

SCTOD Comment Summary

From Ricardo Gonzalez (South Capitol District Planning Committee)

MEMO TO: SCTOD Committee Members
FROM: Ricardo Gonzalez
RE: Comments on East Gateway Proposed Changes

As requested at our meeting of last Thursday 5/8, I am writing to offer some comments on the East Gateway Concept Revisions, as proposed in the Final Report submitted by Kimley-Horn and Associates. However, I believe we all would agree that an entirely new dynamic has been introduced to our deliberations with the presentation by Tim Anderson's group, so my view of the proposed changes for the "hairball" intersection has been affected by it and this will be reflected in what I have to say.

As we all know, the hairball intersection is full of problematic issues that demand attention and solutions. The left turns from John Nolen Drive onto East Wilson St. and from Blair onto Williamson St. were never designed correctly in 1985 (when the intersection was last rebuilt) and have been a source of great stress and danger to all. Then the access driveway to the parking area behind Machinery Row was built to compound the existing flow of all traffic and pedestrians, augmenting the already obvious safety hazards. Additionally, there are many pedestrian crossings where the road curves and a railroad crossing to boot.

Even if we went at it with a major reconstruction, it would be hard to take care of all these issues. However, closing East Wilson St. in a cul-de-sac and shifting all that traffic into the residential areas of South Franklin and Hancock Streets is not the answer. Besides, with only four major thoroughfares crossing the Isthmus, it would be impractical, if not downright folly, to close one of them. Furthermore, this proposed cul-de-sac is opposed by all the businesses in the immediate area and many of the residents of the First Settlement neighborhood.

My initial approach would be to temporarily fix the problem issues rather than reconfigure the entire intersection. Consequently, it would be unnecessary to adopt radical solutions at this time to deal with the hairball intersection and, for that matter, the building of a pedestrian bridge connecting the 300 block of East Wilson St. to the lake shore.

Some of these temporary fixes would include:

- * Creating adequate left turn lanes onto Williamson from Blair and onto Wilson from John Nolen, with dedicated time to match the existing left turns from Williamson onto John Nolen and Wilson onto Blair.
- * Eliminate the channelized right turn from John Nolen onto Williamson and allow sufficient space for the entrance to Machinery Row's parking area. Thus vehicles turning left from Blair onto Williamson would not have to cross that additional lane of traffic which may not see them coming.
- * Significantly improve markings and signage for pedestrian crossings.
- * Consider eliminating the sharp right turn from Blair onto Wilson, moving it forward as possible and expanding the sidewalk in front of the 500 block of East Wilson.

While the opening of South Hancock Street to facilitate a right turn from East Wilson that would connect to John Nolen is desirable, given that it would reduce traffic flow at the great intersection, I believe this would be premature now in view of the future potential of a John Nolen/Blair tunnel. By the same token, constructing a pedestrian bridge over John Nolen would not be appropriate now.

I realize that our task does not include the consideration of any proposal not germane to our discussions, but I cannot in good conscience fail to recognize the existence and potential of the Design Professionals' efforts. The work done by our Committee, our City Staff and Kimley-Horn and Associates in addressing the other relevant issues has been very good and effective, providing us with solid solutions to many of them. I believe, however, that we ought to keep our minds open to a more comprehensive approach to the East Gateway.

Respectfully,

Ricardo Gonzalez

From Melissa Berger (South Capitol District Planning Committee)

- ITC section: Mention the history of the Badger Bus Depot, pointing out that area's precedent as a transit hub.
- Paths and Parks section: The report barely mentions the fishing pier off the Monona Terrace, and is unclear about whether we took it out in a subsequent vote. I know that the current executive summary states its inclusion, but it should be in the body of the document too.
- East Gateway Section:
 - On current page 3-8, add some/all benefits from Tim Anderson's white paper to the John Nolen Tunnel "pros" list. The ones he fleshes out under the headings of Transportation Benefits, Parks and Open Space Benefits, Environmental Benefits, and Economic Benefits.
 - On current page 3-9, Hancock intersection part under "cons" please add: 1) removal of southern pedestrian connection across John Nolen/Blair and 2) bus rerouting challenges.

From Madelyn Leopold (South Capitol District Planning Committee)

David:

I will have to miss the upcoming meeting on the 12th. I apologize once again.

I read the minutes from the May meeting and also the draft Executive Summary. I agree with the general outlines of the Executive Summary. I was relieved to see that some options were rejected (the bridges on either side of Monona Terrace, for one, and the Wilson St. cul-de-sac and Hancock St. intersection) while others were proposed for refinement. I was also glad to see

that the large-scale visions (Kenton Peters and Tim Anderson) were referenced, as I think that a grand solution will ultimately be the best. The fact that none of the smaller fixes was really satisfactory bears out this conclusion.

I wish you the best in the next rounds of this planning.

Regards,

Madelyn

From Chuck Strawser (South Capitol District Planning Committee)

Here are my comments on individual chapters:

1. Intermodal Transit Center. I think the Bedford site was/is a good compromise, especially when there was an opportunity for a public private partnership on the Boldt parcel. Now that it appears that opportunity for a public private partnership at that site has been missed, I think we should be willing to consider other sites that have better connection to the existing rail lines, and any potential future passenger rail (of any kind – whether HSR or a connection from Sun Prairie through downtown to Middleton, as has been proposed in the past), should that opportunity present itself.
2. Wilson Street context Plan. I personally would prefer to see Wilson St be two-way for its entire length (and I'd point out that the problems with trucks loading/unloading on a two-way street with two parking lanes and two travel lanes is not so very different from the situation we have on State Street now – two travel lanes, no parking lanes, and lots of big trucks, including semis, dropping ramps in the street). Sure, State Street restricts motor vehicles somewhat, but the reality is that there are probably as many bus routes on State Street (and in both directions) as there are one-way on Wilson St now, in addition to newspaper delivery vehicles, fast food delivery vehicles, private vehicles whose owners live in housing on State Street and park off of State Street, not to mention hundreds, if not thousands, of bicycles every day, and yet somehow it still works. If Wilson is not to be two-way for its entire length, then I much prefer one-way traffic for MVs with a contraflow lane for bikes on the south side of the street to the status quo. Even if the contraflow lane is occasionally blocked, having a contraflow lane there tells all street users that it is ok for bicyclists to proceed in an east bound direction, which is very important for encouraging bicyclists to get off the sidewalk (and might also benefit pedestrians in other ways, such as slowing the MV traffic on the street by visually narrowing it)
3. Gateway Intersections (WEST). I like the proposals for John Nolen at North Shore and at Broom so far as they go, but I still think we should consider separate grade options for bikes and peds there (in addition to the proposed at grade changes), including, but not limited to, below grade designs like those suggested by Ron Shutvet. I also think that the cycletrack on the southernmost block of Broom Street is a good idea worth exploring more, but I wonder if it doesn't essentially shunt the problem (especially for bicyclists) further north to where it ends. Gateway Intersections (EAST-John

Nolen/Blair/Williamson/E. Wilson). As long as right turns on red will continue to be prohibited from inbound John Nolen onto EB Williamson St (and I think we should continue to prohibit them), then I can't see retaining the channelized right turn there as justified. If traffic is making that movement on a green light (the only time it's currently legal), then they can use the whole width of Williamson Street there to make a corner with a smaller curb radii, semi's included, especially if we prohibit EB turns onto Williamson Street from SB Blair (and I think we should, as that would bring many of the benefits of making E Wilson a cul-de-sac without actually cutting off E Wilson St to through movements to/from Williamson). If we are to retain the channelized right turn from John Nolen onto EB Williamson, then I think the raised crosswalk is an excellent idea that should be in this chapter (I think it's only found in the current iteration of the executive summary, unless I missed it). But again, if we're going to make all MVs stop there except on a green light, why not just eliminate the channelized right turn. I think we should also prohibit left turns from John Nolen onto WB E. Wilson St, as that would also bring many of the benefits of making E Wilson a cul-de-sac without actually cutting off E Wilson St to through movements to/from Williamson. And the channelized right turn from SB Blair St onto WB E. Wilson St should be eliminated, and the pedestrian refuge there enlarged (and perhaps room for outdoor seating made there-again incorporating some of the benefits of making E Wilson a cul-de-sac without actually cutting off E Wilson St to through movements to/from Williamson. Rarely does a car traveling SB on Blair actually get to that channelized right turn when the light facing SB Blair traffic is red anyway since the typical queue of cars backs up beyond where they can get there (meaning they often have to wait until the light facing them is green anyway). Lastly, the green bike box on WB E Wilson St is dangerous in conjunction with the current signal timing of that light. I have come EB on E Wilson on my bike with my kid in a trailer, approached the intersection facing a red light, traveled down the short bike lane to the front of the queue of cars, and then turned left (in the bike box, as it was intended to be used) just as the light facing EB traffic on E Wilson turned green, putting me and my kid in our trailer in direct conflict with three lanes of impatient drivers. The traffic signal timing needs to be changed to give bicyclists a few seconds head start (actually, this requires a new signal head specifically for bikes), to prevent this conflict in the future.

4. Connections between the Capitol Square and Lake Monona. I think all of the proposed bridges are ok, but I still think we should continue to consider other ways to make connections, including variations of the proposals made by Tim Anderson and Kenton Peters, and the underpasses suggested by Ron Shutvet. In particular, I think the point made about the plaza bridge reducing green space between John Nolen and the lake where it lands is a critical one, especially when compared to the opportunity to add 6 acres or more of additional parkland through one of the alternative proposals. Those alternatives need more consideration.
5. Paths and Parks. Again, I'm sorry if I missed the meeting at which the committee voted on the concept in this chapter. But I think it would be a huge mistake to provide a sidewalk for pedestrians that is only 6' wide. Yes, a wider sidewalk reduces green space, but so will the desire lines that will be created when people walk (or jog, or run dogs) next to the proposed sidewalk (or simply use the 10' path intended for bikes, which

means the same sorts of conflicts we have now). Also, I got a call from City Engineering just this week asking us how we produced the stamped asphalt in the Howard Temin Lakeshore Path west of Picnic Point where we have separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities with nothing more than paint (and the stamping in the asphalt). The city engineering staff person I spoke with said they were considering the possibility of widening the current path to about 15' and separating bikes and peds the way the Lakeshore Path does west of the entrance to Picnic Point. This committee should consider what city engineering is already thinking about as well as what the consultants suggest.

From Jay Ferm (Transportation Master Plan Oversight Committee)

To: SCTOD Oversight Committee
From: Jay Ferm
Date: May 6, 2014

Re: SCTOD final draft report comments

Dear SCTOD Committee,
Congratulations on completing a complicated and demanding task. My thanks to you and the many citizens, staff and consultants who have given their time, creativity and thoughtful consideration to this important part of our downtown. I respectfully offer the following comments in response to the draft report.

Super Crossings of John Nolen at North Shore Drive and Broom Street are an outstanding solution at these intersections. They will deliver dramatic improvements in bicycle and pedestrian safety, comfort and speed of crossing. By producing more predictable and visible bicycle and pedestrian behavior, the experience of car drivers will also improve. And they will be relatively inexpensive. These will become a model for many troubled intersections throughout Madison.

The proposed location (parcel B) for an Intermodal Transit Center (ITC) has several critical drawbacks:

1. Located along low-volume residential scale streets that limit visibility and access from nearby major streets and commercial neighborhoods. These streets will need extensive expansion to accommodate heavy busses and existing and induced pedestrian, bicycle and car traffic.
2. Adjacency to housing leads to conflicts with neighbors who will not want heavy busses coming through their neighborhood.
3. Adjacent to few existing commercial properties so miss the opportunity to strengthen what's already built. Instead, the ITC should front on at least one major commercial street.

Proposed Hairball redesign has low benefit/cost ratio. (John Nolen x Blair x Williamson x Wilson) While the proposal would be a modest improvement for local car and bicycle traffic, it will have limited benefit to pedestrians and through car traffic (East Washington ↔ John Nolen). I believe the proposal from the *Madison Design Professionals Workgroup*, **An Alternative Vision for Law Park and John Nolen Drive** that buries John Nolen Drive east of Monona Terrace to some point on Blair Street offers a more comprehensive solution to the many challenges of this quadrant of downtown. While more expensive than the SCTOD proposal for the Hairball, its many transportation, financial, green space and social benefits far outweigh the added cost. It has a high benefit/cost ratio.

As an interim measure to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and throughput at this most gnarly intersection I suggest **twin East-West Super Crossings and one North-South Super Crossing** across Williamson. Inbound bike/pedestrian traffic on Williamson and Capital City Trail could be combined into a North Super Crossing to Wilson. Outbound bike/pedestrian traffic from Wilson would traverse a South Super Crossing. Outbound traffic seeking the eastbound Capital City Path will require accommodation to get across Williamson. Possibilities include: (1) a diagonal akin to Dunning x Atwood; (2) Redesign eastbound Williamson to draw bikes to a designed crossing at Blount St.; (3) After crossing the South East-West Super Crossing, cross the North-South Super Crossing in the same light cycle or queue to cross North-South Super Crossing on a subsequent light cycle.

The lack of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy is a shortfall of this report. TDM holds the potential to significantly reduce Single Occupancy Vehicle traffic in downtown, lowering car traffic counts and reducing parking demand. These benefits will increase available parking and potentially allow conversion of street space from car parking to other beneficial uses. I strongly suggest that a comprehensive TDM analysis be completed to determine the potential of TDM throughout downtown Madison.

Wilson Street

The proposed one-way Wilson with contra-flow bikeway and sharrow lane is a promising improvement to the existing condition. It would be interesting to see the opportunities for more dramatic changes (E.g. increased green space, two-way traffic, etc.) with no reduction of parking availability, if an aggressive TDM program were in place. It is disappointing there is **no proposed solution to address congestion caused by commercial delivery vehicles on Wilson Street.** Given the almost certain redevelopment of the Government East Parking Ramp and some or all of the Madison Municipal Building parcel we have a unique opportunity to create a shared service delivery dock with underground access to all properties along Wilson between King Street and MLK, Jr. Blvd. Removing delivery vehicles (which are often present during peak morning hours) would greatly simplify traffic planning in the Wilson Street corridor. Given the many ways this option meets the SCTOD plan's goals, this is a good time to get this idea into the public dialog.

Thank you for your time, consideration and hard work.

Respectfully, Jay Ferm

Member, Madison in Motion (Transportation Master Plan) Oversight Committee (present)
Co-Chair, Madison Platinum Bike Planning Committee (concluded)

From John Coleman (Marquette Neighborhood Association)

David,

At the Marquette Neighborhood Association (MNA) meeting last week, our traffic committee and Chuck Strawser reported on the proposals for Law Park and the John Nolen/Blair/Wilson/Williamson intersection. The board was unable to endorse any of the proposals and would prefer to see a more visionary approach to traffic, pedestrian and bike use of the area. We suggest an approach that involves small but immediate improvements to the intersection such as a raised crosswalk in the channelized right, hardening up the channelized right, traffic calming in the first block of Williamson St. heading east, and reduction or elimination of left turns from John Nolen or Blair. Those and other incremental improvements should be followed with additional planning to develop a more complete approach that is workable and solves the multitude of problems at the intersection.

Although not endorsing any specific ideas, the Board felt that the ideas recently submitted by Tim Anderson to underground a portion of John Nolen, expand park space and simplify the intersection were the type of vision that is needed. We regret that the substantial work that has already been put into the SCTOD process has not resulted in a clear solution for the intersection. We look forward to a more complete solution being developed in the future.

Sincerely,

John Coleman (for the MNA Board)