

Pien, Janet

From: Preston Austin [preston.h.austin@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 28, 2012 2:53 PM
To: ALL ALDERS; Tolley, Sabrina; Pien, Janet; Rummel, Marsha
Subject: Please support bike path lighting, improvements

Hello Marsha, Madison Councilfolk, and infrastructure Planningpeoples,

You folks run an awesome city. I really appreciate that and I think you do a damn good job, so I encourage you to keep making it better :)

I'm writing to express my support for improved lighting on the sections of the Southwest bike and pedestrian path North of the Beltline that aren't well lit. Bicycles and walking must be treated as first class transportation choices by the city of Madison, both to respect the fact that residents wanting to move this way should be allowed to choose how to get around, and because an improving biking system is an important signal of progress and a huge asset to the city. These things cost money, but the various dividends of increased ridership are significant, and the expense a wise one. My property taxes support drivers and I do not have a car, and I expect the property taxes of drivers to support bikers in reciprocity - two way streets and all that.

As a local businessperson, I run a startup on the Capitol Square, Murfie Music, that employs full or part time about 40 people and a coworking center with 25 members. Both enterprise are entirely dependent on a bike and pedestrian friendly city. Of that entire group, on any given day, perhaps 2-4 people will choose to drive to the office. The rest walk, bike, and use public transportation. To fail to respect this shift in the transportation choices of professionals young and old would kill my business, and it would be a huge mistake for the city not to continue to allow the choices of a new generation to guide the infrastructure they will inherit. Businesses like mine won't locate where the bike infrastructure isn't good and improving, because we have better alternatives available to us, so lack of system improvements limits our investments in a place. There are similar effects for public transit, sidewalk amenities, and intersection provisions for pedestrians and bikers.

As a Madison resident, lefty sandal wearing tree hugging front-yard gardner hippie type dude, and lifetime year-round bicycle commuter, I've lived through and loved the evolution and extension of the system, including times and places where some paths and roads are lit or well lit while others were not. I feel my choices are more respected by my city where the paths are available, marked well, and well lit. Further, I can assure you from my experiences that the lighting is functionally important; light improves both the real safety and the feeling of safety while biking regardless of what lighting one has on one's bike, light makes path crossings at streets far more evident to crossing cars, and light makes the paths more clearly available and inviting to bikers finding their way in unfamiliar areas away from streets. Most of these factors are not something that individual cyclists can substitute for by adding safety equipment to their bike (if that would work, we wouldn't have streetlights for cars or pedestrians either - headlights and flashlights are not new technologies ;) All of these factors also help keep bikers who don't know the system or have adequate lighting from choosing to use the main roads at night, which will in all likelihood reduce car on bike accidents per biker.

It is awesome that this system keeps getting better, and I urge the city to keep up the good work. I firmly believe ongoing investment in system improvements dramatically increases the return on the public and private investments we've already made in biking and the path system. So, I ask you to please support this improvement to the bike system. I would be happy to answer any questions anyone wishes to direct my way about this via email.

Thanks much,
Preston

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