

Northside STEAM SRTS Special Assessment Sidewalk Project

EMAILS FROM RESIDENTS

On Fri, Oct 19, 2018 at 2:10 PM Susan Presswood Wright <spw1616@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Anne and Sumi,

As you'll know, the Project Manager for the Northside STEAM School Sidewalk Project, has just circulated comments on the issues that were raised by property owners on the affected roads at the meeting at the Northside School on October 4th. No doubt we will be responding to her comments in more detail.

At this point, I'm responding—with the support of my neighbors on the 1600 block of Traver who have reviewed this letter—to two claims made by Ms. Allen. First, in the past she has claimed that “100%” of homeowners on the 1600 block of Traver Rd supported sidewalks on our bloc. I'm attaching two pdfs with all the signatures from neighbors on the 1600 block of Traver Road who oppose the construction of sidewalks on the easements on the northern and southern sides of the road. These signatures show that Ms. Allen's claim is absolutely not the case. A very large majority—all the property owners we have been able to contact—*oppose* sidewalk construction on the easements—for all the reasons described in our Proposal, 10-3-2018. Furthermore, my neighbors Charles Marshall and Everett Armstrong have questioned whether *any* sidewalks are needed for the 1600 block since children outside the block have no need to use it for walking to school.

Second, Ms. Allen and the engineering department have claimed that *two* sidewalks are “required” on streets where sidewalks are installed. [Q and A session, Northside STEAM Meeting, 6-26-2018.] This claim is repeated in Ms. Allen's response to the Proposal for Reopening the Sidewalks Planning Process from the homeowners on the 1600 block of Traver Road (see p.5: “Sidewalks must be installed on both sides of the street”.) This strikes me as an odd formulation because it's clear, just looking at the great variety of sidewalks and walkways (and absence thereof) in U.S. cities, that there is certainly no legal requirement. Last week, I made some inquiries with the Michigan Department of Transportation and was referred to Max Fulkerson, who is the Contract Coordinator for the Safe Routes to School program for Michigan. I've attached a brief summary of his view of the factors to be taken into account in a Safe Walks to School plan. In summary, there is no “requirement” for two sidewalks. Decisions on sidewalks are “context dependent” in that they take into account not only numbers of children needing to cross roads but also traffic patterns and traffic calming programs, and the environment—such questions as the impacts on trees and shrubs (“a consideration if there is public input”), landscape, privacy. It is precisely such contexts that were not addressed during the development of the STEAM sidewalks plan in 2016-2017. To my knowledge, *no property owner* on the 1600 block of Traver was involved in developing this plan.

In summary, as my neighbors and I have shared with you in our proposal, this is a complex issue that is much larger than sidewalks and encompasses environmental impacts (resulting from removal or killing of trees, shrubs, and woody vegetation), landscape impacts in a wooded neighborhood, traffic calming, parking arrangements, and equity issues, and the need for broad participation in a project

that could be used as a prototype for other school districts in Ann Arbor, if not also elsewhere in Michigan.

It seems to me that the next step is the question of educating members of the City Council which will be meeting after the mid-term elections—possibly as soon as November 8th. We would really like to hear your suggestions for how to do this.

With thanks and best wishes,

Susan

Appendix: Phone Conversation with Max Fulkerson, Contract Coordinator for Safe Routes to School, State of Michigan, October 11, 2018

Max Fulkerson told me first, that in residential neighborhoods, there is no *requirement* for two sidewalks but they are “*advised* where children need to cross;” second, that recommendations are made on the basis of a walking audit carried out by the team responsible for a Safe Walks to School Plan, and that it is the “communities” that make the choices about priorities for sidewalks; third, that proposals for two, one, or no sidewalks are “context dependent” in the sense that they should take account of: 1) numbers of children needing to cross the road; 2) traffic patterns and traffic calming programs; 3) Trees and shrubs—“a consideration where there is public input.” Fulkerson said that he thought that “tree cutting should be minimal. It would come up only if there are safety needs.”

On Mon, Oct 22, 2018 at 10:18 AM Amy Chavasse <chavasse@umich.edu> wrote:

Dear Allen, Ms Redinger and Mr Lazurus,

I write to strongly urge that the citizens of the 1600 block of Traver be allowed to schedule a meeting prior to Nov 19 meeting and vote, and that MDOT halt proceedings until the full picture and impact for the SRTS plan is clear, and reflects reasonable concern for tax payers and the citizens whose lives and properties will be dramatically and negatively affected. Specifically, we agree that NO SIDEWALKS are needed on Traver. They will not address the problems created by the large number of commuter students coming to STEAM.

There has not been proper due diligence. Ms Allen's claim that all residents of the 1600 block of Traver are in support of the sidewalks, and that all residents of the 1600 block of Traver were given full and timely information prior to the institution of the SRTS plan, is a misstatement. I was not included in any messages sent out by Ms Allen until Oct 4.

I live near the intersection of Barton and Traver and witness and experience the dangerous traffic flow everyday. The morning rush hour even before the STEAM school was launched, was very problematic. No common sense measures have been taken to improve safe passage for students or residents at the intersection. Adding this area as a drop off point defies rational planning or concern for pedestrians, or drivers.

It does not seem that parents are aware of the promotion of the AME Church parking lot as a safe and sensible drop off point. I had a very discouraging encounter with two parents 2 weeks ago. Below is the

text of an e-mail sent to the 1600 neighbors and Principal Fenech. The very few number of students who walk to STEAM from the north do so by traveling down Peach or Pear to Taylor and enter safely at the rear entrance. I spoke with one parent who wondered why other parents persist on using Traver and Barton as a drop off, when the circular driveway at Taylor is so convenient and safe.

I just had a very illustrative encounter with two parents parked at the intersection of Traver and Barton. I asked them if they were award of the initiative by the SRTS and STEAM to provide easy and safe drop off points, particularly at the AME church. One man, who identified himself as Sean Edison, was immediately combative, first saying that he couldn't believe that I would say that in front of his 11 and 13 yr old kids. Which is confusing to me.... but anyway. He asked me why I was harassing him. I said that we were trying hard to find good solutions, and spare the damage to our yards and old growth trees. He replied, very angrily- "Why don't you just move!" And then added-- "look you're standing in that yard and tearing it up"! Which is even more bizarre-- me and my dogs were standing quite still in the yard on the corner. One other guy remarked to me--"why are you telling us this"? They were both clearly pissed off. And they both clearly do not know or do not care about the push to provide safe drop off points. Having sidewalks on the 1600 block of Traver would NOT improve this situation. Parents crowd the intersection, parking right up to the edge of Barton and let their kids off. Cars are tuning in and out and it's a bottleneck. How can we learn about the ways these initiatives are being shared with the parents, if at all?

I'm guessing that these views match the views of many parents. To them, coming from higher income neighborhoods, we are seen as low income, marginal citizens.... living in our modest houses and making outrageous demands to protect our way of life. It was stunning to hear how abruptly and completely they don't care about the folks living around STEAM.

Respectfully,
Amy

On Tues, September 25, 2018 at 8:09 PM Carmen Pelton <cpelton@umich.edu> wrote:

Hi Anne,

To follow up on our conversation this evening at the Hideaway Lane hearing, I want to voice my support for a drop-off site in the BACK of the Northside STEAM School, using Hiawatha Place to access it, where traffic is practically nonexistent and the area is level, without inclines.

My objections to drop-offs involving the AME Church on Traver with a sidewalk built for walking down to the corner of Barton/Traver and up Barton to the school:

- the traffic at the corner of Barton Drive and Traver Road is already heavy and will continue to grow; children are not safe walking around that corner. I have witnessed many cars coming down both the hill on Barton the hill on Traver and not coming to a complete stop before continuing.
- The Traver Road sidewalk would be on a steep incline, dangerous in winter weather conditions.
- In order for the sidewalk to be built, a whole line of mature trees would have to be taken down on Traver Road, which would lower the property values of houses on the street.
- The neighborhood homeowners on that part of Traver Road are mostly retirees on fixed incomes; the tax assessment of a sidewalk (built for someone else's children) would be devastating for many of them. These people make up the original Traver neighborhood and should not be penalized for having earned

a modest income and bought a modest home in the neighborhood before it started to gentrify with the reputation of the STEAM school.

- Even the crosswalk with crossing guard at the top of the hill on Barton is unsafe because of the hill's incline. In slippery weather conditions, cars MUST accelerate in order to get to the top of the hill, where they must suddenly stop for the crosswalk.

- That same hill on Barton is dangerous for drivers going down it toward Plymouth. Neighbors living nearer to the intersection have reported seeing children come very close to being hit multiple times. I myself have witnessed cars driving through the Traver intersection because they could not stop at the stop sign and instead slid through the intersection.

- I understand that the city could receive federal funding for the needed drop-off sites if they built a sidewalk on Traver Road and used the AME Church as a drop-off. However, the prospect of funding is not a good enough reason to risk the safety of children and adults navigating an increasingly busy neighborhood and intersection at Barton Drive and Traver Road.

Build the drop-offs at the BACK of the STEAM school, going through Hiawatha Place, and create a safe transfer place for children and adults.

Thanks for your attention to this important matter.

Carmen Pelton
1916 Traver Road
A2

RESPONSE FROM CITY STAFF MEMBERS

100% of Traver Rd homeowners support sidewalks:

At the June public meeting, the City asked "Are you willing to give up on-street parking in order to narrow the road and place the new sidewalk where current on-street parking exists now?" (Thus reducing the impact on trees & landscaping) Comment cards were received from 17% of the residents on Traver, and all of those responding indicated support for this concept. Ms. Allen never suggested that 100% of the residents on Traver supported the sidewalk project overall.

Sidewalks on both sides of the street:

The City of Ann Arbor's SRTS Operations Coordinator, Colleen Synk, originally told staff that *the SRTS grant funding for Michigan follows a complete streets policy. Applying for sidewalk on one side of the street would make the application less competitive for funding.*

Applications that do propose sidewalk on only one side of the street are carefully reviewed throughout our process for the context specific reasons for a scope of work which is outside what we generally consider eligible. To my knowledge, the proposals where we awarded funding to put in sidewalk on one side were zoned as either industrial or agricultural. Further, putting sidewalk in on both sides of these projects did not increase connectivity or was not feasible given topographic constraints. None of these

situations would apply to the residential context of the A2STEAM project, thereby making sidewalks on both sides of a street a requirement to remain competitive for funding.

Max Fulkerson's comments to Susan Wright were mis-interpreted. When asked for clarification regarding this particular project, Max Fulkerson responded to the City with the following:

In areas where the land use is residential on both sides of the street, when new sidewalk is constructed using Safe Routes to School funds, it should be installed on both sides of the street.

Thank you,
Max

Max Fulkerson
Safe Routes to School Contracts Coordinator

Traver residents not given full and timely information prior to the SRTS plan:

Project Manager, Jane Allen, stated that every affected property owner was invited to the Administrative Hearing held June 26, 2018 and the Public Meeting held October 4, 2018, and every property owner also received a site plan by mail as the design progressed. This was confirmed with mailing records prior to the June 26, 2018 Administrative Hearing (6/4), prior to the October 4, 2018 Public Meeting (9/17), and within the month of September (9/11 to 9/27) for the site plans. Involvement prior to the SRTS plan would have been the responsibility of the SRTS Committee. Their letter informing the affected property owners of the City's intention to apply for the SRTS Grant was sent August 28, 2017 with an enclosed map. 1633 Traver was included in each mailing.

Support for a drop-off site in the BACK of the Northside STEAM School, using Hiawatha Place:

The City of Ann Arbor will forward this suggestion to Ann Arbor Public Schools (AAPS) for further consideration, but that is not part of the project being considered.

Staff response to the attached Petitions requesting that no sidewalk be installed along Traver St.:

The proposed sidewalk design took every opportunity to limit negative impacts to landscaping.

Northside Properties on Petition:

- 1627 Traver gets a proposed retaining wall behind the sidewalk in an area where curb is relocated; impacts on existing rock border and landscaping.
- 1629 Traver gets a proposed retaining wall behind the sidewalk in an area where curb is relocated; a 12" tree will be removed. New trees will be planted.

- 1633 Traver gets a proposed retaining wall behind the sidewalk; a 4' shrub will be removed, but can be replaced.
- 1621 Traver gets a proposed retaining wall behind the sidewalk in an area where curb is relocated; minimal negative impacts on landscaping.

Southside Properties on Petition:

- 1634 Traver; existing rock border and landscaping within the right-of-way will be affected.
- 1602 Traver; the proposed sidewalk is in an area of relocated curb; minimal negative impacts to landscaping.
- 1626 Traver will have multiple small caliber trees removed, but will also leave many existing trees undisturbed behind the proposed sidewalk. New trees will be replanted.
- 1616 Traver has proposed sidewalk at various offsets from the road, moving around trees. One small caliber tree will be removed and replaced.

10/11/2018

We the undersigned request that no sidewalk be installed on the easement on the northern side of the 1600 block of Traver Road. The burden on property owners resulting from the removal of trees, shrubs, and other woody vegetation, the negative impact on the landscape, the loss of privacy, the actual and potential impacts of changed drainage patterns, and the costs of homeowner assessments vastly outweigh the benefit in safety for 6 or at most 7 homes. Pedestrian safety on our block can be effectively achieved in many other ways.

Signatures:

Audreaton

1627 Traver Rd. Ann Arbor 48105

Jean Arnold

1629 Traver Rd Ann Arbor 48105

Angela

1633 Traver Rd Ann Arbor 48105

Scott W. Heston

1629 Traver Rd Ann Arbor 48105

D

1621 TRAVER RD 48105

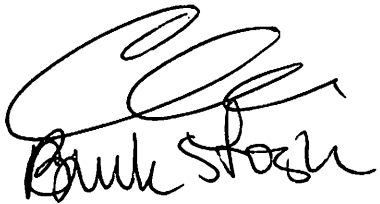
Elizabeth

1634 Traver 48105

REQUEST FROM HOMEOWNERS, 1600 BLOCK OF TRAVER ROAD
10-03-2018

We the undersigned request that no sidewalk be installed on the easement on the southern side of the 1600 block of Traver Road. The burden on property owners resulting from the removal of trees, shrubs, and other woody vegetation, the negative impact on the landscape, the loss of privacy, the actual and potential impacts of changed drainage patterns, and the costs of homeowner assessments vastly outweigh the benefit in safety for 4 or at most 5 homes. Pedestrian safety on our block can be effectively achieved in many other ways.

Signatures:



Charles Marshall
1602 Traver Rd
Brenda S. Foster

CHARLES MARSHALL
1602 TRAVER RD
Brenda S. Foster

John T. Magnum 1626 TRAVER

Susan Wright 1616 Traver Rd.