Traffic signals often increase rather than decrease accidents. The "engineering review" fails to consider the hill west of the intersection and that the east bound 40+ mph traffic coming over that rise will be running into stopped traffic. That is likely to lead to more rear-end collisions. Local traffic should simply use Yellowstone or Inner to make a left onto or to cross Mineral Point at peak hours. I have used Yellowstone for 20 years and maintain a duplex a block north of that intersection and frequently use it at off-peak hours to travel between home and Market Square shopping center. Neither it nor the exit from Memorial HS are safe at peak hours. An alternate solution would be to close the median making Yellowstone right-in, right-out at Yellowstone. That would likely eliminate accidents at the intersection for far less cost. At Memorial, a "Michigan left" facility might be constructed, but at Yellowstone the hill would probably make that option unsafe.

It is difficult to express the extent of my disappointment at Madison's new traffic engineer. There seems to be little thought to access control and intersection safety reviews are cursory at best. This "engineering review" doesn't mention the average accident rate for Madison intersections generally, along Mineral Point Road, or at the two stoplight intersections nearby. Do we have more or fewer accidents at Grand Canyon and at Inner Drive? The review also does not discuss the topographical effect of the hill west of the Yellowstone intersection. It never mentions the 11 different warrants for an intersection signal that must be considered under the MUTCD (the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices that highway engineers are required to follow by state and federal law). If this was graded as an assignment, it would receive a D from me. It reads as though the engineer looked at Google Earth and a plat and never visited the intersection, never reviewed the MUTCD and never looked at the Access Management Manual.

To see the type of factors this type of installation should involve, see the last section of this document, which provides a summary of the warrants for a traffic signal. http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/...

One of the basic steps that a competent engineering review will involve is a comprehensive engineering study. "A comprehensive engineering study should also be done to indicate that the installation of a traffic signal would improve the overall safety and/or operation of the intersection. If the study indicates otherwise, a traffic signal should not be installed even though one or more of the warrants are met." http://www.dmgov.org/Departments/Enginee...

Nor does the "review" assess the stoplight proposal in light of the City's own study of West side traffic (http://www.cityofmadison.com/trafficengi...) That study concluded that slowing traffic on arterial highways such as Mineral Point diverts vehicles onto residential streets, such as South Hill Drive. Installing stoplights on Mineral Point or University Avenue exacerbates that problem rather than corrects it.

There is undoubtedly a Mineral Point corridor access management plan. A corridor carrying that much traffic must have been studied at some point. Where is any reference to that plan and how this proposal fits into it?

This is not the first recent example of a lack of serious review of intersection configuration by the Madison City Engineering staff. The complete failure of the Traffic Section to seriously look at the Hill Farms proposals to construct intersections on and at the top of the Old Middleton Road ramp

onto University Avenue reflects a complete disregard for the basic principles of access management and traffic control in Madison's current Traffic Engineering section. Everyone in that office needs a copy of the new TRB access management manual (http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/171852.as...) and should be trained on traffic flow and access management basics. The expertise that the office once demonstrated Under Larry Nelson's leadership is now lacking. While they may employ competent construction engineers, they are not demonstrating basic engineering competence related to traffic and access management.

As convenient as a stoplight at Yellowstone might be for me, I believe I can safely enter and exit Mineral Point during peak hours at Yellowstone or at Inner Drive. A stoplight at Yellowstone will create rear-end collisions on Mineral Point Road, particularly for east bound vehicles. It will not prevent left-turning vehicles from being t-boned at the intersection, and will lead to increased traffic on Yellowstone as cars that currently use Inner Drive or Grand Canyon may divert to the new light, thus exacerbating the speed problem Tim Cole points out. The installation is inconsistent with the West Side traffic study. Accordingly, I could not support installation of a light at Yellowstone.

I would tell my neighbors who have had "close calls" at the intersection not to use it during peak traffic hours. If traffic is heavy, turn right and make a u-turn at the next intersection. The u-turn law was changed precisely for this reason -- to facilitate traffic flow in busy urban corridors and to allow for elimination of median crossovers and thereby improve traffic safety. If the intersection is truly dangerous, I would support closing the median opening, which would solve the traffic safety problem at much less cost than a stop light and which would force neighbors to use the existing stoplights at Inner and Grand Canyon to enter east bound Mineral Point Road.

You mention a bicycle accident at the intersection but do not explain how that accident would have been prevented by a stoplight at this intersection. I doubt a stoplight would have affected that. Many bikers run stoplights, and the presence of a stoplight would further distract left-turning drivers (who are watching the light rather than just oncoming traffic).

Traffic signals can represent a positive public investment when justified, but they are costly. A modern signal can cost $80,000 to $100,000 to install. In addition, there is the cost of the electrical power consumed in operating a signalized intersection 24 hours a day (which can average about $1,400 per year). Those numbers add up, especially if stoplights are installed willy-nilly rather than when an engineering study, properly done, supports it. Finally, there is the cost of increased accidents that can occur from rear-end collisions and red light running.

If a stoplight is to be further considered, I recommend the council request a comprehensive engineering study of the concept. If there is no access management plan for the corridor, then I would go a step further and demand an access management plan for the corridor be developed and then the proposal be considered in light of the recommendations in that plan.

Very truly yours,

John Sobotik

Mr Sobotnik raises some very interesting points. In light of his comments, I would recommend that Alderman Clear discuss those points with the city engineer if he has not already done so. I live on yellowstone drive and walk to market square now and then. It is very dangerous to cross yellowstone on foot because of the hill to the west. You can't see cars going east on mineral point until they are almost upon you. That said, if a light would cause the negative impacts described in Mr. Sobotik's post, I'm certainly willing to take an alternate route rather than ask for the light. Regarding a traffic circle, I'd like to hear a lot more about it before we support that approach. I wonder if Mr. Sobotnik would be willing to comment on the circle at yellowstone and blue ridge. I continue to be amazed that we don't have more serious incidents there with bicycles and cars as kids come down the hill from the pool on the sidewalk and cars travel west on yellowstone. We are routing cars into the crosswalk to get around the circle. It seems like a much higher risk than the issue its supposed to be addressing.

John Amundson

This intersection is becoming more hazardous with the increased development on the south side of Mineral Point Rd. With more and more left turns coming from the south there is not room to escape if one attempts to turn east when coming from the north. Yellowstone Drive must have been designed as a feeder to Mineral Point Rd. when it was first created. It clearly fails as a safe method to head east now. It might be safer to prohibit left turns with some type of redesign forccing people to take Grand Canyon or Inner. Unless three traffic lights in such a short stretch can be synchronized to avoid serious congestion, I'm opposed to it. Based on the current timing of lights on Mineral Point Rd., I doubt there's much hope to avoid the congestion. Something more creative than another light needs to be considered. It is too dangerous now and will only become more so with the additional development.

Thank

Fred Moskol

As one who frequently turns onto Mineral Point or crosses it from Yellowstone, I would ask those advocating a traffic light at that intersection to reconsider their position. Traffic lights are blind to the amount of traffic, and while one at Mineral Point and Yellowstone might help during rush hours, it would require stops on Yellowstone well over 50% of the time, even when there was no oncoming traffic, since it would be set to favor the heavier traffic on Mineral Point. All in all, the delays on Yellowstone would only be increased..

Tom Duff

John,
The first time I hear anything about this is when Mark Clear announces on the Parkcrest and

Faircrest websites that installation of the traffic lights has already been approved. It caught me by surprise and raised my ire a bit. The fact that a small number of people on the "Pedestrian/Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Commission" can make this sort of decision and have it approved without the majority of residence in the neighborhood knowing about until after the fact it is absurd. I'm sure these commission members think they are doing something good but when the majority of the neighborhood is in the dark about this or any other thing then they are doing things for themselves and not the community they serve. I took a small survey in my area of 20 of my neighbors (some of them I knew) on various streets near the intersection and none of them knew there was such a commission and the majority didn't know of the traffic light decision until I told them.

My point of my post however was if there is a choice between traffic lights and the median preventing access across Mineral Point Rd. while on Yellowstone while allowing left turn only in both directions of Mineral Point Road onto Yellowstone, then yes if I had to choose one over the other. Traffic light access across Mineral Point Road can be had by going one block over on Grand Canyon.

It's my observation over 20 years of living in the neighborhood that this intersection is usually a safety concern three times a day. When people are going to work, at noon when many of the same people are going to lunch, and when these people are leaving work to go home. All other times of the day I have not seen a need for traffic lights. Those three times of the day would be safer for people want to cross Mineral Point Rd to use the Grand Canyon Mineral Point intersection that currently has traffic lights.

I offered my opinion of left turn only from Mineral Point in both directions and prevention from cross over while on Yellowstone (except for pedestrians and bicycles that I did not include in my post) as an alternative to traffic lights.

To be honest I would rather leave things the way they are. But when people become reactionaries and feel the only solution to safety is to install traffic lights despite the data that does not support it I feel a need to say something. I'm not apposed to traffic lights when needed but I don't really think the need is there at this time. My two cents.

Sandra Karpinsky