

Harnish, Sharon L

From: Justin Pugh <justin@justinpugh.me>
Sent: Monday, July 18, 2022 12:36 PM
To: Transportation Policy Board
Subject: Comments on 72615 Speed Policy on Shared Use Paths

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Transportation Policy and Planning Board,

I wanted to share some thoughts and feelings regarding the discussion about the Shared Use Paths.

I moved to Madison over six years ago, in part because of how wonderfully bike friendly this city is. We have such a great network of paths for all types of path users, and many of them function quite well for practical commuting trips as well.

I have to admit, I'm what many would (perhaps contemptuously) call a "pathlete". I ride my bike primarily for recreation, I'm a member of a local cycling team, and I attend group rides regularly. All of my recreational rides involve the multi-use paths for a portion of them, because there are often not any safe alternatives to get out of the city.

I try to be a respectful path user, but I have been yelled at, by pedestrians, for:

- Ringing my bell too loudly and startling them
- Not ringing my bell loudly enough
- Ringing my bell but not also saying "on your left"
- Passing too quickly (what constitutes too quickly?)

I really do take extra care to pass slowly and with warning, especially when there are children or dogs around. Unfortunately, it's really difficult to strike the balance between making sure they hear you call out, vs. startling them by being too loud. When there's a lot of traffic on John Nolen Dr, good luck trying to hear someone say "on your left" on the path. Sometimes I ring my bell multiple times to make sure they hear it, but then I guess I'm ... being too assertive? Really feels like I can't win here.

There are many times I encounter people completely blocking the path, children running around, dogs on leashes blocking the path, other cyclists passing me on the right, people walking on the wrong side of the path, etc. In most of these situations, I just smile and try to remember - life is stressful, the world is crazy right now, and we're all just out here trying to enjoy nature and be happy. And, while I'm not one of them, a lot of people rely on these paths to safely get around as well.

I think it's important to remember, not everyone who wears Lycra and rides a nice bike is behaving poorly on multi-use paths. The suggestion that "high speed users" should just avoid the paths entirely is incredibly disheartening. I've had many near-misses with cars, including being run off the road by a dump truck on HWY MN.

I think it's unfair to imply cyclists are as dangerous to pedestrians as vehicles are to cyclists. A conflict with a cyclist and a pedestrian on the path would most likely result in scrapes and bruises, maybe a broken bone (how often does this actually happen, anyway?). Getting run over by a car would probably end my life. My brother was left with a traumatic brain injury because of a vehicular crash. Do people who ride for recreation not also deserve infrastructure that safeguards their life?

The reality is, Madison is growing, and because of the great paths we have, a lot of people use them. Excluding certain path users seems like the wrong approach.

Madison is really lacking on-street protected bike infrastructure. If there were more **protected** bike lanes, I would often use those instead of the paths, and I imagine many commuters would as well. I once visited Minneapolis with my bike and was super impressed with how many protected bike lanes they had. Having a physical barrier between you and cars really does feel a lot more comfortable. It makes it clear that bicycles are a respected and valid form of transportation.

I think Madison too often blindly follows the NACTO "Contextual Guidance for Selecting All Ages & Abilities Bikeways". Is there anything stopping us from going beyond the bare minimum? We should keep in mind that we have an issue with distracted drivers, drunk drivers, speeding vehicles, stolen vehicles, etc. Speed limits are not often followed. Paint does nothing to keep a car from mowing you over in the bike lane. Unprotected bike lanes are often blocked (intentionally or unintentionally).

Additionally, something else I was really impressed by in Minneapolis, is that they have a lot of completely separated paths for people on bikes and pedestrians. I think that would be the ultimate end goal, but I realize it's not always feasible.

Here are some of my suggestions:

- Separate paths for pedestrians and cyclists (ultimate end goal)
- Widen the paths where possible (gosh I can't wait until the Cap City Trail along JND is redone).
- Etiquette signage
 - Make it clear which side of the path pedestrians should walk on (with bike traffic, or against?)
 - What should people say to indicate passing?
- Invest in more protected bike infrastructure. If there was an easier way to completely bypass the Cap City Trail in front of Monona Terrace, I absolutely would.

I don't feel like speed limits are the answer, and I do NOT support spending money on "speed feedback boards", and I do not support speed humps. I would support setting a reasonable speed limit in congested areas, if enough people felt that would make a difference. But, from my experience in Minneapolis (which also had path speed limits), they are not effective.

I think ultimately, the primary issue is congestion. Some of the consequences of that can be mitigated by etiquette, but not entirely. Clarifying the path expectations and etiquette would help in the meantime (e.g. "walk with bike traffic", "bikes say passing or ring bell", etc). There should be an expectation that if you're on a shared path, you will be interacting with other path users, and should be aware of your surroundings. I feel like the long-term solution is to increase capacity and make room for everyone.

I realize this is a complex issue, and I appreciate that others may have different opinions or perspective than my own. Thank you for reading and giving me the opportunity to have my voice heard.

Regards,
Justin Pugh