

To: Bloomington Common Council Members
Cc: Stephen Lucas, Council Administrator/Attorney
Beth Cate, Corporation Counsel
From: Mayor John Hamilton
Date: October 13, 2023
Re: Veto Message re: Ordinance 23-23

Members of the Common Council:

When the new 7-Line protected bicycle lane was opened on 7th Street in late 2021, stop signs were removed at five intersections. This prioritized 7th Street as a desired east-west route for all, especially for bike and transit traffic, consistent with a 2020 ordinance unanimously adopted by City Council.

About a year and a half later, in April 2023, the City Engineer issued a 180-day order to replace stop signs at one intersection, Dunn and 7th Street, to address a measurable trend of crashes at that location. This action was consistent with recommendations from both the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety and the Traffic Commissions after they reviewed a report on the corridor's traffic and crash data since the 7-Line project was completed.

On Wednesday, October 4, 2023, the Bloomington City Council voted to retain the three-way stop sign at 7th and Dunn Streets as requested by the administration and consistent with the earlier recommendations of the resident commissions. The Council also by amendment that evening directed that three additional stop signs be reinstalled along 7th Street and the 7-Line protected bicycle lane, at the intersections of Morton, Washington, and Lincoln streets. The vote was 5 in favor, 4 against.

Pursuant to state and local laws, I am vetoing this ordinance and sending it back for Council consideration, for several reasons.

Safety, use of data, and process are all important in making traffic management decisions. Changes in traffic patterns are always a safety concern, and monitoring results generally should allow sufficient time for adjustment to new patterns. The public is becoming familiar with the new traffic patterns along 7th Street, including the replacement of the Dunn Street signs six months ago. Frequent changes along one corridor can cause greater concerns. The Council vote to revert three intersections to the pre-2021 condition, with the possibility of it being changed again in a few months, can cause more confusion and directly presents public safety concerns. Additional time, hopefully enough to allow a full year of data since the April 2023 changes, will allow for more robust and meaningful data to inform any significant adjustments.

In addition, a primary rationale described by some council members in support of the amendment to the ordinance was regarding concerns about pedestrian safety or level of comfort. Since its re-opening, the 7th Street corridor has seen an improvement in pedestrian safety with a decrease in pedestrian-involved crashes.

Process matters are concerning as well. The amendment to adjust three more intersections was proposed in a way that did not allow for any significant notice to or input from the public, including particularly the resident commissions charged with advising on any changes.

I appreciate the interests and commitment of all to sustaining and improving our safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system, recognizing that there can be different judgments made about how best to accomplish those shared goals. Consistent with city ordinances, the City Engineer has implemented a second 180-day order to preserve the status quo with the stop signs at 7th and Dunn, and to allow additional public review, data gathering, and discussions that can inform any decisions by the City Administration and Council by or before April 2024.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hamilton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Hamilton
Mayor, City of Bloomington