

Parking, Safety and Bus Service Community Discussions

Summary of Outcomes

Marquette Neighborhood Association Traffic Committee. Meeting held August 31, 2016.

“If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places.” - A Citizen’s Guide to Better Streets, Project for Public Spaces.

On August 31, 2016, the Marquette Neighborhood Association sponsored a community meeting to discuss problems, issues and opportunities for improvements related to parking, safety and bus service in the neighborhood, particularly along Jenifer and Williamson Streets. The meeting was well attended by about 70 residents, business owners, and other interested stakeholders. Attendees were randomly divided into three groups and took turns discussing issues specific to Jenifer Street, issues specific to Williamson Street, and general neighborhoods issues including parking. Three moderators volunteered their time:

- Chris McCahill, a policy analyst at the State Smart Transportation Initiative at the UW, who studied civil engineering at the University of Connecticut, where his research focused on the relationships between parking, land use, and transportation.
- Ash Narayanan, Director of Transportation Policy, 1000 Friends. With a master’s degree in transportation engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, his interests lie in sustainable transportation, traffic safety and the transportation-land use relationship.
- Denise Jess, Denise Jess Consulting, organizational planning and facilitation. Now at the Wisconsin Council for the Blind.

The discussions lasted two and half hours.

Participants’ concerns fell into three main categories: 1) immediate concerns about the effects of bus service currently running on Williamson St., 2) concerns about bus routes and alignments in general, and 3) general concerns about traffic, safety, parking, development, and other issues.

Many participants attended the meeting to voice concerns about the loss of parking on Williamson Street due to the new bus route there and the extent to which it is hurting businesses, particularly on the 1200 block between South Few Street and South Baldwin Street. Business owners and sympathetic residents sought an immediate resolution to the issue. Many residents, however, expressed longstanding concerns about buses and through traffic on Jenifer Street (e.g., speeding, safety, and bus idling at the shift-change locations) and see the current bus alignment as an opportunity to mitigate those issues. There was no agreement on which alignment is better for the community, but a common interest in studying the effects of each and sharing the burdens of buses, traffic, and parking as evenly as possible.

Another common concern about the current bus route was the way in which changes were implemented. Many participants felt uninformed and underprepared. Others pointed to the fact that changes in parking restrictions on Williamson Street were not well marked, resulting in a high number of parking violations. Participants felt that before similar changes are made in the future, the effects on traffic, parking, safety and other outcomes should be fully understood and that the process should be as transparent and equitable as possible.

Participants also discussed many issues and opportunities that they felt should be addressed over the longer term. For example:

- Managing traffic flow through the neighborhood,
- Improving transit service,
- Improving safety,
- Regulating parking, and
- Studying and understanding specific issues better.

These issues and opportunities are listed below in detail, based on notes taken by each group facilitator, comments left after the meeting, and other emails received by the meeting's facilitators.

Issues

Meeting participants cited and discussed the following issues related to planning, growth, traffic, parking, bus routes, bicycle use, and pedestrian safety.

Buses / Bus routes

- Issues with buses running on Williamson Street
 - Loss of parking, particularly on 1200 block
 - Increased panhandling on Williamson Street
 - People waiting for buses on Williamson Street block pedestrian traffic on the sidewalks
 - Jenifer Street is a more pleasant and comfortable place to wait for buses, including wider terraces
 - Increased traffic congestion and safety issues with buses running on Williamson Street -- including mix of bike, bus, and vehicle traffic
 - Plowing on Jenifer Street will become more complicated
 - Two adjacent salting routes in same neighborhood
- Issues with buses running on Jenifer Street
 - Lack of traffic calming causes speeding, including bus drivers
 - People sitting on steps and porches to wait for buses
 - Buses idling in front of houses
 - In winter, westbound buses get stuck at Ingersoll -- the point for a shift change
 - Bump-outs and buses do not calm traffic on Jenifer Street
 - Perception that most riders actually come from north of Williamson Street
- Panhandling and groups of people are an issue no matter where the buses run
- Accessibility at bus stops are a problem; no shelters or benches in most cases; snow is not always cleared well
- Concerns about buses not adhering to their scheduled arrival and departure times
- Metro brakes squeal

Traffic / safety

- Who shoulders the burden of traffic?
- Safety concerns on Jenifer St. due to speed and volume of traffic (cut-through); also visibility issues
- Biking feels unsafe on Williamson due to heavy traffic volume and bus traffic
- Commuters use neighborhood as a cut-through
 - Through traffic is an issue (speeding, safety, volume, exhaust, etc.)

- Biking on Jenifer Street is unsafe due to speed of cars
- Car access on the west end is challenging
- Crossing issues at Blount Street - No dedicated sidewalk and multimodal issues for Elks and Fauerbach
- Night time safety concerns due to criminal activity and poor north-south connections-- women especially feel unsafe walking between East Washington and Williamson.
- People with disabilities are having trouble navigating and crossing Williamson Street
- Bikes are often using the sidewalk and creating conflicts with pedestrians
- There needs to be pedestrian safety at Blair and Blount Street crossings. This is interconnected with the junction of Williamson and Jenifer Streets, where traffic engineers will not change the traffic stoplights because the intersections are so close.

Parking

- Parking issues on 1200 block of Williamson Street
 - Business are suffering greatly from loss of on-street parking; seems like a fairly small loss of parking can have a disproportionately large effect on businesses
 - Loading has been an issue for businesses
 - New “No Parking” signs on Williamson Street are not clearly marked to indicate a change in policy and many people are getting tickets
 - Effects of Jenifer Street reconstruction are perceived to be worse than Williamson St. reconstruction (including Mother Fools)
- Particular issues at certain times of the day -- e.g., residential demand competes with others at nights and on weekends
- Commuters park in Marquette neighborhood and walk/bike/bus downtown
- On-street parking for events, restaurants, bars and other businesses can make residential parking difficult

General

- Planning is piecemeal -- decisions made by block or street rather than with a neighborhood-wide perspective
- Issues related to growth and development in the neighborhood
 - Loss of historic character
 - Loss of diversity and affordable housing
 - Growing traffic
 - Loss of parking
 - Increasing alcohol licenses are crowding out retail and service businesses
- Noise at Wilson Street in the Central Park skate park. Any new structure such as a parking ramp should act as a sound barrier

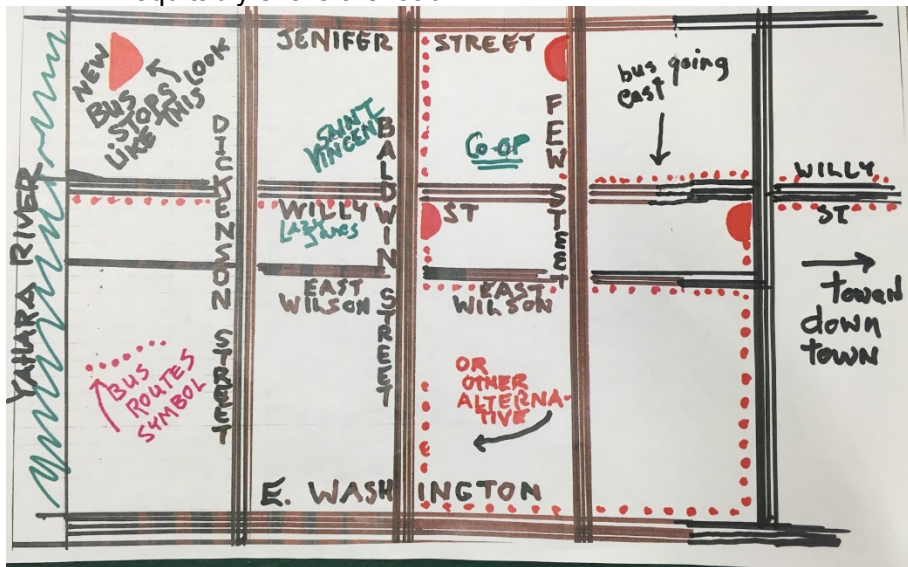
Opportunities and recommendations

Meeting participants also discussed opportunities and offered recommendations, listed below.

Buses / Bus routes

- Study and understand the effects of buses and parking on safety, traffic, businesses, and plowing/salting before making final recommendation for bus routes in any location.

- Bus routes seem to get more plowing and salting, but less parking
- Effects bus routes on amount of on-street parking (12 stops on Jenifer vs. 6 stops on Williamson)
- Study bus ridership -- e.g., where people leave and what times they use buses
- Creative solutions to bus stop locations on Williamson Street
 - Route traffic on Jenifer Street, East Wilson, or East Washington for one or two blocks beginning at Baldwin Street
 - Possibly split transit service between Jenifer and Williamson so that both streets equitably share the load.



- Move bus stop currently on 1200 block to the west
 - This raises concerns about creating new parking issues
- Transit service improvements
 - Improve service for non-commuters -- e.g., more frequent weekend service
 - Create express bus along East Washington that runs in each direction, stopping frequently
 - Use railroad spur for bus rapid transit
- Study the effects of street width on bus routes and safety
- Enforce and enable Metro drivers to obey speed limits and other traffic regulations
 - Take steps to make it easier for drivers to stay on schedule -- e.g., bus priority
- Provide seating and other amenities at bus stops

Traffic / safety

- Redesign Blair-John Nolen-Williamson intersection to reduce unnecessary through traffic from John Nolen Drive headed toward East Washington from easily flowing eastbound onto Williamson Street
- Restrict left turns to limit through traffic and force more traffic to use East Washington
 - Some concerns about wait times and ability to cross East Washington
- Traffic calming opportunities on Jenifer Street
 - Narrower lanes
 - Radar speed limit signs
 - Speed humps and/or stop signs if bus route is not located there
 - Other physical and visual cues to slow traffic

- Traffic calming opportunities on Wilson Street
 - Make street one-way with angled parking along Central Park
 - Parking-buffered bicycle lane
 - Diverter or some other measure to limit cut-through traffic (as on Atwood Avenue)
- Make Jenifer and Williamson Streets one way in opposite directions
 - Concerns that would hurt businesses
 - Concerns about bicycle and pedestrian safety
- Reduce/limit traffic along Isthmus using transit, bicycle infrastructure and transportation demand management
- MNA Traffic Plan calls for traffic calming on Jenifer and other streets with stop signs or other traffic-calming measures
- Take lessons from University to improve pedestrian safety -- e.g., policing and blue lights
- Provide bicycle access and crossing at Blount Street (with traffic signals) to reduce congestion at Blair Street

Parking

- A parking study is needed to understand needs and how different people (e.g., restaurants, workers, and residents) are affected by loss of parking
 - Keep in mind that parking issues are exacerbated due to loss of parking on Jenifer Street due to construction
 - Consider alternative locations to street parking or policies for employees of Co-op and other businesses
 - Interest in implementing RPP and other parking restrictions
 - Keep in mind that residents on Williamson Street will likely need to park on other streets
 - Potential to retain all-day parking versus rush hour regulations
 - Learn from RPP on Grand Avenue in St. Paul: specific blocks designated for residential vs. business parking
- Re-evaluate parking restrictions on Williamson St during rush hour if buses are going to stay on Williamson Street
- Do away with alternate side parking along portion of Jenifer Street in winter
- Increase on-street parking by positioning it more efficiently, particularly in front of Co-op (Are there visibility issues?)
- Explore the option of angled parking on locations along Williamson Street
- Create additional parking along Williamson Street closer to Machinery Row and John Nolen Drive; Also an opportunity for traffic calming
- Potentially move parking inward towards the travel lane creating a buffer zone for bikes and calming traffic.
- Make use of excess parking capacity in the neighborhood to supplement on-street parking.
- Coordinate trash pickup and street sweeping to minimize on-street parking restrictions.

General

- Fairness, transparency, and equity can go a long way in gaining approval for system changes
- Anti-idling ordinances could ease some concerns about traffic and pollution

- Area between Williamson Street and East Washington can provide additional parking and serve other needs
- Provide park and ride opportunity for commuters
- Implement employer-based transportation demand management (TDM)
 - Zebradog provides transit passes and offers free lunch to carpoolers
- Williamson St and Jenifer St can share the burden of parking, bus service, traffic, bicycling, etc.
- Holistic corridor planning that treats Spaight, Jenifer, Williamson, East Washington and entire Isthmus as a system