



PRESS CONTACT:
Julie Harris, Bike Walk Nebraska
402-699-3037
julie@bikewalknebraska.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Bike Walk Nebraska responds to Mayor, Terminates Partnership with Metro Smart Cities

Yesterday, the [Metro Smart Cities](#) (MSC) Advisory Board which Mayor Stothert co-chairs, had its first meeting in several months.

Despite being invited to every Advisory Board meeting as the steering partner of the Market-to-Midtown Bikeway (the Bikeway) to provide information and updates, Bike Walk Nebraska (BWN) was not invited to attend this meeting.

In the meeting, data from the evaluation reports authored by BWN and the status of remaining funding were presented and questioned. Due to the lack of an invite, BWN didn't have the opportunity to answer questions or provide additional insight.

Bike Walk Nebraska brought the Bikeway project and the entirety of the funding to MSC to facilitate a successful example of a public/private partnership. Mayor Stothert [attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony](#) voicing her appreciation and support of such a partnership.

In this spirit of partnership, BWN allowed MSC to use a portion of the funding **BWN provided** to create a website now serving **all of its current and future pilot projects.**

Bike Walk Nebraska learned from an [August 22th Omaha World Herald article](#) that City Council President Pete Festersen was authoring “an amendment that would support the project beyond its 18-month pilot program,” for the September 13th council agenda.

To work in good faith with everyone at the City, [a memo](#) outlining potential ways to extend the pilot project was sent to Festersen on September 6th. It was not a request for funding or for a champion of the cause. The identical memo was sent to Mayor Stothert and Public Works Director, Robert Stubbe, on September 12th.

After the MSC meeting on September 21st, BWN was informed the Mayor and Public Works director indicated **they will not extend the pilot project agreement,** Also, that the Bikeway will be removed once the agreement expires on September 30th, despite unanimous passing of the



city council referendum and apparent success on all previously established performance measures.

The Mayor and Public Works Director reportedly voiced concern over the budget to maintain the Bikeway if the pilot period was extended an additional 18 months (estimated at \$40,000). Bike Walk Nebraska has \$38,930 in remaining project funds not provided to MSC which could be used for these costs. This could have been clarified at the meeting had BWN been in attendance.

Bike Walk Nebraska questions the logic of removing a bike lane serving 50,000 rides since the start of the project on a street which will be torn up for the streetcar construction in 18-24 months.

Further, while BWN agrees there are safety issues to consider when various modes of transportation co-exist in the same area, well-established engineering standards exist to help guide the design and construction of safe bicycle infrastructure. Also, the location of the streetcar in the center of the urban core means people on bikes, scooters, and adaptive mobility devices will be navigating the tracks regardless of the location of the Bikeway.

BWN calls on Mayor Stothert and the Public Works Director to clarify their intentions for the Bikeway and share their budgetary calculations and concerns voiced in the MSC meeting with BWN, the funders of this project.

Having not been extended the professional courtesy of being part of this crucial conversation of the project BWN fully funded and coordinated, **Bike Walk Nebraska is terminating our partnership with Metro Smart Cities, effective immediately.**

Bike Walk Nebraska values and appreciates all of the organizations participating in that group, especially our friends on the staff of [Omaha by Design](#) and Lamp Rynearson.

Bike Walk Nebraska is proud of the work BWN did on The Market-to-Midtown Bikeway. [The results speak for themselves.](#) Bike Walk Nebraska is enormously grateful to all of the volunteers, City staff, community partners, businesses along the route and champions who helped us gather all of the data that was asked of us to collect in service to the performance metrics established to evaluate success.

