

Johnson, Johanna

From: Mary Carbine
Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 2:00 PM
To: Board of Public Works
Subject: April 3 Agenda Item 8, Hermina Street and Union Street Reconstruction

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Dear Board of Public Works members,

I am writing with input on the [Hermina and Union Streets Reconstruction and Bridge](#). I have lived on Hermina Street just east of Starkweather Creek for more than twenty years. I regularly walk and bike the neighborhood on both sides of the creek, and volunteer to remove invasives, plant native species, and clean up trash along the creek.

I want to thank city staff for a reconstruction plan that is responsive to the 2017 [Darbo Worthington Starkweather Neighborhood Plan](#).

My input is to ask you to reconsider whether the proposed additional bike-pedestrian bridge and ramp up/retaining wall is truly needed.

The proposed additional bridge at Hermina St. is roughly 45 ft long and 12 ft wide with a 50-ft by 10-ft ramp-up/retaining wall. It is just [.1 miles \(around 528 feet or 1.5 blocks and an est. 3 min. walk or 1 min. bike ride\)](#) from the existing 80-ft long by 14-ft wide bridge at Darbo Drive, and [equidistant from the Milwaukee Street bridge](#).

Starkweather Creek is identified by the city as a watershed of greatest concern. The city's plans for shoreline stabilization, water quality and flood prevention call for native plantings in the area, which were planted I believe starting around 2007.

I understand the bridge is a response to the Darbo-Worthington Neighborhood Resource Team request that kids have difficulty getting across the neighborhood (accessing Hawthorne Public Library), and that it is also intended to improve bike connectivity, with a desire to site a B-Cycle station on the Starkweather Path at the proposed bridge.

I observe that the highest density of housing and children on the east side of the creek is closer to the existing Darbo bridge than to the proposed bridge. For those on the west side of the creek, the bike path and Darbo bridge are a more direct route than the proposed bridge to cross the creek by foot or bike to get to Worthington Park and the Salvation Army activity center.

I frequently walk to the library from Hermina on the east side of the creek using the Darbo bridge—all on neighborhood streets and sidewalks (and not on E. Washington Ave.). It takes about 12 minutes. I also bike regularly to the Starkweather Path from Hermina on the east side of the creek. It's quick and convenient, and I don't see a great need for improved bike connectivity.

Since the March 11 Public Informational Meeting, Engineering has slightly scaled back the width of the bridge and the length of the ramp-up, which I appreciate. At the Transportation Commission, a representative of Friends of Starkweather Creek said that he talked with Engineering staff, who promised to replant native plantings in areas disturbed by the construction and potentially replant native trees that will be removed. I appreciate the Friends' collaborative spirit in not opposing the bridge if they believe the neighborhood wants it. (At the Transportation Commission, we also learned that FEMA has to approve the bridge, so it can't be completely free of watershed impact concerns.)

I still don't think the city should expend funds to install more concrete hardscape and a 3rd bridge within .2 miles along a creek to save 1-3 minutes of biking or walking time. While it won't have huge environmental impact, it will add impervious surface and chip away at restored habitat. I don't see that it will have benefits other than the slight improvement in convenience. With the 50 ft. long by 10 ft. wide ramp-up, it will be a significant hardscape addition to a small-scale natural area.

A public works project I think the neighborhood needs more is to fix the deteriorated condition of the 300 and 400 blocks of Rethke Ave. between Worthington and Webb next to the Community Development Authority housing. The parking lot for the CDA housing exits onto Rethke. The northbound side of Rethke is continuous potholes and eroded pavement, which people try to avoid by driving both ways on the southbound side. I'm not finding Rethke resurfacing or repair listed in city engineering projects for 2024. Can the city work with the Town of Blooming Grove to come to an agreement to repair this street? It's too bad Rethke was not addressed during the recent resurfacing of nearby Blooming Grove streets. Rethke is in very bad shape and should not wait until the city annexes this part of Blooming Grove at end of 2027. I think this is a more needed public works project than the bridge.

Thank you for your work on the Board and for considering my input.

Sincerely,

Mary Carbine