularly of on-street facilities - is a key goal of the Transportation Plan, as follows:

"The Transportation Plan supports biking as a transportation choice that is non-polluting, energy efficient, and promotes good health. Burlington has some excellent off-road paths, but lacks the on-street facilities needed for biking to be a practical alternative to cars for day-to-day transportation. This Transportation Plan calls for a complete bike network." *See page 4 of the Transportation Plan.*

The Transportation Plan further designates the portion of Pine Street from Kilburn Street to Maple Street as a "Bicycle Street." It specifies that:

"The Bicycle Street gives bicycles priority treatment through street improvements intended to enhance bicycle convenience and safety... It is the intention of the plan to implement design changes, specifically through the marking of the pavement and an improved system of wayfinding signage oriented exclusively to bicyclists, to heighten the awareness of bicycling in general, and on these streets in particular, in effect 'branding' them as a Bicycle Street." *See page 39 of the Transportation Plan.*

Current Design

The design for the Champlain Parkway actually *removes* existing on-street bicycle facilities from this section of roadway, as it omits the southbound bike lane that currently runs along the west side of Pine Street from Kilburn Street up to Maple Street. It replaces that lane with wide vehicle lanes for approximately the southern third of this section, a design strategy that, as noted above, is itself inconsistent with the Transportation Plan. On the remainder of this section, travel lanes narrow to accommodate left-turn lanes at each intersection. The design then proposes simply to stencil "sharrows" (on-pavement markings indicating a shared bike-car lane) in

vehicle lanes.¹ However, simply marking lanes as shared does not meet the requirements of a “Bicycle Street,” which specifically calls for dedicated bicycle lanes in at least one direction on the street.

Recommendation

Between Kilburn Street and King Street, reconfigure the striping or curbing to include bike lanes in both directions along this “Bicycle Street.” This may require prohibiting left turns at both intersections so as to free up space for bike lanes and improve traffic safety, a strategy that would also reduce the cut-through traffic that has been voiced as a major concern by residents and businesses along King and Maple streets. Cars wishing to turn left would have to proceed to Main Street.

Issue 7: On-Street Bicycle Facilities (Lakeside to Kilburn)

Relevant Plan Element

As noted above, enhancement of bicycle facilities - and particularly of on-street facilities - is a key goal of the Transportation Plan, as follows:

“The Transportation Plan supports biking as a transportation choice that is non-polluting, energy efficient, and promotes good health. Burlington has some excellent off-road paths, but lacks the on-street facilities needed for biking to be a practical alternative to cars for day-to-day transportation. This Transportation Plan calls for a complete bike network.” See page 4 of the Transportation Plan.

The Transportation Plan further designates the portion of Pine Street between Kilburn Street and Lakeside Avenue as a “Complete Street,” stating that “Complete Streets, Slow Streets and off-road paths, [together with Bicycle Streets,] provide a bike network that will traverse the city.”

Current Design

The design for the Champlain Parkway actually *removes* existing on-street bicycle facilities from this section of roadway as well, as it omits the southbound bike lane that currently runs along the west side of Pine Street all the way to Lakeside Avenue and beyond. It replaces that lane with wide vehicle lanes, a design strategy that, as noted above, is itself inconsistent with the Transportation Plan.²

¹ Sharrows are not mentioned by name in the Transportation Plan, as the plan was written approximately five years ago and sharrows are a fairly new idea.

² The design adds an off-street shared-use path on the west side of Pine Street from Lakeside Avenue, but such a path - while an excellent addition to the corridor - does not further the stated goal of improving the city’s on-street network of bicycle facilities. Furthermore, the path ends at Kilburn Street, leaving the busy northernmost portion of the corridor without any facilities at all.

As above, it then proposes simply to stencil “sharrows” (on-pavement markings indicating a shared bike-car lane) in the vehicle lanes, which is inconsistent with the plan for the reasons noted above.

Recommendation

Between Lakeside Avenue and Kilburn Street, reduce lane widths along the Pine Street portion of the Parkway to the typical 10 to 11 foot width called for in the Transportation Plan, and allocate the surplus width to a buffered northbound bike lane that runs between the on-street parking and the northbound car lane.³ This design will complement the proposed shared use path, ensuring that dedicated bicycle facilities are available on both sides of Pine Street.

Issue 8: Off-Street Bicycle Facilities (Upper Pine Street)**Relevant Plan Element**

The Transportation Plan addresses off-street bicycle facilities in a number of places. It places a strong emphasis on the importance of off-street links in the development of a comprehensive bicycle network, as noted above.

Current Design

The proposed design of a 10 foot wide path along Pine Street from Lakeside Avenue to Kilburn Street is consistent with the Transportation Plan and is an excellent addition to the design. However, the path terminates at Kilburn Street in the current plan without any on- or off-road facilities connecting to downtown. This lack of connectivity is not consistent with the vision for a “complete bike network” as called for in the Transportation Plan.

Recommendation

As a condition of the permit, we request that the Commission require that the City of Burlington construct a multi-use path along the former railbed through the Curtis Lumber property so as to make a direct and seamless bike-pedestrian connection to Champlain Street or even Battery Street. This could be done as a separate project from the Parkway, but completed in parallel with construction of the main project. A connection to Champlain Street would not interfere with the existing operations of the railyard.

³ This is similar to the design on page 41 of the Design Guidelines entitled “Two-Way Bike Lanes and Two-Way Street,” but with a bike lane only on the side with parking due to street width constraints. Alternatively, if the street were widened by about two feet to a total curb-to-curb width of 40 feet,, bicycle lanes could be included on both sides of the street.

Issue 9: Off-Street Bicycle Facilities (Parkway between Home & Flynn)

Relevant Plan Element	As noted above, the Transportation Plan addresses off-street bicycle facilities in a number of places. It places a strong emphasis on the importance of off-street links in the development of a comprehensive bicycle network, as noted above.
Current Design	The proposed design of a 10 foot wide path along the “new construction” portion of the Parkway is consistent with the Transportation Plan and is an excellent feature of the design. However, there are several locations where the path is not adequately connected to the broader network, including at the south end of Batchelder Street, at Morse Place, and at Lyman Avenue. This lack of connectivity is not consistent with the vision for a “complete bike network” as called for in the Transportation Plan.
Recommendation	Include access points to the shared-use path at each of the above locations that allow bicycles to ride easily and at speed from the street onto the path at each of these three locations.

Issue 10: Pedestrian Access along Sears Lane

Relevant Plan Element	One of the key progress indicators listed in the Burlington Transportation Plan is “ <i>Mode Shares for Students at Public Schools</i> (percent walking, biking, using transit, carpooling).” Without safe routes to school, Burlington cannot expect schoolchildren to walk or bike to school. Page 9 of the Burlington Transportation Plan reads: “The streets not otherwise designated in the street plan will be Neighborhood Streets. This category ranges widely from low-volume residential streets to streets with moderate traffic volumes. Although there are no specific guidelines for these streets in the Street Design Guidelines, many of the general principles are applicable. Therefore, the Street Design Guidelines should be referenced prior to major reconstruction. In particular, the concepts for providing a <u>quality pedestrian experience</u> [our emphasis] and accomplishing traffic calming through design are widely applicable to many situations.”
Current Design	Sears Lane is the main route for families walking from the Lakeside neighborhood to Champlain School. While the street currently has no sidewalks, families walk in the road because it is a potholed street with very little traffic. Construction of the Champlain Parkway will transform Sears Lane into a much higher-volume and higher-speed street,

thereby eliminating a key safe route to school unless upgrades are made to the whole of Sears Lane. The current design for the Parkway calls for construction of sidewalks on Sears Lane only within the project area, forcing Lakeside families to walk in the road on a much busier street as soon as they leave the boundaries of the Parkway project.

Recommendation As a condition of the permit, we request that the Commission require that the City of Burlington build safe, continuous sidewalks on both sides of Sears Lane from the Lakeside neighborhood to Pine Street.

Issue 12: Fencing as a Pedestrian Barrier

Relevant Plan Element The design guidelines included in the Transportation Plan note that “Complete Streets are the major corridors leading into and out of Burlington [that, in their] current condition... are typically four-lane arterials dominated by automobile movement, often creating a hostile environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.” The guidelines then proceed to describe a range of treatments intended to counter this status. *See page 5 of the Design Guidelines.*

Current Design The current design shows 6 foot high fencing along the Champlain Parkway between Flynn Avenue and Lakeside Avenue. This fencing funnels shared-use path users into a fenced roadway corridor with few points of egress. This barrier raises personal safety concerns, inhibits future bike/ped connections, and is inconsistent with appropriate design for a low-speed urban parkway. It could reasonably be described as contributing to a “hostile environment for pedestrians and bicyclists,” and is clearly a holdover from earlier phases of the design when the Champlain Parkway was in fact a limited-access, high-speed highway.

Recommendation Remove fencing from all locations along the Parkway except where needed for protection from steep side slopes. In any location where there is a compelling reason to include fencing, make it at most 4 feet high so as to achieve a pedestrian scale.

Issue 13: Overall Conformance to Burlington’s Transportation Plan

Relevant Plan Element Burlington’s Transportation Plan lays out good minimum standards for street design in Appendix 2 of the document.

Current Design

The proposed project has components that meet the design standards, components that fall short of the design standards, and many other places where there is not enough detail to make sure the standards are met. Some of these have been addressed in the issues outlined above, but for the sake of brevity, we have not identified every instance where the current design may fall short of the standards outlined in the city's Transportation Plan.

Recommendation

Ensure that the final plan conforms with the city's street design standards in every respect.