

HILL STATE PACKARD BLUES neighborhood group

May 22, 2023

Mayor Christopher Taylor
Mayor's Office,
Larcom City Hall, third floor
301 E. Huron St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Ann Arbor City Council
301 E. Huron Street
Larcom City Hall, 3rd Floor

Dear Mayor Taylor and City Council,

"HILL STATE PACKARD BLUES" is a group of neighborhood property, business, and apartment owners all of whom are like minded concerning the plan being imposed by the City Engineering Department, City Transportation Department, and political representatives of Ward Four of our neighborhood and whose real motivations are disguised. Our group was unformed and misinformed of the proposed changes to our neighborhood. The State and Hill Streets Improvements Project grew from solving utility distribution, roadway paving needs to finding funding to finance narrowly focused scope changes. The seemingly narrow scope changes promote misguided opinions and desires of project management and our non-responsive political representative, however well intended.

Property owners, business owners, and apartment dwellers all who are of the opinion the stated goals of the "State and Hill Streets Improvement Project" will not be realized, and result in life altering consequences and have a devastating impact on our businesses, neighborhood, and families.

One stated project goal for the State and Hill Street Improvement Project is to be "... responsive to the surrounding land use context, including businesses, residential areas, University of Michigan facilities, students, and event traffic."

Please find an attachment containing a detail synopsis of how the project adversely impacts the daily lives of property owners, business owners, and apartment dwellers within the bounds of the proposed project.

Our neighborhood group, thanks you for giving this matter the attention it deserves.

Sincerely the following members of Hill State Packard Blues

JAMES PRICE

Nathan Pietryga

MARTIN NYRKKANEN

Natalie Simon

Alexandna Vann

COACHMAN BARBERSHOP 806 S. STATE

Pizza Bob's 800 South State

Jack's Hardware 740 Packard

Eladott 726 Packard

Eladott Property Management 726 Packard

Penny A. Barthwaite

Holden Spencer

~~Jim Stefan~~
Omar Durr

Chris P.

Robert Hanning Keltlettung

Timothy P. Woy...

ERIK KISSEL Bluefront

Jonathan M. Murray / Guy Alred

Gerald Kozak

RICHARD WINDWIECKI

Moan Choe

Nicole Meltzer

Brittney White

Jean F. & Jeanne S. Lay

Keystone Properties 608 Packard

Jimmy Johns

STATE ST. BRIBER ST. 816 S. STATE ST.

601 Packard St Baba Durr

818 S. State St.

808 S. State St Mr. Spots Restaurant

808 S. STATE ST. Mr. Spots

701 PACKARD A² 48104

902 S. State Street Ann Arbor 48104

State St. Shortcuts

800 S. State Ann Arbor, MI 48103

800 S. STATE ANN ARBOR, MI 48103

812 S. STATE, ANN ARBOR, MI 48104

617 Packard St Ann Arbor MI

6410 Lake Dr. Ypsilanti 48104

810-814 S. STATE, ANN ARBOR. 48104

STATE AND HILL STREETS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT:

Key goal objective: “This project will make the roadway safer, more comfortable and more accessible for all users, while also improving utilities and roadway conditions.”

WILL THE PROPOSED PROJECT MAKE THE ROADWAY SAFER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL USERS? UNFORTUNATELY, THE ANSWER IS “NO.” THE PROJECT PROVIDES FOR DELETING THE EXISTING 10 AUTOMOBILE PARKING SPACES ADJACENT TO THE SIDEWALK ALONG STATE STREET AND PROVIDING ONE BIKE LANE EACH SIDE OF THE STREETS ROAD WAY.

Project plan and implementation deletes 10 existing automobile parking spaces adjacent to the sidewalk which currently provide convenient - safe access from parking spaces to business storefronts. Access to the business storefronts will require southbound State St. automobiles wishing to drop off business patrons to illegally “Stop” and block single lane southbound traffic to release passengers creating a safety hazard. Dropped off passengers will then become pedestrian’s and required to step on to and cross the 6.5 wide bike path accommodating southbound motorized vehicles bicycles / scooter traffic to gain access to the safe sidewalk. Even more dangerous is to consider passengers exiting automobiles into opposing northbound State St. automobile lane traffic. Although not anticipating the above scenario human nature will win out and forever will be a temptation for pedestrians to be dropped off rather than walking some undefined number of city blocks possible at night with additional personal security concerns.

The businesses and apartments (14 approx.) on State St. between Hill and Packard will no longer be accessible to seniors physically impaired or persons requiring more accessible parking and the inability to walk some undefined distance. Needed ADA and Handicap parking spaces to frequent the area have not been provided. Accessibility for families will be more difficult or nonexistent without close accessible parking. Accessibility for visiting citizens looking for a timely lunch in the area will be nonexistent without close accessible automobile parking. Deleting all automobile parking and requiring “park elsewhere and walk” scenario for businesses will not fit the needs of the larger segment of current patrons to the area. Bicyclist are a small percentage of the area’s patrons.

South bound and North bound automobile and bus thru traffic will not be decrease by the proposed plan in the area, but in fact may increase. However, existing patrons and future patrons wishing to visit the State Street restaurants, barbers and shops may well be discouraged. Is the patron discouragement to the area a designed planned project outcome since it easily does not make the area “.... more accessible for all users?” Deleting business and apartment parking accessibility does not translate into the “Key goal objectives.” Shop owners were verbally informed a bike lane would be added to the street and parking would remain by city staff. Repurposing the existing 7-foot-wide automobile parking spaces as a new 6.5-foot-wide bike path was not part of any conversation. The current proposed project does not provide City designated parking areas for bikes. Hopefully bicycle parking will not be slotted to be provided by business owners and further reducing the existing high use pedestrian narrow sidewalks? Current sidewalk widths wide may not provide double wheel chair access or ADA compliance along State Street.

STATE AND HILL STREETS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT: cont. 2

Property owners and business owners use the automobile parking and pedestrian sidewalks for building maintenance and interior equipment repairs including, window washing, maintaining building roofs, and facade repairs. Businesses use automobile and sidewalks for the procurement of materials for STATE AND HILL STREETS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT: cont. 2

restocking shelves and the delivery distribution of finished goods for retail sale. Sidewalks and automobile parking is used for shop deliveries and Door Dash type deliveries as well as patron access. Apartment dwellers use sidewalks and parking for apartment access, moving in and out and restocking of living amenities. No street parking access will make apartment and business exterior and interior maintenance operations more difficult, less efficient for repair technicians, and therefore more costly.

Stated key project goal: State and Hill Street Improvement Project is to be “... responsive to the surrounding land use context, including businesses, residential areas, University of Michigan facilities, students, and event traffic.”

IS THE PROPOSED PROJECT RESPONSIVE TO THE SURROUNDING LAND USE CONTEXT, INCLUDING BUSINESSES, RESIDENTIAL AREAS, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN FACILITIES, STUDENTS, AND EVENT TRAFFIC. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ANSWER IS “NO.”

Bike Paths (6.5-wide-feet each side of the double automobile and bus road lane traffic). Allocation of 13 feet wide road space for bicycle paths and the deletion of all street parking in front of business storefronts along of State Street is not responsive to the needs of the surrounding land use context, of small businesses and residential spaces.

Not all bike path users are the same. The term “bike path” is deceiving since actual motorized vehicles of all configurations are deemed for use in the proposed bike paths. Many users of the bike path are motorized and their numbers continue to grow in popularity based on the growth and success of the company leasing the vehicles seen throughout the city.

The trend for our State Street area has been for electric skate boards, electric scooters, and smaller personal electric vehicles to be driven unsafely weaving between pedestrians at higher speeds attainable due to the sloped State Street grades. Also based on observations larger motorized electric bikes tend to use the automobile lanes and more rarely use sidewalks.

When do riders of the electric vehicles feel safest and are safer? When does light weight electric scooters and electric skate boards mixed with larger tire electric motor bikes traveling up and down the State Street grades at different speeds in make the bike lanes unsafe? Are the single tire electric motor vehicles or motorized skate boards incompatible. Are small electric vehicles safer on pedestrian sidewalks away from larger electric vehicles? Are uses of the bike lanes to be controlled by size, mass of motorized vehicle and speeds it can obtain? What pathway should a 275-pound rider select for riding a leased electric motorized scooter tooling down State Street’s sloping grade toward the athletic facilities? Should the selected pathway be the pedestrian sidewalk, the bike path, or the road way? When not regulated can we expect the collective public’s human behavior will objectively select the safest motorized vehicle pathway?

STATE AND HILL STREETS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT: cont. 3

Pedestrians using sidewalk crosswalks at intersections will be required to use special attention and alertness to “Stop, Look and Listen both ways” for two lanes of road traffic and two lanes of motorized vehicle traffic before proceeding. What decisions will southbound bike lane riders make at the intersection of State Street and Packard Street. Will it be a safe one?

When does vehicle size, speed, number of passengers require the vehicle be segregated from sidewalk foot traffic? The safest solution for our busy urban area maybe to require electric motorized vehicles to be walked not ridden between Hill Street and Packard Street. At one-point in some years ago skate boards were not allowed on sidewalks to protect pedestrians.

PLEASE CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING AS A PERFERRED VIABLE SAFE SOLUTION

Maybe we could learn from our past safety measures, and apply similar solutions to current business area safety concerns.

- a.) Require bicycles and motorize vehicles be walked from the Hill Street / State Street corner to the Packard Street / State Steet corner on business side (west side) of State Street.
- b.) Southbound bike lane on business side (west side) of State Street to be deleted from project from the Hill Street / State Street corner to the Packard Street / State Steet corner. (May reduce project costs and reduces the visual pollution of the bike line dividers in front of the business)
- c.) Southbound bike lane will be detoured and made continuous connecting to Hill Street west bound bike lane and intersecting into Packard Street bike lanes for bike rider trip continuation.
- d.) Retain Northbound bike lane on east side of State Street to continue the continuity of the northbound bike line through the area.

The removal of the motorized vehicles in the area of the commercial storefronts provide better safety for patrons and pedestrians. In similar fashion removal of the proposed southbound bike lane the motorized vehicle riders could elect to use Hill Street bike lanes and proceed around the block to avoid walking their vehicles. Bike lane rides will experience a small inconvenience, but eliminates many objections to the project. Further a covered bike parking area at each end of the walk bike area could provide for and opportunity incorporate an interesting element into the city scape. In-lieu of the proposed bike lane long the commercial side of State Street the opportunity to retain the safe and accessible automobile parking and provide for safer pedestrian access.

Pedestrians' Sidewalks (12 feet wide in front of businesses along State Street most of whose doors are directly at the sidewalk). The sidewalks provide pedestrian circulation, accessibility and support the business and apartment uses. Pedestrian walkers, joggers, student groups, athlete team groups, game day pedestrians', alumni, parent, Big Ten visitors, business patrons, apartment dwellers above business. Most users are affiliated with the University of Michigan past or present including elderly patrons to the area requiring ADA accessibility consideration.

Pedestrian circulation and accessibility improvements are not part of the narrow scope of State and Hill Street Improvements. Pedestrian sidewalks, bike lanes access, and roadway should

STATE AND HILL STREETS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT: cont. 4

have been integrated into all the proposed improvements for the best project outcome for a most deserving and important area.

Sidewalks have necessary street planters or barriers next to business entrances to facilitate the safety of patrons as they exit from the businesses directly on to the active sidewalk, with motorized vehicles. Trees, street light poles, and planters reduce the pedestrian walking widths. The value of tree and plant growth is an important element in the design of urban street scape. Treeline Trail Master Plan has been deemed infeasible within the narrow scope of State and Hill Improvement Project. How can street scape not be considered as a viable requirement for improvements based on the scale and impact of the construction activities being proposed.

Hill Street, State Street and Packard Street business area should be viewed as a connecting link from Main Campus Area, University of Michigan Law School, University of Michigan Ross School of Business and the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy University Athletic Department and facilities. We suggest no other part of our city has such a wonderful opportunity and responsibility reflect context of the area.

DOES THE REMOVAL OF 10 STREET PARKING SPACES FIT THE GOALS OF THE STATE AND HILL STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, THE ANSWER IS "NO AGAIN"

Removal of on street parking is not responsive to the needs of the business and residential area they currently serve. Automobile Parking and ADA parking spaces has been seriously deficient and lacking in the past. Plans to removal of remaining street parking will only contribute to the further demise and weakening of the 24 plus businesses and unleased business spaces available in the area.

Bike lanes in-lieu of street automobile parking spaces maybe a well-intended opinion of the proponents for improvement of this type in the area, but it is miss guided and is not supported by a successful business model. Building owners, apartment dwellers, barbers shops owners, restaurant owners, retail shops serviced by current parking are not convinced proposed improvements fit the land use context for apartments and businesses.

One only must consider the previous history of our immediate area as a model of what will happen when commercial parking spaces are removed. Business storefronts along Packard adjacent to the Blue Front are vacant and unleased. Years ago, street parking was removed and replaced by bike lanes. A second model to consider is the Craft Brew City (CBC) at 604 Packard Street permanently closed and is only one of the four or five business to fail at that location. Earlier years when street parking was available in front of the three adjacent businesses at the location seemed to thrive. Previously street parking was removed and bike lane installed. Walking past the current vacant business spaces in our area is not pleasant.

Important unintended (?) consequences of State Street parking removal are listed below.

1. Fire Trucks turning radius and First responders' access to the area may be compromised and restricted by bicycle path.
2. ADA access – Barrier free parking is currently nonexistent and parking for the elderly customers or partially disable customer who frequent the barber shops and restaurants in the area will be further nonexistent.
3. Business will not have necessary accessibility to replenish and restock shelves without automobile parking from which to stage replenishment and restocking of shelves. Many business owners restock using their personal vehicles. Similar conditions will exist for the apartment dweller above the commercial business for groceries and moving situations. Restocking of stores will be severely troubling during cold winter days without convenient automobile accessibility. Automobile alley access behind stores does not exist. Normal daily pedestrian sidewalk traffic is severely reduced during cold winter days and the convenient automobile parking is extremely important for patrons' accessibility also.
4. Business finished good distribution will not be manageable. Patron pick-up whose popularity increased during Covid will not be practicable for patrons. Delivers by restaurants will not be possible. Delivers by businesses such a Door Dash will not be practicable. Since parking existed during Covid businesses were able to survive and might not have survived if not for convenient available parking. If Covid type conditions were to exist again without the existing parking it would be fatal for business. Normal daily pedestrian sidewalk traffic is severely reduced during cold winter days and the convenient automobile parking is extremely important for patrons' accessibility.
5. Winter weather conditions severely limit bicycle and motorize vehicles use. The result will be unused bike lanes of plowed/stored road snow or business owner shoveled sidewalk snow making stores non-accessible during the already reduced business months.
6. Availability of parking is a tangible fixed asset of a businesses. Parking availability increases the value of the property and businesses. Reducing or deleting parking reduces the value of the properties and businesses in the area. If parking is removed from State Street areas one would expect the City Assessor to reflect such changes in the tax liabilities of all affected properties. There are 24 plus properties in the area that benefit from the availability of the State Street parking spaces. Minimal research reveals where business areas have installed bike lanes to replace automobile parking has resulted in business areas becoming depressed and has encourages urban blite.
7. Monetarily, parking spaces bring in business patrons providing income to business suppliers, property owners, business owners, business employees and their families all of which will be negatively impacted if parking is remove.
8. The University has many off days for students including spring break, holidays and the three off summer months. Business experiences a reduced number of patrons during student off periods and therefore reduced receivables. However, business overheads or cost of doing business continues. Convenient accessible parking is a life line to potential patrons outside the normal customer catchment area. Again, during winter months and student off days all convenient accessible parking is a life line to potential patrons outside the normal customer catchment area.
9. Close accessible parking is a necessity for businesses operating at night for patron security and personal safety.

STATE AND HILL STREETS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT: cont. 6

10. Improvement project plans for removing 10 parking spaces along State Street adjacent to the businesses. How can removal of 7-foot-wide automobile parking space width and providing a 6.5-foot-wide bike lane use (each side of street) provide for better access and safer use to the business users?
11. Why are bike lanes 5-foot-wide all around the area and new proposed bike lanes 6.5-foot-wide? Could the designated 13-foot-total width we consolidated on located on the east side of State Street and reduced overall width?
12. Project documents denote the removal of 13 parking spaces along State Street north of Hill, on east side of State Street next to Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. Was there correspondence between the city and the University of Michigan? The spaces being removed does provide parking students, Michigan events as well as parking for the Businesses in the area who were not notified.
13. State and Hill Street Improvement Project is to be "... responsive to the surrounding land use context, including businesses, residential areas, University of Michigan facilities, students, and event traffic." If above was the goal of the City Traffic Engineers the goal was not attained. What level of priority was being given to be "... responsive to the surrounding land use context." A person might easily contend it was a very low priority and was only a verbal sound good politically statement to promote and facilitate the implementation of an imposing preconceived generic bike lane design. Implementation of safe and creative design responsive to the surrounding land use context, including businesses, residential areas, University of Michigan facilities students, and event traffic can still be goal and is deserved by all.