

TO: City of Madison Mayor
City of Madison District 6 Alder
City of Madison Engineering
City of Madison Traffic Engineering
City of Madison Department of Planning & Development

FROM: Concerned Eastside Bicyclists (signed below)

SUBJECT: Green streets are bike streets!

September 22, 2010

To Whom It May Concern,

It is our understanding that there is some concern that a "green streets" model may conflict with the "complete streets" model in the upcoming reconstruction of Williamson Street.

We, the undersigned, who have advocated tirelessly for bicycle infrastructure for many years, believe that the dual ideals of green streets and complete streets need not conflict.

We believe that when it comes to our older neighborhoods, a more nuanced vision of what makes a street bikeable should prevail.

First, we wish to acknowledge some realities with regard to the Williamson Street.

- No section of Williamson between Livingston and the Yahara River is wide enough to accommodate even a compromised "complete street" as long as parking is maintained on both sides of the street.
- Even at its widest—the stretch west of Baldwin—it is only 48' wide . That is still not nearly wide enough to accommodate the "complete streets" ideal. Bikes in the right-most lane are still subject to "dooring" for the entirety of the right lane's width.
- This wider, western segment has an anemic curb terrace, meaning trees and other green amenities are constrained, stunted, ugly. The result is faster traffic--a bad thing from the perspective of cyclists.
- The narrower stretch of road—east of Baldwin—is 42' wide. That narrower width accommodates larger trees and more greenspace. The result is slower traffic. The narrower roadway allows greener, fuller tree canopies and, potentially, rain gardens. This creates a green "tunnel" or narrowing effect which slows car traffic significantly. Slower traffic is always more comfortable than fast traffic for cyclists, no matter the technical advantages of a wider street.
- The dooring danger is no more/no less in this stretch than in the wider stretch.

Thus, we do not believe that Williamson Street is a good candidate for attempting to apply the "complete streets" ideal for bicycles. We believe that humanizing the environment on Williamson Street—making the pedestrian priority—should take precedence because a) Fast cyclists already have two parallel alternatives very nearby in the form of the Isthmus Bike Path and Jenifer Street and b) For cyclists needing access to local businesses, any traffic calming and other pedestrian-promoting efforts on Willy Street will similarly benefit cyclists. Cyclists are most comfortable in more human & humane environments every bit as much as pedestrians are.

Specifically, we suggest:

- A street cross-section that is similar to the Baldwin-Yahara segment
- Traffic Calming
- Pedestrian bulb-outs combined with,
- Extra curb terrace (into what is currently the parking lane) in front of current & future commercial buildings for expanded outdoor seating. This would eliminate rush hour double lanes of traffic, thus returning the street to 24-hour neighborhood business use and access
- More bike parking on the curb terrace. The wider curb terraces would provide adequate space for the addition of bike racks; currently it is too narrow for the installation of bike racks. This would further enhance bike access to businesses.
- Large canopy, shade-producing trees
- Bio-swales/rain gardens in curb terraces
- Vines and other innovative green amenities to enhance shading and a traffic-calming narrowing effect
- Other green street amenities.

The city's adopted Pedestrian Plan already includes many of these ideas. And we do not consider this list exhaustive in terms of greening Williamson St. More ideas are sure to come.

The upshot: **We support the efforts to green Williamson Street.**

That said, we would also like to be kept up to date and participate in the evolving plan as it moves forward.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Barrett, Pamela S. Barrett, John Coleman, Colleen Hayes, Brad Hinkfuss, Barb Irvin, Chuck Strawser, Tim Wong