Dear Council Members Chughtai and Goodman,

Thank you Council Member Chughtai for supporting the recommended Public Works design for the upcoming reconstruction of Hennepin Ave S on the recently completed Our Streets Minneapolis and Move Minnesota questionnaire. I am writing today to ask you both to support the approval of the proposed design for the Hennepin Avenue South reconstruction project as soon as possible. We also ask that you make a public commitment to doing so.

Full-time bus lanes and a new protected bikeway will dramatically improve transportation options and are a long-overdue investment in equity and mobility justice. 17% of households in Minneapolis are transit-dependent, a statistic that is higher in Wards 7 and 10.

The bus lanes will improve speed and reliability for transit riders, 43% of whom are people of color. 64% of Metro Transit riders have an annual household income of less than $60,000 per year. The full-time bus lanes will also serve Metro Mobility buses, providing fast and frequent transit service for the 1 in 10 disabled residents in our community.

By increasing access to clean transportation options like walking, biking and transit, the new design will also reduce traffic emissions, which have caused disproportionate health impacts like asthma among the thousands who live along Hennepin. The new design is also a critical step to address the climate crisis, which you both list as a priority on your campaign websites.

This design will make it easier for working class members of our community to shop, buy groceries and eat along the corridor. It’s needed for the thousands of renters, disabled people and transit-dependent people who need faster and more comfortable options for walking, rolling, biking and taking transit on Hennepin Avenue S.

Local businesses are an essential part of our community and will also benefit from the new design. A survey launched by Our Streets Minneapolis on January 31st indicates that over 90% of respondents would spend more time shopping, walking, biking and rolling on Hennepin Avenue S. once the proposed
redesign is completed. More than 70% of respondents said that they regularly use other modes of transportation aside from driving to visit businesses along the corridor, traveling from over 10 different neighborhoods across the city. Similar bikeway and transit improvements in other cities have demonstrated that the benefits to Hennepin businesses will far outweigh the small loss of street parking.

For these reasons, I urge you to approve the recommended design for Hennepin Avenue S. Our community is counting on it.

Thank you Council Member Chughtai for supporting the proposed design and thank you both for your leadership on this important matter.

Ashwat Narayanan
Executive Director