

December 6, 2022

Dear Mayor Kim and Council Members:

I am writing on behalf of Sustainable Saratoga to express our strong support of the bike lanes proposed for Union Avenue. Please accept this letter as our public comment for the December 6th hearing on the matter.

Climate change is already affecting this region, and experts warn us that we must act now to avoid greater climate disruption. Investing in greener, alternative transportation such as biking infrastructure is one critical component of any strategy to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Many communities are seeking to reduce the preeminence of the automobile to improve the efficiency of transportation systems and reduce traffic congestion, energy use, air pollution, and the emission of greenhouse gasses. Our city recognizes the threats posed by climate change and has committed to address them by becoming a certified Climate Smart Community. To qualify for certification, the city council passed a resolution pledging to take a number of actions, including the promotion of a compact, transit-oriented, bikeable and walkable community. The more we can do to invite people to get on their bikes and leave their cars at home, the closer we will be to attaining our Climate Smart Community goals.

Cities structured to support walking and biking are desirable places to live and work. When communities recognize that public streets should accommodate a range of users, the streetscape must be configured to account for the safety of everyone, including those who ride bicycles. Cyclists need the protection of bike lanes so that they do not have to rely on motorists' good behavior and alertness to safely navigate city streets. Our city should encourage bicycling by making it safer and more attractive through the creation of a network of bike lanes connecting residents and visitors to destinations throughout the city.

Saratoga Springs has undertaken important projects to encourage bicycling in the city, including the bike lanes on North Broadway and Lake Avenue, and the recent completion of the Downtown Connector segment of the Saratoga Greenbelt Trail. But there is much more to be done. The details of the city's vision for a citywide bicycle network are presented in the Saratoga Springs Complete Streets Plan. The plan recommends adding bike lanes along the length of Union Avenue in light of its importance for the creation of a citywide bicycle network.

Union Avenue is a main entrance to the city and a connector to downtown from the east side neighborhoods. It is used regularly by visitors and community members, some of whom rely on bicycles as their primary means of transportation into the downtown area. Union Avenue currently resembles an extra-wide four-lane highway, encouraging people to speed, and making it difficult to cross by foot or to bicycle safely in the traffic lanes. Since cars park along the shoulder, bikes either use the traffic lanes or the sidewalks. If a cyclist uses the sidewalk, pedestrians are forced to step aside into the tree lawns or onto people's yards, a dangerous situation. Many cyclists in town are children or teenagers – it is simply not safe for them to use the traffic lanes along a busy street like Union.



Board of Directors: Amy Durland, Anne Ernst, Laura Faulk, Dianna Goodwin, Sarah Goodwin, Harry Moran, Paul Murphy, Laura Rappaport, Richard Romano, Rachele Thomas

Creating bike lanes on Union Avenue and connecting them to other bike lanes will make cycling safer and more accessible in our city. A recent study of European cities found that adding bike lanes increased the number of cyclists across the cities, not just in the streets with bike lanes but everywhere. Bike lanes encourage cycling. Cycling is good for the environment and for our health, and is a strong indicator of livability in any city. Bicycle lanes should be part of Saratoga Spring's plan for a sustainable and equitable future.

We look forward to seeing the plans for Union Avenue bike lanes and hope they are constructed in the near future.

Very truly yours,

Dianna Goodwin

Dianna Goodwin, Co-Chair
Sustainable Saratoga

cc: Rick Fenton, Laura Faulk, Ed Lindner and Ken Grey

