

June 6, 2022

TO: City Council President, Breean Beggs

City Council Members

Karen Stratton

Zack Zappone

Lori Kinnear

Betsy Wilkerson

Michael Cathcart

Jonathan Bingle

RE: Strong Road Design Removal/Delay from Capital Facilities Six Year Street Plan

Dear Council President and Council Members,

Our Neighborhood Council Leadership Team had the opportunity to review a recent Plan Commission Meeting and the current proposed Six Year Street Plan where we noticed that the draft showed a delay to Strong Road improvements, specifically, the planning and design project for \$150,000. Once learning of this delay and verifying it with city staff, our Executive Board met immediately and we are submitting written notice of opposition with this letter.

With that being said, not only do we, the Executive Board oppose this, we also respectfully request that you offer and approve an amendment to the PC's draft version and move Strong Road back to 2023 list, as there has been a significant change in condition.

- * The Roundabout is fully open and functioning, the road is in disrepair and has degraded more quickly than anticipated and is unable to be maintained.
- * We have added two new schools, Skyline Elementary and Highland Middle School bringing the total number of schools on the Prairie to **five** and over **2,000 students** attending. This change in condition has led to a substantial increase in bicycle and pedestrian travel sharing a deteriorated road that lacks shoulders, sidewalks, a walking path and traffic calming mechanisms allowing for safe travel.
- * Completing this section of Strong Road is the final link between the Roundabout improvements, the Pathways Connect Project which the city has invested in, ultimately connecting Sky Prairie Park to Five Mile School, Prairie View Elementary, Skyline Elementary, Highland Middle School and the Slavic Baptist Church School.

We plan to bring this to our next quarterly meeting on June 23rd for a full vote of endorsement but that will be after you approve the Six Year Plan which is why this is urgent. We hope to have both our council members at this meeting plus a representative from public works.

Most recently we have engaged with the neighborhood on Facebook with over 60+ responses. This combined with the 2021 neighborhood survey which had over 128 responses listing Strong Road as the number one issue in the neighborhood right now. This seems a small amount of money for planning and design and we are proposing if city staff doesn't have the capacity for planning and design , please use outside vendors to complete this work because of the public imperative and it will save money in the long run. It may allow us to obtain funding through grants if the street is designed.

We also have to note that our Neighborhood Council has commented on several developments with connections to Strong Road and our comments surrounding concurrency were tempered because we knew that Strong Road was finally on the Six Year Plan. Now if it is delayed then our numerous discussions and comments to the hearing examiner and city staff on developments that are building out seem misguided and not in the neighborhoods best interest.

You will likely hear from engineers that Strong Road still has "capacity" for traffic and that Five Mile already has lots of improvements. Our response is that we waited 35 years for Five Mile Road to be built and almost as long for intersection improvements, which is our Roundabout at the heart of the Prairie. **This issue isn't about capacity or fairness between neighborhoods. This issue is about a rural farm road that has decomposed beyond it's useful life because it is now being used as an urban arterial literally crushed under the weight of development truck traffic and 40% growth.** City street workers have publicly said they cannot maintain Strong Road any longer and have recommended a full buildout to City standards. Please help us here or this arterial will need to be closed. It is simply not safe.

We hope you see the importance in approving an amendment to move Strong Road planning from 2027 and design from 2028 and combine them to be funded and completed in 2023. Ideally we would like to see the project fully funded in 2024, and we look forward to working with you, the Plan Commission, the County and staff to finally get this old farm road up to city standards. Please let us know if you have questions.

Respectfully,

Five Mile Prairie Neighborhood Council Executive Board
Maribeth Watt, Co-Chair Kathy Miotke, Co-Chair Maira Perez, Board Member
Raeleen Turner, Board Member Aaron Reese, Board Member

