



Statement of Concern on Impacts of the Mayo Unbound Investment on Environmentally, Financially and Accessibly Focused Transportation

The Mayo Unbound project is a transformational opportunity for Rochester and surrounding communities. However, a number of known community driven concerns do not appear to have been considered or rectified in the nearly one year since the project was first made publicly available.

We, the Minnesota Transportation Equity Alliance coalition of partner organizations, wish to raise a number of concerns that potentially challenge public health and safety as a result of the current public documents pertaining to Mayo Unbound. We do not oppose this project, but wish to raise concerns that appear to be inconsistent with more than a decade of City of Rochester planning. It is our collective hope that in raising awareness of these issues before plans are finalized, we will be able to collaboratively ensure a stronger and more equitable end result.

Maintaining grid connectivity is the best and safest option for vulnerable road users who are disproportionately BIPOC, low income, unhoused and/or disabled. It is also apparent to many others within the community who have expressed concerns directly. While the City Comprehensive Plan had extensive deliberate public engagement, the Mayo Unbound plan has not.

Requests

Our organizations have two specific requests for City of Rochester leadership:

First, we request that the concerns raised pertaining to inconsistency with pre-existing community planning be addressed. Solutions should include fully funded temporary and permanent measures to protect the health, welfare and safety of our community.

Second, we request the full community — including the organizations supporting this letter — be involved in a meaningfully collaborative public process to ensure that these concerns are addressed.

These activities should predate the vacation of public right of way and any other public subsidies.

I. Non compliance with Community Comprehensive Plan

As currently proposed, Mayo Unbound is inconsistent with more than a decade of city planning. The “*Planning 2 Succeed*” Comprehensive Plan deliberately engaged diverse minority and low-income peoples. Mayo Unbound does not follow the prescribed path from that multi-year, inclusive planning document. Of particular concern: Mayo Unbound is seeking

permanent street vacations to key pieces of infrastructure that are vitally important to the overall transportation system, especially for people who bike, walk and roll — whether on bicycles, in wheelchairs or with strollers. Much of the same development could be possible using a revocable permit, which is a more just and equitable approach. Mayo Clinic has used revocable permits in the past.

II. Overall Automobile Congestion

The elimination of a substantial portion of the downtown street grid will significantly increase automobile and other motor-vehicle traffic and potential conflict points from turning motions on remaining streets. In particular, new parking facilities along the 2nd Street transit corridor will increase peak hour traffic on the already congested 6th Street SW, as well as negatively affect transit headways on 2nd Street SW. Center Street remains the only viable connection across downtown from east to west and will be far more dangerous due to substantially increased traffic and turning motions.

The elimination of public routes on 3rd and 4th avenues eliminates all existing north-south connectivity for people who bicycle and leaves no public route for pedestrians between West 1st and 6th avenues. All remaining roadways will see a significant increase in traffic, especially Center Street, 6th Street West, and 6th Avenue West, which will be far more dangerous for people outside of the protection of an automobile.

The community comprehensive plan envisioned 2nd Street SW as a transit corridor, with West 3rd and 4th avenues as principal car and bicycle routes. The proposed Mayo Unbound plan is inconsistent with these plans.

III. Transit Concerns

The LINK project is the most transformative transit project in the history of Rochester and the first new mass transit line in Greater Minnesota in 100 years. The success of the line relies on the following:

- Reduced automobile trips into downtown along 2nd Street.
- The ability for buses to run freely in the right-hand lanes.
- Minimization of left-turning traffic along the corridor.

Current Mayo Unbound planning is showing a new 1000 stall employee parking facility adjacent to the existing Generose Ramp. This will significantly increase automobile traffic and turning motions in the transit-oriented area along 2nd Street. The ramp will create unnecessary trips into the city core at peak shift change, and automotive traffic patterns will disrupt the ability of people to access transit; it also would harm transit headways. The most recent Mayo employee ramp at Discovery Square has demonstrated that even attempts to control the flow of traffic have been ignored, with employees frequently exiting illegally against the flow of traffic.

The elimination of West 3rd and 4th avenues creates additional challenges for LINK transit.

Significant left-turning motions will be introduced at West 3rd Avenue into the new Mayo dropoff loop. This is dangerous for vulnerable road users and inconsistent with transit priority and headways on 2nd Street SW. It would be more appropriate to eliminate left turns altogether in this area. The Mayo Unbound plan does the opposite, requiring the vast majority of automobile traffic to make a left turn through a transit priority lane. The left-turning motions are likely to back up automobile traffic and create conflict with the transit priority lanes. It is likely that no amount of enforcement will stop automobile traffic from illegally accessing the LINK lanes, especially if left-turning traffic is backed up into the single automobile lane.

IV. Biking Concerns

Over a decade of community planning has identified Center Street and West 3rd and 4th avenues as the key bicycle routes to and through downtown Rochester. These are the only viable options for connectivity to and through the downtown core set of destinations. Mayo Unbound has disregarded these planning decisions and, as presented, would eliminate bicycling infrastructure in downtown Rochester. Bicycling infrastructure is particularly important to lower-income communities who need to access the clinic or other amenities in downtown Rochester. Its use is not limited to bicycles as many other mobility device users utilize these lanes due to the frequent inaccessibility of other options.

The largest concern of people who bicycle to and through downtown is the complete elimination of every north-south bike route with no viable replacement. A viable north-south bicycle route would need to connect areas north of Civic Center Drive to Soldiers Memorial Field Park.

Broadway can not support safe bike infrastructure alongside four- or five-car lanes; West 1st Avenue does not have safe bike infrastructure; West 2nd and 5th avenues cannot connect from north of Civic Center Drive to Soldiers Memorial Field Park. Plus, turning motions on through routes are unsafe, especially with substantially increased traffic on remaining public roadways.

West 6th Avenue is too far out of downtown to serve as an effective north-south connector. Further, West 6th Avenue south of 2nd Street suffers from a lack of accessibility due to the slope, which may not even meet the minimum acceptable ADA standards. Intersections on 6th Avenue SW at Civic Center Drive, 2nd Street SW, 4th Street SW and 6th Street SW are unsafe for people on bicycles even before a significant increase in traffic and turning motions.

The planned Mayo Unbound access from Center Street along with the complete elimination of vehicle access on West 3rd and 4th avenues will substantially increase traffic on Center Street, whose bike facilities currently suffer from a lack of enforcement. Bicyclists are particularly vulnerable because Mayo employees and other contractors frequently illegally block bike lanes, forcing cyclists into faster moving traffic.

In the approximately three months where coatings of ice can be a problem, it is important that bicycle lanes be exposed to the sun for ice removal. Icing on Center Street is more likely due to the low elevation of the midwinter sun, the presence of taller buildings along Center Street, and

the elimination of visual corridors to the south on West 3rd and 4th avenues.

The bicycling community has not been presented with any viable solutions to these problems.

V. Walking Concerns

The most walkable cities have well-connected public street grids. Any vacating of public right-of-ways allows for the closure of public access to the formerly public connections without public approval. The elimination of much of the public grid via Mayo Unbound and previous City of Rochester street vacations will create a lack of public pedestrian connections. This creates a number of challenges for people who walk. Remaining streets become more congested, and intersections become more dangerous as a result of vehicle turning motions, especially left-turning motions. Additions of turn lanes increases crossing distance.

A large building massing such as what is shown in the Mayo Unbound proposal creates additional concerns for street vibrancy. In particular the city has had a longstanding moratorium on building skyways over streets because of how that design detracts from the attractiveness and vibrancy of the street below. Additionally this can cause challenges due to icing conditions from a lack of sun exposure in the winter months. Short underground connections with clear sightlines and abundant lighting can provide the same connectivity without many of the problems related to covering roadways.

Additionally the design of buildings along sidewalks has a great impact on the walkability and vibrancy of pedestrian spaces. It is important that the city follow its guidance related to breaking up building facades and ensuring ground-level transparency on all Mayo Unbound projects.

VI. Accessibility Concerns

The greatest potential challenges from the current Mayo Unbound proposal affect people with mobility impairments. This population disproportionately relies on biking, walking/rolling and transit and is vastly overrepresented within the individuals who live, work and visit Rochester.

An increase in personal vehicle congestion and turning motions on key streets, especially 2nd Street South, will reduce the effectiveness of transit due to increased delays. The project also significantly increases conflict points for all road users as a result of a planned left-hand turn into the primary hospital entrance from the eastbound lanes on 2nd Street South. Due to substantially increased traffic on all remaining streets, it will be important that all intersections are designed to exceed ADA standards to minimize crossing distances and avoid person vs. vehicle collisions.

Due to an induced demand for vehicle idling and decreased number of automobile routes through downtown, we also fear that there will be an increase in vehicle emissions in core neighborhoods. This is particularly harmful for people with asthma and other respiratory

ailments, which disproportionately affect low-income populations.

People with mobility challenges will face substantially longer distances to traverse the area around the Mayo campus by public right-of-way. This creates more difficulty accessing services, amenities, community spaces and transit connections.

It is also important that walkways ensure permanent access for pedestrians at **all times**. Private roadways allow all individuals to be trespassed if they are deemed to be undesirable; this often targets unhoused communities and/or persons with mental health needs. Pedestrian connections need to be available to the public at all times unless the city issues a special permit. In the past, the public has been denied access to Annenberg Plaza at the behest of Mayo Clinic.

VII. Destination Concern

People deserve safe multimodal access to locations outside of Mayo Clinic. Around the country, as is the case in Rochester, traffic crashes disproportionately affect people who live with a disability, are low-income and/or are from BIPOC communities. These groups also are more reliant on safe walking/rolling, bicycling and transit networks. It is important that transportation options remain viable for *all* people who visit and live or work in downtown Rochester.

Beyond Mayo Clinic, it is critically important that we create safe and direct routes between and among all of our other downtown destinations. We wish to highlight that the Rochester Public Library, City/County Government Center, Mayo Civic Center, businesses (especially along Broadway and West 1st Avenue), city recreational trails, Rochester Civic Theatre, Rochester Art Center, Soldiers Memorial Field, Central Park, core residential neighborhoods and services for the unhoused are all important destinations that need to be conveniently accessible without an automobile.

Current planning documents contemplate safe walking, biking and transit access to all of these places. It is important that this connectivity not be reduced or made less safe by elimination of public right-of-ways as a result of the Mayo Unbound project.

In conclusion: Both collectivized and individual community concerns have been raised directly to Mayo Clinic leadership and Mayo Unbound leadership since the initial images of the plan emerged. Despite this, successive details around the Mayo Unbound plan have only reinforced a belief that impacts to accessibility, transportation equity, bike/pedestrian safety and transportation sustainability are not a consideration or priority within this planning process. The path forward is through good-faith collaboration with community experts and individual stakeholders to create an end result that works for everyone — residents and visitors alike. We look forward to working with you to meet everyone’s needs, including and most especially those who access the clinic and our city through multiple modes of transportation



For further information please visit mnteat.org or contact mnteat@bikemn.org

Note: This coalition statement was compiled based on input from community members but was not authored or coauthored by any current Rochester city employees or members of Mayo Clinic’s staff.

Exhibit 1: Downtown Rochester 2024

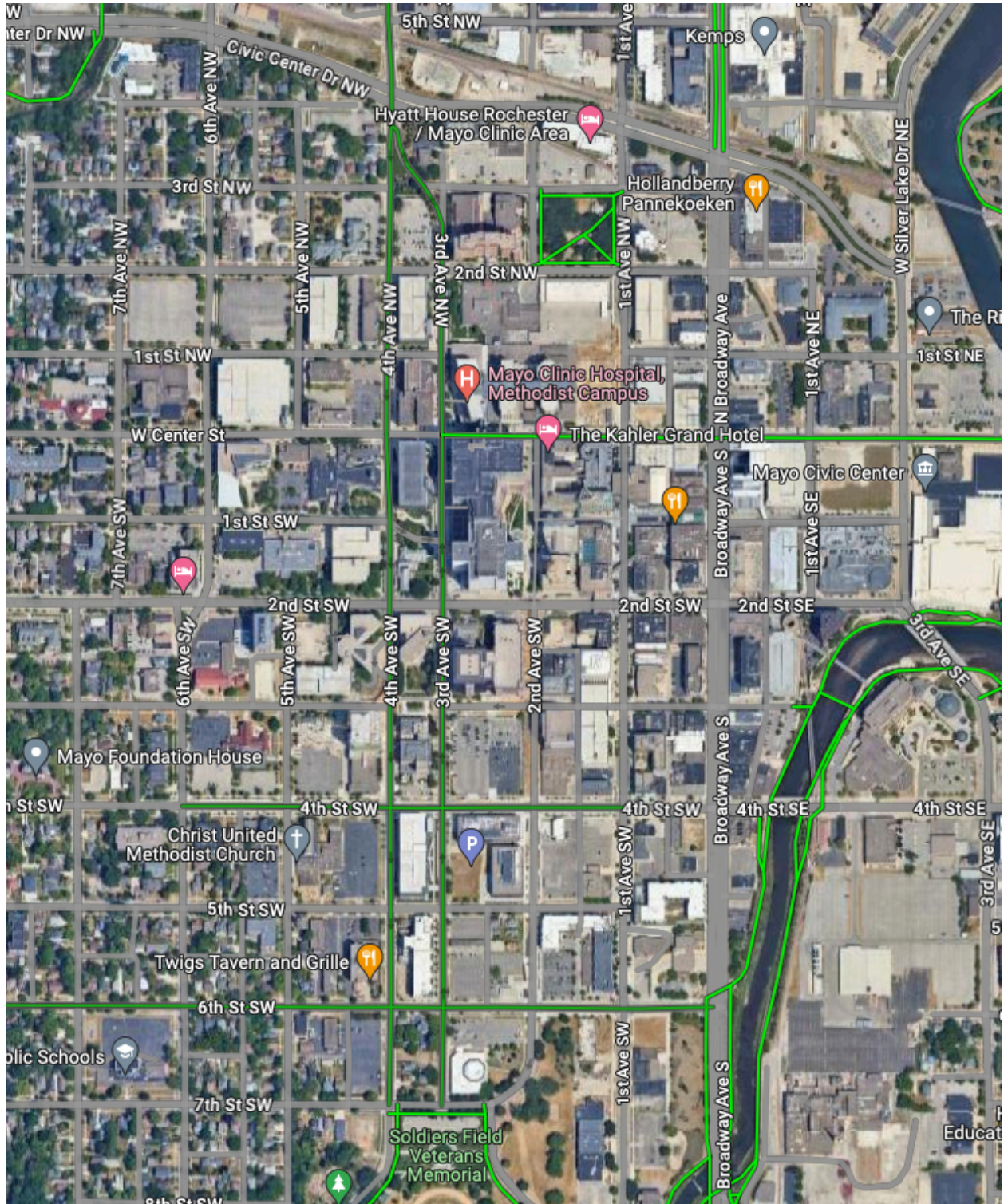


Exhibit 2: Mayo Unbound Layout



Exhibit 3: LINK rapid transit

