

Tolley, Sabrina

From: Laura Brown [ljbrown607@charter.net]
Sent: Friday, December 07, 2012 9:55 PM
To: aaron.crandall@yahoo.com; Maniaci, Bridget; Johnson, Jill; Subeck, Lisa; lydmaurer@gmail.com; hiwayman@chorus.net; robbie@robbiewebber.org; ronsteinhofer@yahoo.com; devos@ssc.wisc.edu; Tolley, Sabrina
Subject: PBMVC #28101 Southwest Path Lighting

Dear Members of the PBMVC,

I am writing to you about lighting of the SW Path because for 10 years I commuted on the Southwest path from my home in Midvale Heights to the UW Campus in both directions for 9 months of the year, and during the 3 winter months I walked 3.5 miles home after work daily. The path is great during daylight hours, and beautiful at sunset, but in fall and winter it can be very dark at night. In the fall and winter I went into work early and left early whenever I could to avoid having to walk or bike in the dark. Not everyone has a job that allows this kind of flexibility, so to encourage cycling the path should be lit.

I have also biked a few times on the path at night, returning from an event on campus or downtown. I have a good bike light, but still have great difficulty seeing many of the pedestrians and dogs on the path. If the path is wet or slippery from ice more time is needed to swerve or stop, and lack of lighting puts both bicyclists and pedestrians at risk. Several times I have found (and reported) downed trees on the path during the day, but at night these would be difficult to see, as are the numerous walnuts on certain areas of the path in the fall. At present I take the bus when going downtown at night, but when the bus times are not convenient I have not attended events because I didn't want to bike the unlit path at night.

I have listened to the arguments used by the neighbors and others arguing against the path. I understand the environmental issues, but if path lighting is so bad, why have these same people not tried to cut lighting on all city streets (since this uses much more electricity, and cars have headlights)? If it's bad for owls, why are they not pushing for street lighting to be reduced and continuous (rather than motion sensor) porch and back yard lighting to be banned? Some of these yard lights are every bit as bright and "glaring" as the path lights. My husband and I are concerned for the environment and have worked very hard to cut our carbon footprint: our home has solar panels that annually produce more power than we use. We have prairie in most of our yard that attracts numerous birds and insects. We run many of our errands by bike. Bicycle transportation is beneficial to the environment, yet every bicycle improvement that I've seen on the west side (construction of the SW Path, lighting of the SW Path, installation of a connector path from the University Research Park to Tocora Lane, and bike lanes on roads) has faced loud objections from neighbors.

Regarding issues of path accessibility for emergency vehicles: this is definitely not an issue. Numerous vehicles drive down the path on a regular basis. I have seen trucks from MGE, the city, tree trimmers, and various other contractors on the path frequently. This past summer I heard a crash while I was pulling ragweed in the Midvale ditch. I assisted the bicyclist who was injured, and saw that the ambulance had no trouble driving down the path from Midvale Blvd. to the accident site.

The city transportation engineering and engineering staff members have gone out of their way to listen to opponents of the path lighting. They have altered the lighting to reduce the amount of light, to prevent light from spilling into yards, and they have reduced the proposed hours of lighting to allow hours of darkness from 11 pm to 5 am. I would like to commend them for their efforts. I walked by the lights at 9 pm tonight and found that although there is a darker area between the lights, the next lit area silhouetted a pedestrian in the dark area, making his motion visible even without reflective gear. In other words the lights work as currently configured.

Path lighting is fundamentally a transportation safety issue, and should be treated as such. I urge you to support the SW Path lighting. To vote this down would be to set a precedent that bicycle and pedestrian safety don't matter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Laura Brown

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