

## **Resolution Regarding Reimagine Washtenaw Corridor Improvement Study**

Whereas, ReImagine Washtenaw is a cooperative, multi-jurisdictional planning, place-making, transportation, and economic development effort, led by Washtenaw County with stakeholders that include the Cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti and Pittsfield and Ypsilanti Charter Townships, the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, among others;

Whereas, Washtenaw County secured a \$3,000,000 Community Challenge Planning Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which funded, in part, a comprehensive transportation study of Washtenaw Avenue, known as the Corridor Improvement Study, completed in April 2014;

Whereas, the Corridor Improvement Study was the result of an 18-month planning process, involving significant public input, that provided a detailed plan for the future of the corridor that incorporates specific land use, transportation, non-motorized, and public transit goals;

Whereas, the success of the Corridor Improvement Study depends on all stakeholders working cooperatively to implement its provisions, including future public right-of-way limits necessary to improve the roadway in the future to provide for adequate vehicular travel lanes, non-motorized facilities;

Whereas, all four local units of government have adopted, or will adopt master plan and zoning regulations to ensure that future private land use patterns provide for walkable, vibrant, mixed-use districts that emphasize a sense of place, sustainable development, and integration with public transit;

Whereas, the Ann Arbor City Planning Commission recommended on December 16, 2014 that the Ann Arbor City Council support and endorse the recommendations of the Corridor Improvement Study;

Whereas, serious traffic congestion along the Ann Arbor portion of Washtenaw greatly inconveniences motorists and reduces the patronage of many of the auto-dependent businesses along the avenue.

Whereas, many citizens, business representatives, and engineers have raised concerns that elements of the Study could create even worse traffic congestion, making travel by commuters, shoppers and emergency vehicles more difficult and undercutting the wide geographic customer bases of most of the businesses on the Ann Arbor portion of the avenue;

Whereas, creating separate bike lanes on each side of the avenue directly adjacent to narrowed traffic lanes used by cars, buses, trucks, and emergency vehicles could be hazardous, especially in light of: a) the need for buses to pull over to the right side of the road to accommodate passengers; b) the danger that a green traffic light may invite collisions between cars turning right and cyclists riding through intersections; and c) the alarming growth of distracted driving along Washtenaw as well as other city streets.

Whereas, the value of the Planning Department's policy of requiring or encouraging new commercial buildings to be built close to the avenue with the parking lot behind has yet to be demonstrated for the conditions along Washtenaw but may preclude the subsequent creation of adequate pathways for non-motorized traffic;

Whereas, the Study proposes eliminating the median vehicular lane (that currently accommodates vehicles turning off of or onto the avenue) in favor of a wide, planted median that would force vehicles (including emergency vehicles) to make cumbersome “Michigan lefts” It offers no evidence, however, that this move is appropriate for so heavily-travelled an artery or that the plan allows an adequate turning radius for large commercial and emergency vehicles;

Whereas, the means proposed for reducing the flow of vehicular traffic on the Ann Arbor segment of Washtenaw do not appear adequate to attain the 15% reduction that plan says is required and could divert traffic to roads already congested at the same times of day;

RESOLVED, that the Ann Arbor City Council:

- 1) endorses continued staff cooperation with the other municipalities to improve conditions along Washtenaw Avenue;
- 2) specifically endorses cooperation with AAATA to create several off-road bus superstops that will both encourage ridership and reduce traffic blockages;
- 3) endorses the goal of completion of the sidewalk system along the avenue, preferably in ways that will accommodate all forms of non-motorized transportation.
- 4) endorses the broad objectives on the Corridor Improvement Study to improve the experience of pedestrians, bikers and transit riders but recognizes that the highest priority for improving the Ann Arbor portion of Washtenaw must be improving the flow of vehicular traffic for the benefit of emergency vehicles, of commuters into and out of the city, and of the businesses along the avenue and their customers.
- 5) directs that the proposal in the study for a wide median--limiting direct left turns and requiring “Michigan lefts” at many places--should be evaluated by objective outside traffic engineers for their effects on traffic flow and be brought back to the Council before any implementation is planned or executed.
- 6) urges staff to suspend the policy of having new commercial buildings built close to the avenue until empirical evidence convinces the Council that such an approach actually encourages walk-in business and does not conflict with the visibility of shops and with other objectives of the report, such as wider right-of-ways for pedestrians and bicyclists;