

March 18, 2009

Peter Varga
The RAPID
300 Ellsworth SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Re: The Silver Line

Dear Mr. Varga,

The Heritage Hill Association appreciates your presentation at the March 17th HHA Board meeting regarding the proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) project, the Silver Line. There has always been strong support from our neighborhood for accessible rapid transit services within Grand Rapids. In fact, the promotion of public transit services is a policy of the *Master Plan of Heritage Hill* that was prepared by the Heritage Hill Association and adopted by the City of Grand Rapids in 1988.

While the concept of the BRT is greatly applauded, the proposed route and use of Lafayette NE is strongly opposed by this neighborhood and therefore, the board cannot support your request as presented at this time.

The HHA Board members concur that a rapid transit bus route into the core of Downtown and along Michigan Street would, in theory, reduce the need for parking, however Board members and neighbors believe that the frequency, weight, vibration, and noise on this already congested residential street is too great a burden for both the historic structures and residents to bear. Structural damage has already occurred on several streets in Heritage Hill with existing bus traffic and it is believed that the steady vibration will cause the same damage to the historic homes along Lafayette NE. Currently no public buses use the blocks of Lafayette NE between Fountain and Michigan Street. To go from zero bus traffic to a constant stream of buses every 10 to 15 minutes would constitute a significant change and we challenge the assumption that Lafayette can accommodate this heavy use. The smaller shuttle buses that are used by Spectrum Health to transport employees to the hospital already force traffic to back up due to the radius needed to turn the corner at Michigan Street onto Lafayette. The BRT bus will certainly need equal if not greater space to maneuver and will block traffic. Additionally, the idea of removing on-street parking to minimize this congestion is not an acceptable alternative. The need for parking is huge for residents with the limited off-street parking in Heritage Hill. Tenants are already inconvenienced with the high numbers of student parking. Eliminating more on-street parking will only make access to homes and apartments harder for residents and more difficult for landlords to rent apartments due to the lack of parking. Furthermore recent 100+ inch snowfalls reduced the travel lane widths significantly and often to a point that limits traffic to one way. The addition of these buses would only greatly exacerbate the problem.

We believe there are alternatives to the route that will take the buses off residential streets. We want to work with you to find a solution to this concern that will preserve the integrity of our historic houses and neighborhood and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to work in a cooperative manner with you and your staff. This solution will also allow us to support a much needed rapid transit system that is vital to Heritage Hill and the entire Grand Rapids area.

We hope to hear from you soon regarding our concern and options on finding a solution.
Before we take our opposition further, please contact me at 644-6453 or our office, 459-8950.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Clark, AICP
Heritage Hill Association Board of Directors President

Cc: John Logie