

Thursday, January 12th, 2006

From: **Dallas Hawkins**, Chairman of the Citizen Streets Advisory Commission.

Re: Bernard Street Project- 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Thank you for your communication expressing your concerns about the 2006 Bernard Street project. We have received contacts on a variety of issues and perspectives by letter and email.

All of us on the Street Commission share the goal of a healthy urban forest and ample green spaces in Spokane, and we desire a modernized and improved street system and improved pedestrian safety in our community. It is very important to understand, however, that the primary and fundamental role of the Street Commission is the rehabilitation and restoration of existing roadways in Spokane and to be accountable to the public for the money spent on the street bond projects, by carefully considering and making recommendations to staff concerning the expenses that should be included.

Some people may want the use of street bond revenues to include traffic calming, new street lighting, new and better pedestrian safety amenities and bicycle lanes, and perhaps even other uses. As the co-author of the current Spokane Traffic Calming Guidelines and past Chairman of the All-City Traffic and Transportation Committee, I have always been a strong advocate for traffic calming and pedestrian safety amenities. In reality, however, we are convinced that street bond dollars should be limited to activities directly related to street rehabilitation and restoration work. This view of the appropriate use of these funds is supported by City staff and the City Council. This position is in accordance with Section 4.6 of the Comprehensive Plan, General Considerations section, which states, "The Standards are not intended to apply to the resurfacing, restoration, or rehabilitation of existing arterials."

In the case of Bernard Street, the Commission has recommended to staff and our elected officials, that they repair damage to the sidewalks and curbing caused by the roots of the trees located in the very narrow planting areas along the street, in order to preserve and repair the sidewalk, which is certainly a pedestrian safety issue.

Secondly, because the Street Commission and city staff are committed to following the guidelines of the comprehensive plan and other State and Federal regulations where staff, the Mayor and City Council feel such expenditures are appropriate, the CSAC has also recommended to staff that they replace and appropriately relocate up to twenty-two new trees to replace the ones that we have been advised must be removed along Bernard Street, as part of the street rehabilitation project. We, in fact, recommend that two additional new trees be added in this area.

The CSAC shares the community's strong preference to preserve street trees and tree canopies throughout the city, to the greatest possible degree. However, based on presentations by the city arborist and street department staff, and while every reasonable effort will be made to save some trees, if possible, we are convinced that it will not be possible to preserve most of the existing trees which are incorrectly located immediately next to the street along Bernard, due in part to their current health and unfortunate location.

In order to properly rehabilitate and restore the roadway to the correct engineering standards, which necessarily requires the use of heavy equipment and the correct compaction of the rock under the new pavement, staff advises us that many of these trees must be replaced and relocated. These trees are

simply too close to the street, and are located in too narrow a planting strip. The trees are located on an 18 inch planting strip but we are advised will require at least 48 inches of planting area to thrive.

Staff and the CSAC will continue to deal with all available and reasonable options to minimize the impact of the removal and replacement of these trees. The residents who will be directly affected by the replacement of these trees and the relocation of new trees on their properties have generally been very amenable to this solution.

Based on all of the available information, public input, and the presentations we have received, we have worked during the past several days to make a recommendation to staff and our elected officials regarding the Bernard Street concerns. We felt that we had three options to consider in our deliberations. Staff will consider our recommendation and will make the final determination.

1. Rehabilitate and restore Bernard Street to the correct engineering standards, which will require the removal of trees that staff deems cannot be saved, and replacement and relocation of up to 22 existing trees, as necessary, on Bernard Street, along the project work area.
2. Redesign the Bernard Street project to include provisions to widen the tree planting strip, relocate the sidewalks and therefore narrow the roadway. This requires additional purchase of right-of-way. This additional work does not qualify for funding under the Street Bond program.
3. Set aside this project for 2006 due to unpopularity of the replacement of the trees and the unacceptable engineering cost associated with redesigning the project.

Our recommendation to staff is # 1; to keep the Bernard Street project on the construction schedule for 2006, save as many trees as can be reasonably saved, and replace and relocate up to twenty-two trees along Bernard Street. After considering the options available to us we believe that this project is in the best interest of the public and the residents of Spokane. Because our work is directly limited to rehabilitation and restoration, and not related to new capital improvements, the Commission and staff feel that this and similar projects are not subject to the comprehensive plan rules which are meant to address new construction projects. This is in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan Guidelines.

We realize that there will continue to be a number of challenges to face as we deal with street projects in the coming years. As we study the other projects planned in the next nine years, no other project has as great an extent of issues related to the location of trees near the roadway. In studying other streets, Bernard Street has proven to be the biggest challenge in that specific area of concern.

We believe that the primary goal of the Street Commission and City Street Department and Engineering Services staff related to street bond projects is to rehabilitate and restore Spokane streets to the best possible engineering standards in order to give the public a roadway system that will be long lasting and cost effective.

As we oversee the rehabilitation and restoration of the streets in Spokane, we will remain cognizant of the guidelines and regulations with which we are asked to comply, including the comprehensive plan. Whenever possible the CSAC and city staff will take into account the desire to maintain safe pedestrian access to our parks, public areas and homes, mitigate the negative impact of increasing traffic volumes and maintain and preserve adequate and attractive urban tree plantings and green spaces.

Our promise made to the citizens of Spokane is to make the most effective use of the Street Bond Funds to rehabilitate and restore the streets. The street bond that was approved by the voters in 2004 did not include funds for complying with Comprehensive Plan requirements, due to the fact that the work is all of a rehabilitation and restoration nature. The Street Commission is charged with

delivering the projects promised to the voters, and this can only be done by carefully restricting the bond funds to the work that was anticipated. While the goals of the comprehensive plan are worthy and important to Spokane and our region, they are not related to such rehabilitation and maintenance projects.

We appreciate the opportunity to explain the role of the Street Commission as it relates to street rehabilitation and restoration in Spokane during the ten-year bond program.

We look forward to continuing to work with active and involved residents in Spokane to resolve issues of concern and make the very best use of the street bond funds.

Sincerely yours,

Dallas Hawkins  
Chairman  
Citizen Street Advisory Commission