

Dear Mr. Cooper:

Thank you for accepting these comments on the Draft Final Transportation Plan. I think it is an excellent document, and I appreciate the incredible effort on the part of staff and volunteers in evolving it to this point. I have vastly more compliments than criticism, however I'll focus on the latter in an attempt to be concise.

Please find specific suggestions below:

#### **P 40, Street Reconfiguration**

I have the most feedback on this topic because I think its importance can't be underestimated with regard to its 1) immediate ability to save lives and trauma, 2) potential to "unlock" other transformative tools like roundabouts, cycle tracks, or transit ROW, and 3) sound backing of real-world studies (locally and nationally).

Current language: "Next Action Steps: Implement roadway reconfigurations *where opportunities have previously been identified*. Evaluate opportunities for lane reductions *in corridor reconstruction projects*. [Emphasis added]"

I agree with these two directives, however this list excludes two extremely urgent (and one less-urgent but important) priorities:

- 1) Evaluate opportunities for lane reductions that have neither been previously identified nor are contemplated as part of a corridor reconstruction project—but have traffic volumes near or below the thresholds for lane reduction. Some examples may include Huron Parkway, West and East Stadium Boulevard, Platt Road, South Main Street, Fuller Road, and eastern Packard Street.
- 2) Evaluate opportunities for lane reductions on segments that are part of a (future theoretical) corridor reconstruction project but should be pursued for lane removal (or allowance for parallel parking) immediately given their proximity to schools and histories of tragedies for vulnerable road users. Put another way, life-saving lane restriping should not wait for a major reconstruction. Examples may include upper Washtenaw Ave, N Main Street, and Huron Street. (I realize outreach has been made to MDOT in the past for some of these segments, including the request for off-peak parking on Huron Street, but they should be re-approached immediately in conjunction with the University of Michigan where appropriate).
- 3) Evaluate conversion of 5th Avenue, Division Street, and Beakes Street to two-way traffic.

#### **Background**

- Studies have demonstrated permanent reductions in vehicle speeds—and a 19 to 47 percent reduction in overall vehicle-pedestrian, vehicle-bicyclist, and vehicle-vehicle crashes—when lanes are reduced (FHA 2010). Extraneous lanes make people drive faster, and they impose a "double threat" on pedestrians crossing 4- to 5-lane roads or multilane one-way roads. We are aware of the tragedies that have occurred on 4- and 5-lane roads precisely because of the combination of high speed and the inability of drivers to see pedestrians crossing in front of a taller adjacent vehicle—even in daylight and when RRFBs are flashing. RRFBs and signs help, but they are not as beneficial as lane reductions.
- With regard to 5th and Division downtown, there is now a broad consensus among cities that there is no place for multilane one-way streets in core downtowns. They encourage faster speeds, decrease pedestrian comfort, and diminish the viability of surrounding businesses. It is no secret that 5th and Division have long inhibited the connectedness and synergy that could exist between the Main Street and State Street districts, just as Huron Street inhibits connection with Kerrytown. Two-way conversion was an unqualified success for State Street and will be for 1st and Ashley. This would likewise hold true for 5th and Division. The reconstruction of 5th and Division several years ago was a good start. First and Ashley were first studied for conversion in 1996; I think we can do better than waiting 25 years to fully convert 5th and Division.
- Appropriately sizing roads makes subsequent intersection conversion to roundabouts much more feasible. Multilane intersections can require a prohibitive amount of space to convert to a multilane roundabout and are more complex to navigate (although they still offer benefits compared to signalized intersections).
- There is a common misconception that lane conversions worsen traffic congestion, however there is ample evidence that lane reductions rarely cause increased traffic delays when roads carry less than 20,000 vehicles/day, and some reductions have been successful on volumes in excess of that without unduly "compromising" motorist throughput. These thresholds do not consider the significant public safety gains achieved through lane reductions—or the public's tolerance for car traffic delays in exchange for these safety gains. The 2009 Transportation Plan stated it clearly: "Adopt a policy that states that in evaluating roadway conversions, a certain reduction in Vehicular Level of Service should be deemed acceptable to accommodate safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The policy should state that a multi-modal approach to roadway engineering is to be employed where the safe movement of all modes is given priority over the capacity of a single mode. [Emphasis added]" What's more, a statistically-valid survey conducted in 2018 found that two-thirds of Ann Arborites are willing to delay their drive times between 30 and 60% in order to "significantly" or "very significantly" reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes.

injuries, and deaths (see chart below from Citizen Survey). This finding clearly demonstrates that in addition to a moral obligation to prevent injury, there is a significant citizen mandate to do so. The science and public sentiment support repurposing dangerous lanes immediately. Please do not lose the acknowledgment of this trade-off when finalizing the plan.

Table 47: Question 14

The City of Ann Arbor is considering introducing new road designs that have been shown in other cities to reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries and deaths. For example, roundabouts have reduced injuries for all users while decreasing motorist drive times (by creating more steady traffic flow). Other road redesign options reduce injuries but have different effects on motorist drive times. Which of the following statements is closest to the advice you would like to give the City as they make these decisions?	Percent	Number
Substantially increase drive times (a drive that was 10 minutes would be 16) to very significantly reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths	26%	N=171
Moderately increase drive times (a drive that was 10 minutes would be 13) to significantly reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths	40%	N=265
Slightly increase drive times (a drive that was 10 minutes would be 11) to somewhat reduce pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths	18%	N=122
Do nothing and expect the same drive times and levels of pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths	5%	N=36
Reduce drive time, even if it increases pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist crashes, injuries, and deaths	3%	N=20
Don't know	8%	N=52
Total	100%	N=666

- Another misconception is that lane reductions are promoted exclusively for the benefit of cyclists, since the space left over after a reduction is often striped with a bike lane. While community plans clearly support more cycling infrastructure, I believe the documented significant safety gains due to reduced speeds, reduced rear-end car crashes, and reduced pedestrian injuries and deaths alone are reason enough to prioritize lane reductions.

In summary, I believe excess lanes in Ann Arbor are one of our greatest and most easily remedied public health risks. We should not accept any pedestrian and cyclist injuries and deaths due to poor road design, and I would challenge any city agency to name a faster or cheaper way to save lives than by eliminating unneeded vehicular lanes. We know there are lanes right now that definitively do not help vehicular throughput but do endanger road users. Even in cases where it's a "close call" regarding increasing motorist delay, we should operate on a precautionary principle where the city errs on the side of slightly inconveniencing motorists for the safety of vulnerable road users and motorists alike.

### Recommendations

Add the following three bullets under Next Action Steps:

- "Analyze and model traffic data on all remaining 4- to 5-lane road segments and multilane one-way road segments within city limits to determine the expected impact of lane reduction on vehicular throughput and network effects. On city roads, immediately restripe roadways to remove extraneous lanes where said removals will not increase motorist delays more than 60% within the city road network."
- "Adopt a resolution notifying MDOT of motorist and vulnerable road user deaths and injuries on their 4- and 5-lane segments and the city's desire to obtain control of their road segments if they cannot commit to improving their safety."
- "Recommend that the DDA pursue a study to convert 5th and Division to two-way streets."

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**P 33, Focus Areas.** The current map shows several Tier 1 and 2 road segments and intersections that are not listed on p 32. Please list all focus corridors (and intersections) indicated on p 33 on p 32. Please extend the map's corridor indication of Fuller Road (currently labeled Glazier Way) from Fuller St to the VA Hospital, not stopping at Bonisteel (as described in words) or Maiden Lane (as shown on the map), since I believe the segment between Bonisteel and the VA should be considered for reconfiguration.

**P 50, Education and Enforcement.** Current language states: "To ensure transparency, any ticketed or fined enforcement should be posted on an open data source (with potential identifying information redacted) and reviewed quarterly for potential disparities." I agree, however I think the PD should be expected to track and report all stops in the city and report to the public in an easy-to-read format the following: reason, outcome, and location of each stop plotted on a map, as well as the demographics of the potential offender. For example, we should know where all of the tickets and warnings occur for each type of moving violation, whether it's passing a cyclist too closely or failure to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk. We cannot know if enforcement is occurring if it's not reported regularly. Recommendation: modify language above to read, "To ensure transparency, all stops, warnings, tickets or fines issued should be posted on an open data source (with potential identifying information redacted) categorized by type of violation, outcome, mapped location, and race/demographic information and reviewed quarterly for potential disparities and policy directives by 2021."

**P 99, Commuter Transit.** I appreciate and agree with the desire to expand park-and-ride capacity significantly. Absent from the discussion is the short-term opportunity to promote use of the more than 1,000 publicly-owned, unused park-and-ride spaces throughout the city on any given day that are a short walk to frequent bus lines: on-street parking. I understand there is a degree of ownership that some residents feel about the public parking in front of their home, however we would be wise to understand and quantify these underused public parking assets before adding capacity downtown or on the periphery. We should also bring the price of guaranteed public on-street parking spaces (residential parking permits, which equate to about \$0.04/hour) more in line with market prices, or simply meter in-demand on-street parking at a highly-discounted rate instead. Recommendation to add following bullets to p

99: “Identify and promote commuter parking near bus stops in non-downtown neighborhoods,” and “Evaluate best practices for managing unmetered on-street parking near job centers, including residential parking programs.”

**P 108, Parking.** I appreciate the effort to highlight the costs for building new structured parking. The section would benefit from citing the actual cost per space for the proposed parking-only portion of the expansion of the Ann-Ashley structure (closer to \$57,000 vs. \$25,000). I also appreciate the discussion of parking pricing in the Pricing Vehicle Trips section, however I question why this subject was omitted from the section on Managing Demand. Nowhere does the plan take a position on the quantity of parking downtown—or at least whether demand management (such as overall pricing increases in structures) should precede any consideration of expansion of the downtown supply. (I believe demand management should come first; see next comment).

**P 105, Pricing Vehicle Trips.** Add following targets: “Implement 15% hourly and permit rate increases in each city structure when its average monthly occupancy reaches 85%,” “Implement a ‘First 30 minutes free’ policy in each city structure to coincide with rate increases,” and “Extend enforcement of night time on-street parking until 9pm when average weekend on-street peak occupancy reaches 85% within the Main Street BIZ (or another metric).”

**P 109, Parking.** Target language states: “1. Update Unified Development Code to remove parking minimums citywide by 2022. 2. Establish parking maximums along signature transit corridors and in areas well-served by transit by 2022.” I question why the city should delay eliminating parking minimums—and instituting at least some degree of parking maximums—until 2022. The A2Zero plan (p 82) recommends doing these in 2021. My hope is that this is recommended as soon as possible.

**P 111, 20-Minute Neighborhoods.** This is an excellent priority that will decrease reliance on vehicles. I would suggest making the target for at least *preliminary* zoning changes sooner than 2025. This should be able to be implemented by 2022 or 2023.

**[No page number]** I believe there should be a far greater emphasis on roundabouts and micro-roundabouts in the plan, and I’m surprised that a Vision Zero focused document fails to address them more forcefully. The FHA states that roundabouts are “appropriate at most intersections.” As with lane reductions, roundabouts are highly effective in reducing severe crashes for motorists. (And as the plan notes, they also offer safety to vulnerable road users due to their calming effect.) They offer a win-win when it comes to efficiency and safety of motorist movement: they slow the maximum car speeds but often improve overall travel times. The time-saving impact of roundabouts for motorists can more than compensate for any delays incurred by lane reductions and are good for air quality and fuel efficiency due to less idling. Even intersections that perform less than optimally after conversion to a roundabout can be remedied with partial signalization on specific approaches at peak times. As with lane reductions, the benefits of roundabouts are so compelling that the city should consider a policy of default conversion unless found to be financially or logistically prohibitive. Recommendation: p 39, consider adding to action steps the following, “Consider a policy to evaluate roundabout conversions for every road project involving an intersection, after all feasible attempts have been made to reconfigure each feeder road into the intersection,” and “Create a near-term intersection conversion candidate list and timeline for intersections that would result in single-lane roundabouts” (because they do not require lane reduction analysis on any feeder roads).

**[No page number]** Please consider a short-term recommendation to systematize and store traffic volume data on all streets where counting technology exists or can be implemented. The city often runs inadvertent—and occasionally purposeful—experiments with road reconfigurations or lane reductions. We should be learning what impacts lane closures have on safety, vehicle throughput, multimodal use, and the network. Please consider a small investment in portable equipment that can be used to count all road users as needed for modeling and before/after monitoring.

Thank you very much for considering my feedback.

Best wishes,  
Kirk Westphal