

Summary

Park User Focus Group
Thursday, August 22, 2013

Attendees

- Larry Jensen, resident
- Tom Klein, Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin
- Jerry Wilson, American Volkssport
- Rosemary Lee, resident
- Scott Kolar, DMI Bike Subcommittee and Capitol Neighborhoods
- Delora Newton, Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce
- Clair Hurley, Madison B-cycle
- Tom Maglio, City Parks Department
- Don Heilman, Mad-City Ski Team, Clean Lakes Alliance
- Robbie Webber, State Smart Transportation Initiative

1. How do you currently use Law Park and the Capital City Trail?

- I live on West Wilson St., at the intersection of Wilson and the path. I use that trail every day for commuting, fitness, and leisure. I do not take Wilson St. I think it's quicker to go around the intersections and take the trail.
- People like to go Downtown via the wrong way of Wilson St. because it is easier.
- We find that if bicyclists are given facilities, they act better. When Wilson becomes a one way on Henry St., you have no curb space, no bike facilities. I know several experienced bikers who follow the rules even though it is out of their way.
- There are all kinds of issues from getting to the area by bike. It is very difficult to get to the Henry St. and Wilson St. intersection. There's no way of getting there unless you go down Blair or walk down the hill on the sidewalk. It's difficult to get to the bike path at all. When I'm biking down that hill, I have to use the sidewalk, which I don't want to do. There is almost no direct route because of all of the one ways. What I would like to do is use the path and come over.
- Broom St. is very awkward.
- So is Doty on the west end. It's very difficult to get to that intersection. As to how I use the main part, I will often take that route back because it's pleasant. Now, I have the option of going down to Blair St., all the way around, or taking the bike elevator down. I know that elevator is unbelievably crowded in the morning. I would like to use the lakeshore more, but it's hard to get there from the Capitol.
- Other than the elevator, there is no way to get down.

- I don't have any personal use, but I have a dog and I know that creates different challenges. With bikes, some dogs are skittish about wheeled vehicles. It's dangerous for the dog, the biker, and the dog walker.
- I use the bike path and the park on a daily basis. I live on Willy and Jenifer St. I watch the water ski shows and typically use it for commuting. I don't spend a lot of time at Law Park because it is so narrow. I try to not use the bike elevator because it's hot and crowded. We have been able to fit at most 4 B-cycles in there at a time. I used to live on the near west side of Madison and used the trail to get to work in Monona. Widening the trail is essential. The section by Machinery Row where there is a bike path and bike lane on the street is nice. Separated facilities are nice.
- It's already semi-separated at Monona Terrace.
- That's one of the pinch spots. We did not take into account how many fishermen want to be there.
- I get so afraid of being hooked.
- We bike and walk down that area. Walking is okay, but the bikes are going fast and bike commuters aren't any better than car commuters. We also have to dodge around fishermen. I would go there more if not for John Nolen Drive. It's loud and you have to get across and listen to all the traffic. To me, it's not just the study area, but getting across the Isthmus by bike is hard. On W. Mifflin, I use Broom St. to get down to the bike path. It's illegal, but there is no bike path going south, so I use sidewalks.
- Looking at where those breaks and links are is important.
- Even with that issue, we bike out to Willy St. to shop. Biking through the Capitol area is not the best in terms of bike infrastructure.
- The entire Wilson St. corridor doesn't have a lot of commercial development, but I forget that any commercial spaces are there. It's not easy for me to see those because I can't really use Wilson St. much. I can come up from the east side, but I typically forget they're there. Tempest, Paisan's, Osteria Papavero—those things are not there to me.

2. Do you live in the adjacent neighborhoods?

- 4 people indicated they live in or adjacent to the study area

3. What do you like best about Law Park and the Capital City Trail

- Half of our 400 walkers a year are from out of town. They like the park. I get a few complaints about bikes and that there aren't enough benches. They would like to enjoy the lake. A lot are older and going out on a 10k is getting harder and harder. People just check in on their own, go out in groups of 6 or less. We have one big group of 75 about once a year.

- I have lived in this area for 6 years. I recently saw sign for the Clean Lakes run in Law Park, but didn't know where Law Park was. There aren't a lot of community gardens or sitting space. Now I use the park a lot. Building a bridge at Henry St. that is wide and park-like would be great. I love taking friends from out of town on the lake loop. There are people and lots of excitement.
- It's also a great opportunity for tourists—all of these events at Monona Terrace—but there's no place to sit or hang out. The roof at Monona Terrace—you can't see the lake if you're sitting down. Memorial Union is better. Monona Terrace could be a tourist draw if people could just linger. If walking or biking, people can walk down or ride their bike to Machinery Row, Olin, Brittingham, or Willy St. It's a wonderful opportunity for people to experience Downtown with the hotels and the Convention Center.

4. What improvements are needed to improve your experience of Law Park and the Capital City Trail?

- I'm assuming you're using the 1990 Law Park plan as your background? We haven't put a lot of dollars in the park area because there have been so many studies and ideas. I just walked the park with Don and the engineering staff. They're really ready to start investing in shoreline repair unless someone stops them. We were going to be totally redoing the shoreline. We might need to wait until we see what happens with this. We're thinking about making better access to the lake with steps like Memorial Union.
- Folks who use the lakes, what is needed?
- In Madison, there is very little land access to the lakes. There isn't good access to pull up to shore. I go to other cities where there are big, open public piers with restaurants, ice cream shops, food. We need to get people to use a pier.
- UW has jumped ahead of the City with their new pier.
- At a minimum, what about some type of concession stand where people can sit and eat? You can have that owned or run by a private company. Or, you could make it a public facility like at the Kohl Center—they have stands used by nonprofits to raise money for a day. That idea might be more palatable for people.
- Or food carts.
- No offense to the Parks Department—permitting costs are so high. The little guys are having a hard time. We wanted to bring them down to the festival for the ski team, but it's so expensive.
- We talked about a Law Park Master plan. Will be different than this study?
- Yes, will be different and years away. We're purposely waiting to see what will happen from this study.

5. If you had two top priorities to improve the experience for both commuters and peds/bikers, what would they be?

- A pedestrian/bike overpass connecting to Downtown and getting DNR to bump out green space into the lake.
- Capitol access to the park, increasing park space, putting John Nolen Drive underground, or creating more green space for people to walk, bike, read, and swim.
- Improve pedestrian/bike access and use and increase the amenities.
- Building a pedestrian/bike bridge and improving the intersection at Blair St. and John Nolen Drive.
- Improving the Blair St., John Nolen Drive, Willy St. intersection is number one. Number two is making more park space with benches.
- I'm for improving lake access and the park. I sympathize with bikers. I see a lot of people running into each other. If we could bump the lake out, great. If not, build a pier to better utilize the land.
- Getting better access by putting a lid on John Nolen Drive by putting it underground. This could allow access to the lake, more green space, and we wouldn't have to build out into lake.
- Cleaning up we call the hairball intersection. That could become a destination point. I like the bridge idea with a lot of green space.
- Improve pedestrian/bike access and a bridge with amenities, not just concrete.
- Making a bridge of some sort linear with more space for both walkers and bikers that would minimize conflict. Make the entire non-motorized area bigger.

6. How does vehicle traffic affect your use of Law Park and the Capital City Trail?

- John Nolen Drive is just a barrier. The problem is there just isn't enough space to accommodate everything we want to do. For example, bridges—a bridge needs to be certain height for traffic, but it needs to come back down. How will you do that?
- If we are aiming big, I've heard the section of John Nolen Drive between Blair and the Beltline might be underground?
- We are looking at the hairball intersection to cost out what it would entail to underground John Nolen. What would that do to traffic patterns? It could cut off access to Willy St. and E. Main St. if John Nolen Dr. and Blair St. go underground. We are looking at that from cost perspective and modeling traffic patterns.

- That is the biggest issue for that intersection. So many people don't know they are streets—Machinery Row, for example, is a one-way street. If there is a way to eliminate, for example, one of the two driveways leading into Machinery Row...
 - Again, I'm worried about visitors from out of town at that intersection.
 - Has anyone been in Boston before and after the Big Dig? People thought the Big Dig was done to improve traffic. It was done to make the city better. The properties next to where the elevated highway used to be have skyrocketed. It's phenomenal. Everyone wants to be close to Rose Kennedy Greenway. You have no idea there is a highway under there. I know it is expensive, but Big Dig Madison? The amount of value it would create for the South Capitol area would be great.
 - Millennium Park in Chicago is the same thing, except it's a railroad, not an expressway.
 - You need to put the road *and* railroad underground.
 - Traffic calming was done by narrowing Willy St. Don't people want to channel traffic to E. Wash?
 - Not necessarily.
 - Routing that traffic to E. Washington would benefit the neighborhood.
- 7. What changes would you make to the intersection of North Shore Dr. and John Nolen Dr. to improve access to Law Park?**
- Traffic Engineering just redid North Shore.
 - I was just on that little island with nine people on bikes—it was hard to cross. It doesn't leave any space for people coming off of John Nolen Drive.
 - Before, you could only fit two bikers, now fitting nine is better. There is an opportunity for more painting on the street. With all new apartments there, it will become even busier. There is usually one apartment spot for each apartment, but more young professionals don't own cars. Access to North Shore, Brittingham Beach needs to be improved. There needs to be more opportunities for people to get across to the beach, but people don't spot pedestrians/bikers in cars.
 - You can rent a pontoon porch in Brittingham Beach now. It will be a great enhancement and will generate a lot of activity.
- 8. Would you use a pedestrian/bike bridge across John Nolen Drive? If so, what type of bridge should it be? A simple bike/pedestrian connection? An urban plaza? An extension of Law Park?**
- Wherever the bridge is, it needs to include a strong separation between bike and pedestrian traffic. I am sick and tired of being knocked down by bikers riding illegally on the sidewalk. There was a man who stepped out of Marina Condos, was hit by biker and was seriously injured. We need to have strong delineation on all of the Capital City Trail.

- Just to clarify, bikes on the sidewalk is legal in some locations.
- Bikers are required to yield to pedestrians, but we cannot get to all of these people. First, we should solve the problem by making biking easier. I don't think it's fair to say all bikers on sidewalks are hitting people.
- There is 0 lot line on the streets—I've been knocked down on those.
- If we're looking at a bridge, I would like to see more green space, just an extension of the park. I would not like to see one like the one that crosses Campus Dr. I would like one more multi-use, where people can linger or watch the action. One of the things I like about Law Park is watching people – people trying to swim, people running, rollerblading. Making it more of a community space with transit as well would be ideal. Just more green, less concrete.
- The highline in NYC is a good example.
- I was down in Chattanooga, TN. There's an old railroad that is now used as pedestrian/bike path. There's lots of space—less of a conflict because there is tons of space. People can sit and look over the river.

9. Where do you think the ped/bike bridge should be located?

- I walk a lot Downtown. I don't like the connection at Blair St. It can be very difficult to get around there with cars going in and out of the parking lot. I would like to see it as far east as it can go—on the east side of Monona Terrace. Routing pedestrians east and Downtown would be best.
- I feel the same way. That parking lot is just a waste of green space. There should be parking on the other side and should be better ways for people to get to the park from those bars and restaurants. It would open up the lake for people who use lake and go to restaurants. They're wasting a lot of green space there with that parking lot.
- If people could use that spot during lunch, it would be great. If you're thinking about commuters to the Capitol Square, they might have a 30-45 minute lunch, which is not a lot of time to walk far to sit outside. Locations on the east side of the Capitol are more appealing.
- Do any of these bridges require encroaching into lake? A DNR permit?
- There could be a tradeoff we need to identify.
- The upcoming workshop will be an opportunity to identify issues.
- If we're going to dream big, why not ask for two bridges?
- I prefer a bridge on the west side of the Terrace because I live over there.

- I think the east side bridges, at least one, are necessary. People find the Blair/John Nolen/Wilson St. intersection intimidating. A lot of people don't know the bike elevator exists. From a transportation perspective, the Broom St. location is critical. To make that transition from John Nolen Drive to the southwest corner of the area, most people are not going to ride up Broom St., Basset St because it doesn't connect.
- If traffic engineering just cleaned up that bike lane...
- I think it's the turning movements. Just going the other direction, down from Broom to John Nolen Drive is scary. There are a lot of people coming off Wilson St.
- The John Nolen/Blair/Willy St. intersection is going to be redone. Is it possible pedestrian/bike access and movement could be improved through that?
- Possibly. And it doesn't have to be a linear bridge. It could be an elevated circular bridge. We mentioned the workshop—that will be the first exposure to ideas from around the world.
- Are you talking about an elevated roundabout?
- Yes. It doesn't need same structural integrity because it would not carry cars.

Conclusions

- Please visit the project website. You can send pictures of conflicts and opportunities broken down by each issue. It has great ways for people to contribute ideas. This is the first time the City has done this other than for the City budget. We're hoping to expand our reach to people who can't make public meetings.
- Reminder: the Public workshop will be on September 5th from 6-9 at the Madison Senior Center. It will be a design workshop and an opportunity to work with the consultants directly. We will share rough ideas to get juices flowing, but will allow people to flush out their own ideas.