

Transportation Commission
Meeting of September 4, 2024
Agenda #6, Legistar 85043

I do not support the addition of new section 6.5, addressing alignment with the fire code. The design and use of public property, the right-of-way, should not be determined by the needs of a developer. Developers have a number of choices to meet the fire code, including having the fire lane on the property, upgrading a wood frame to steel, providing multiple staircases to the roof, and installing an enhanced sprinkler system. See:
<https://www.cityofmadison.com/fire/permits-inspections/equivalency-guide-for-code-deficient-fire-apparatus-access>

As noted in the materials for your meeting last January, Legistar 81746, those alternative design measures cannot be required under state law. However, that does not mean the City is required to dedicate public space to a private use so that a development can be built, nor is the City required to design streets to accommodate a new development.

The Complete Green Streets supposedly provides a “process centered in community values.” It is questionable whether devoting public space to a private use is centered in community values. Nor would the community necessarily support the use of the street as an aerial apparatus fire lane when trees cannot be more than 20’ tall between the fire lane and the building. It is also worth noting that this item was not posted to Legistar until last Friday, right before a long holiday weekend – not necessarily the best timing for obtaining public input.

Should this change be adopted, I foresee developers almost always using our public streets for the aerial apparatus fire lane. After all, it is the cheapest choice. And since few buildings are being built that are 30’ or less, a lot of public space could end up being devoted to these fire lanes.

Respectfully Submitted,
Linda Lehnertz