

## Tolley, Sabrina

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**From:** Perry Sandstrom [perry.sandstrom@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 10, 2012 1:30 PM  
**To:** Maniaci, Bridget; aaron.crandall@yahoo.com; Johnson, Jill; Subeck, Lisa; lydmaurer@gmail.com; hiwayman@chorus.net; robbie@robbiewebber.org; ronsteinhofer@yahoo.com; devos@ssc.wisc.edu; Soglin, Paul; Tolley, Sabrina; Fernandez, Anthony  
**Cc:** Perry Sandstrom; Susan Robinson  
**Subject:** SW Path Lighting Project.

Dear BPMVC members,

Some of you may be wondering why there is so much vocal resistance from a variety of people about putting these overhead lights in on the SW path. Please don't buy into the "spin" that this is all about self-interested NIMBYism. You will find that there are large numbers of knowledgeable people that don't live on the path who are adamantly against this, for example a large number of regular commuters, including a number of the employees at Saris who commute on this path.

If you spend a lot of time talking to people on this path, it is difficult to find many people in support of this project once they have an idea of what is being proposed. Most people initially assume that low height "path lighting" would be installed in this environment. Traffic Engineering's (daytime) opinion survey of path users about "additional lighting" did nothing to dissuade respondents from this assumption, even though the overhead design was firmly set at the time. Many of the Bike Fed supporters that attend meetings and hearings like the one tonight are not frequent, let alone daily users of the path. They are generally arguing for the non-controversial idea of "safer biking Infrastructure" or "well-lit bike paths" seemingly without understanding that the proposed project is undoubtedly contrary to both of those goals. Since their comments are seemingly based on information contained in Bike Fed mass mailings, rather than any first hand experience with the path or the test lights, this is not surprising.

I have had the opportunity to see the "Cannonball Trail" example of these lights and found them to yield the same discomfort glare as the test lights at Council Crest. When under a light, your entire visual field is mostly confined to that footprint. In between fixtures, you find your eyesight "recovering" from the exposure to the strong glare and reflected brightness (and yes, I was looking straight ahead, not at the fixture). The installation on the SW path will be far worse than this example, however, because there is no "fill light" (for in between the fixtures) from adjacent urban sites on this section of the SW path as there is on the "Cannonball Trail" (i.e. Leopold School's copious parking lot lighting).

Many people falsely believe that the rest of the SW path (from Breese Terrace to Monona Bay) is lighted; this is not the case. The only purposeful lighting on the entire Southwest Path (with the exception of the Allied Drive section) is at entry ramps onto the path. There is no specific lighting along the path anywhere from Breese Terrace to South Shore Drive (not even at intersections with streets where there should be some). Lighting in the campus and downtown area comes only from "spillover" light from adjacent parking lots and buildings.

So, what this project is essentially hoping to "rectify" is the absence of light pollution and urban blight in this region of the SW path. This is unfortunate, because the absence of substantial sources of glare and light trespass onto the path in this region actually makes it \*easier\* to see with a simple bike light or headlamp than in other areas where one's eyes have to continuously adjust to various sources of light trespass glare. Many of us who use the path regularly at night recognize this as we shield our eyes near the two ramp entry regions (Prospect, VA Terrace) where there are currently overhead lights. These regions (and the test light locations) are

incidentally the most visually dangerous because of the bright-dark transition region, a lighting flaw that this project would repeat (in an amplified manner) 68 times.

The lack of urban "spillover" makes this path unique and actually makes it \*easier\* to see with a simple bike light, (regardless of the latest Bike Fed talking points). The lack of trespass glare in this region would also enable much more effective and efficient supplemental lighting than that being proposed. An effective design would preserve users night vision (as recommended by WisDOT) by selective placement of low-glare fixtures. Many people don't realize that \*because of\* the lack of urban spillover light in this area (and the lack of overhead lights), if there is any snow on the ground at all, it is very easy to see for great distances both on and off the path. This is also likely one of the reasons that this is a significant owl nesting area and wildlife corridor. The idea of "fixing" the problem of no light trespass in this region with overly bright high-glare fixtures would be shortsighted at best, and in the end, a squandering of a rare opportunity to achieve harmonious, comfortable and effective visibility improvements to this path.

Many people have made the claim that "this is a transportation corridor and should be lit just like streets or sidewalks". If we follow this concept, then this lighting project should definitely be stopped because it would never be acceptable on any street or sidewalk because of its high glare, deep shadows, and non-uniformity.

The misguided endorsement by a well-loved bike advocacy group is not a good reason to simply plunk down some urban infrastructure, especially when the endorsement seems un-enlightened by any real first-hand knowledge of the path or even observation of the proposed lighting itself. There are myriad ways to make people feel more comfortable and even see better through appropriate supplemental lighting on a path like this. The system being proposed is basically the opposite of what any lighting expert would recommend in terms of aesthetics, the environment and safe vision. Please do the right thing and stop it.

Since many of the people making these decisions have perhaps not visited this path that we in the neighborhoods depend on every day, I have included some visual links:

I wish I had footage of the pre-dawn and after work "parade of lights" that travels down the path. The blinkers, bike lights headlamps and dog collar lights are not only beautiful to see coming and going, but very effective. These measures have been adopted by the vast majority of regular path users despite the absence of a single sign ever being placed here suggesting use of any lights at all.

Here is a quick movie of a walk thru of the test light pair at Council Crest, showing the brightness transition while walking between two actual fixtures:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10151273701834907>

Here is a link to a report detailing some of the safety deficits that this project would actually introduce to the path:

[https://dl.dropbox.com/u/39132997/SW\\_path\\_Lighting\\_Proposal\\_Safety.pdf](https://dl.dropbox.com/u/39132997/SW_path_Lighting_Proposal_Safety.pdf)

Here is a 3 minute MPEG of a trip down the whole section of path in question (during the daytime in summer) as you can see, there is virtually no urban infrastructure whatsoever for the entire length under consideration (after we cross the Beltline, that is). If you look closely somewhere in the middle of the video you might see Tony Fernandez riding home from work.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=4842500387638>

Thanks and  
Regards,  
Perry Sandstrom  
Southwest Path Alliance