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Mayor Miro Weinberger  
City Hall  
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Mayor Weinberger:

This letter responds to concerns you expressed at the Barrio Bakery listening session last month regarding my views on the Champlain Parkway (Parkway) project.

First, let me say you are in a unique position to start implementing quality walk and bicycle as well as vehicle infrastructure along our busy street network. (Not to forget Amtrak, commuter rail and light rail!) Such new infrastructure would represent the first real change for those who walk and bike—and yes ride in vehicles—on the transport network since the 1981 Marketplace opening 34 years ago. The hugely successful Burlington Bikepath represents another milestone in the 1990s but functions mostly as a recreational facility with at best seasonal transportation value. The other major vehicle infrastructure investment, the Northern Connector, through provision of a parallel roadway to North Avenue, led directly to the New and Old North End study and its landmark findings that it is feasible to make North Avenue into a world class transportation corridor for all modes.

Let me be clear regarding the Parkway. My wholehearted support centers on the December letter and attached recommendations of the Burlington Walk Bike Council (BWBC), a communication to you following seven months of continuous discussion and deliberation. The BWBC advisory calls for roundabouts throughout (by default no signals, no fireflies), separate walk and bike pathways, and maintaining connectivity of Pine Street southward through the “McCormack” roundabout at Pine/Parkway/Queen City Park Road. The BWBC principles and recommendations in view of recent developments and reports remain both fresh and compelling. The recommendations rest on bedrock that neither the neighborhood, City, Vtrans and environmental bodies ultimately favor the \$30 million design featuring poor quality, incomplete and demonstrably unsafe content or the recent list of minimal embellishments.

Far more important the re-direction of the South End neighborhood residential and commercial development obviously continues at stake in the Parkway design as no where else can one find an immediate infusion of \$30 million and more of 98% non-City funding fully flexible and available to consider wisely spending beginning later this year.

Overshadowing the Parkway as all of us can see happening in our neighborhoods and City comes the continuing and massive demographic shifts: (1) seniors population rapidly growing from 12% to 24% of our County residents; (2) no-growth or decline in working age /student populations; and (3) economic forces dictating urban growth and against rural/suburban areas in our region and statewide. Added to this mix as well comes increasing residents distaste at all income levels for and abandonment of car use and ownership combined by demands for walkable/bikable streets in existing neighborhoods like my ONE.

Practically nowhere in our City except in the Marketplace can one find busy street walkable/bikable infrastructure usable by all residents. (The rule of thumb for walkable/bikable is the typical eight year old using the facility with safety also known as the popsicle test.) Our City growth gets fueled to a major extent by in-migration from within State borders from outside the nation, i.e., New Americans.

Our City and your Administration truly face a perfect storm of change with tremendous opportunities in the field of urban development intimately involving both higher density housing levels and concomitant transportation benefits aligned with non-car use, the twin pillars of land use and the source of economic and community growth—simply the full span of change promising a vital City now and in the future lies within our grasp. The fear of change being a constraint which must be addressed.

#### Cycle Track, Roundabouts, and the “Synthesis of Safety” as the City Elixir

Am pleased you experienced first hand the Montreal cycle track where I spent two years using (since the first full year 2010, six years now, am “Bixi” key holder) and wish to emphasize until I moved home to Vermont and Burlington I did not associate it as a type of facility Dr. Anne Lusk of Stowe Bikepath fame has been touting and researching for more than two decades--and, of course, now central in all our approaches now to “bikable” on busy streets. (Burlington's Dr. Louis Vivanco's 2013 “Reconsidering the Bicycle” starts on its first pages a plea for cycle track.) Cycle track's arrival as a treatment melds into roundabouts (until now primarily pursued for both walk and vehicle travel safety) into a new street design paradigm perhaps first manifested in our North Avenue Corridor Plan (NACP) which you led to adoption in October.

The synthesis of safety afforded by the combination of cycle track with roundabouts on busy streets achieved in the NACP truly constitutes the elixir which when combined with sensible land use regulation fosters the successful community envisaged by Jane Jacobs and other 60s urbanist advocates. The synthesis of safety—roundabouts and cycle track—actually cures the pain of all-modes at once with radically improved safety, service and capacity. Not only do you get up to 90% reduction of serious and fatal injuries—most important—for each mode but also delays are all but erased skyrocketing service, and capacity for all modes reaches unprecedented levels. As DPW will tell you, transportation is all about the big three: safety, service and capacity. The roundabout and cycle track together best address all three elements of transportation for all modes!

My interest in transportation of course is safety for every mode, particularly walking as that mode suffers the most from carcentric streets. Roundabouts came first in 1966 and cycle

track came along about two decades later. The first roundabout came to America in 1990 and most cycle track in North American still remains pre-teen age (the Montreal first base system was built in 2007 not long after Vermont's only cycle track along the north end of Dorset Street in South Burlington).

### Safety No Accident—Burlington and the U.S. Long Since Passed by on Safety Front

The reason for standing up for safety throughout the Parkway is not just for community development or for energy saving or for reduction in vehicle use as other modes thrive. And the converse is true in builtup areas—it is safety first which gets you all the good things as a consequence. Here in Burlington we experience about one fatality at at our 75 signalized intersections about every three years—six in the last sixteen years counting young Julia Gorda killed on the crosswalk at Staples Plaza near our border and Kaye Borneman whose death at the corner of City Hall Park led to a memorial bench unveiled last week and set for installation at the Park. U.S. walk and bike fatalities trend up now while vehicle fatalities continue downward. However, once first in our lifetime, 18 nations have passed the U.S. in highway safety—we now rank 19<sup>th</sup> in fatalities per vehicle mile (see the New Yorker piece on risk and vehicle safety last month). So, while the decades of the Parkway process has been with us the relative safety of our streets to other nations—particularly walking and biking safety—declined and continues to decline for all modes. We are talking about leading safety rates in the U.K. and Scandinavia which if attained here in the U.S. would lead to at least 15,000 deaths avoided each year along with countless serious and minor injuries. Our dead bodies are on the streets. Unfortunately--AAA points this out--the U.S. has no coherent and comprehensive approach to highway safety found in other nations.

### Shelburne Street High Accident Location Roundabout

Bringing up the high accident location of Shelburne/Locust/St. Paul Streets remains painfully relevant as a project 100% funded federally and its design completed early in the last Mayor Kiss administration apparently languishes under a current schedule through at least two of your administrations unbuilt. At best the situation mirrors the lack of priority for safety for those who walk, bicycle and travel by car through that South End area adjacent to an elementary school and nearby church. DPW and others cite community acceptance as a problem for roundabouts but do nothing to address the situation when not a single busy street roundabout gets built in the County while a “free one” remains gathering dust in our DPW closet.

As you well know from your trip to Montreal other towns and cities now eclipse Burlington in walk and bike infrastructure on their streets. Just as important as cycle track right here in Vermont are the new downtown roundabouts in Montpelier, Middlebury and in Manchester Center where the first corridor of roundabouts completed three years ago spurs on to new heights its economic retail engine self-described as “the Fifth Avenue of the Mountains.” These new facilities offer the highest level of safety and service to those who walk and travel in a vehicle! I would strongly recommend your checking out these three Vermont downtowns, if possible walking, bicycling and driving through each of the roundabout areas. Montpelier just completed an in-depth study of its Main Street, a “green street” study, which means every intersection along Main Street from across the bridge at Memorial Drive and

Northfield Street to the Spring Street Keck Circle Roundabout has now been found roundabout-feasible including the Main and State and Main and Barre Streets intersections. Field visits to the Montpelier roundabouts played a pivotal role in the resident driven NACP outcome.

Just as quality, safe infrastructure now planned for North Avenue includes both roundabouts and dooring-free cycle track so too should any design for the Parkway, really "Parkway Street." By any measure the current design fails the quality, safe, and separate pathway aspects of the landmark North Avenue Plan.

When developing infrastructure the first and basic principle needs to be quality and safety—no compromise need be made in either value, why should there be when little City investment is required? Montpelier used a similar project funding for half mile superior quality roadway with a new adjacent sidewalk, and at the east end (US 2/302) a roundabout at an intersection previously generating an accident almost weekly. Montpelier's project is light years away from the original project concept decades ago. There exists no political downside for advocating for safe, quality street infrastructure benefiting each and every mode. If we as a community and a neighborhood can find common ground I am fully confident of VTrans, FHWA and Act 250 place no unreasonable constraints. Do we not all pursue a common cause?

Finally, parking on our busy streets and downtown need not be a barrier to re-purposing space for bikeways and cycle track. Our residential parking study shows increased interest in parking re-purposing for bike facilities. And Gisli Baldursson's recent talk on Reykjavik's densification of land use and a Copenhagen-like drive for bicycle infrastructure tells us even an actual reduction of parking as a policy can work.

Thank you for your consideration of these thoughts and am looking forward to the many tasks to make Burlington a livable community for fellow residents and those who follow after.

Yours truly,

Tony Redington

cc Councilor Max Tracy, Ward 2  
Council President Jane Knodell, Central District  
AARP Livable Communities Group