

ITEM F.I.
PBMVC 01.26.16

Hi Mark -

I was happy to read of the city's interest in this intersection today in the Nextdoor news. In recent weeks I've meant to call you about this very intersection, since I have noticed so many bright yellow pedestrian signs up and down MPR, as well as on Old Sauk and other streets, and wondered why this very dangerous crossing has absolutely nothing but a crosswalk. The crosswalk should cause drivers to wait for pedestrians, but very seldom does.

The problem isn't so much with traffic from the east, as they travel uphill and can see far enough ahead to consider slowing down (they usually don't), and a pedestrian can see a good distance in that direction as they decide when to start walking. The big problem is with the drivers headed east, coming over the hill from the west. They never slow down as they speed towards the next signal at Island. They are heading downhill at a fast pace, and the visibility is not as good for the pedestrian judging when to cross.

My husband and I frequently cross MPR at this intersection, as we walk or bicycle from our home on N Yellowstone to the Summit Credit Union on the south side, so we have lots of experience with it. A driver who is cognizant of our existence in the crosswalk is very, very unusual.

Our most striking memory would be the time we were crossing with my father-in-law in a wheelchair, walking him from the nursing home adjacent to the credit union (south side) in order to spend some time in our garden (north side). I remember a car speeding past us in one lane as we were walking in the crosswalk in the next one, inches away. It was pretty scary.

Good luck with getting a signal! I think it would be a big improvement to this intersection's safety.

Marjie Marion
N Yellowstone Dr

Dear Mark,

I live in the Faircrest neighborhood on Island Drive.

Thank you for passing on the information as to the traffic light proposal at Yellowstone and Mineral Point Road. While Jerry Sobotik brought up some good points, my bias is to lean toward putting up an additional traffic light and requesting the DOT better monitor and regulate what is happening on Mineral Point Road.

I feel that a traffic light would be good because Summit Credit Union and other businesses are on that road and I usually make a left turn there to access the credit union. Cars exiting the credit union's drive-thru also need more time to right turn onto Mineral Point Road. Summit's membership and incoming traffic will probably only grow over time. There is also a building of cosmeticians right next door (I know because my hair stylist is there). Again, this adds to the traffic along that road.

A traffic light would also assist pedestrians crossing Mineral Point Road - otherwise they have to walk several blocks to access a safe crossing. We want to encourage pedestrian traffic in our neighborhood not discourage it.

Sobotnik has a point about the traffic coming over the hill, but what we really need to do is train the local traffic and put up a warning sign about the intersection. People will learn over time.

As to traffic on Mineral Point Road, I would like to see a few things happen.

1) Left turn signals consistently applied and burned out ones immediately reported and replaced. The intersection at Mineral Point Road and Whitney Way has been a sore spot with me in the past and I have complained directly to the DOT about it. Cars pressure one another to "hang" in the intersection and in the past, cars in the left lane have honked at one another to get the lead car to take a left turn when it might not be safe. If left signals would be allowed to stay on longer and function at all hours of the day, this would not happen. This would train people and reduce anxiety during peak times. The DOT seems to think it knows when peak hours are but really those peak hours are far beyond normal rush hour.

2) Longer red lights along Mineral Point between Whitney Way and Gammon and better traffic monitoring to catch speeding "drag race" drivers - particularly at night. I can sometimes hear them roaring through from our apartment. Again the goal is to train people about proper driving and driving courtesy. I think some electronic speed monitoring signs would be helpful. People just zip through there with no regard for the speed limit.

I do not support speed bumps on Mineral Point because it will just frustrate everyone and damage our cars.

3) I wish there was a solution for CUNA Mutual's driveway adding traffic and so forth at noon and rush hour, but I'm unsure what could be done as I've had to use that driveway myself when doing temp work there.

4) Aside from Beltline construction and the placement of the fire station on Canyon, why is Mineral Point Road being used as a major transportation channel for ambulances and the like? It's gotten better, but I think this needs to be explained to the neighborhoods and whether it's going to get worse with the building of the new west side police station. Please share whatever you know on Next Door. It would be much appreciated.

Thank you for taking the time to care and share!

Elizabeth Thompson

Alder Clear, I am unable to attend the meeting next Tuesday, but would like to register my opposition to the plan.

As someone that lives in the Marbella Condos at that intersection (for the past 15 years), the idea of having cars idle right there is very unappealing for a lot of reasons. I also think it will make it harder to get out of ... View more our driveways and negatively affect the quality of life every single day as a homeowner, a driver and a pedestrian. For those reasons, I am opposed. I'm hoping the engineers can come up with more creative ways to deal with the safety issues.

I also think there are other intersections in the City that are clearly more dangerous and could use the resources.

Deborah A. Zeegers
South Yellowstone Drive, No. 225
Madison, WI 53705

Dear Mark:

I have read your posting on Nextdoor related to the proposal to install a traffic light at the Yellowstone-Mineral Point intersection. Based on the information provided and the lack of a comprehensive engineering study, I cannot support the installation of a light at that intersection, as convenient as it would be for me, personally, to be able to fly more quickly to Market Square from my home on Pebble Beach Drive.

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 - <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/> and <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/engrserv/wmutcd.htm>). 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/other_topics/fhwasa09027/resources/iowa%20Traffic%20and%20Safety%20FS-%20Unsignalized%20Intersections.pdf .

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/Engineering/PDF/FAQ16_Traffic_Signal_Reduce_Accidents.pdf .

Nor does the "review" assess the stoplight proposal in light of the City's own study of West side traffic (<http://www.cityofmadison.com/trafficengineering/nearWestTransportationStudy.cfm>) 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.aspx>) 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 showing basic engineering 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.

I will try to make the meeting on the 26th.

Very truly yours,

John Sobotik

John Sobotik

I support a traffic light. I often cross mineral point at this intersection on foot. There is a hill to the west that makes it difficult to see oncoming traffic when crossing the south half of the road. There are times when I begin crossing only to see a car speeding at the crest of the hill coming from the west on mineral point when I am partway across that makes crossing feel dangerous. Without being to see oncoming fast-moving traffic earlier, it is difficult to cross on foot safely.

-Bret Larget

Dear Mark:

I think it is great that the City Traffic Department is recommending lights at the Mineral Point & Yellowstone intersection. As an older person who has lived in Parkwood for more than 35 years, I have seen the traffic increase significantly over the years. With the growth of business on the southside of Mineral Point Road, along Yellowstone and beyond, has increased the need to cross at this intersection. Also, as an older person, the challenge to cross at this intersection has increased greatly.

The addition of traffic lights at this intersection will not only make it a safer crossing, it will also help slow down the traffic speeds between the now two existing traffic lights, one at Grand Canyon and the other at Island Drive. Unfortunately, in our climate it doesn't work to put in speed bumps to slow down traffic (I was in Mexico City recently and they use speed bumps extensively to slow down traffic and they work.) so more traffic lights closer together will have to do.

John A. Gerold
Saratoga Circle
Madison, WI 53705

Mark,

I support a signal here. Most of the time I end up going down Grand Canyon just so I have the safety of a signal. There are so many drivers who turn or do U-turns at the Yellowstone intersection that even moving forward to the middle is often thwarted. Add in slippery winter conditions and the ability to make it all the way across is even more challenging.

Michaela Moy

Hi Mark,

Thank you for this opportunity to advocate for a stoplight at this intersection. I have never been involved in accident there myself, but I avoid the intersection when possible because I believe it is too dangerous to turn left there. The two main reasons that I think this intersection deserves a light are:

1. When turning left from Yellowstone to MPR (whether coming from the north or south), OR going straight across MPR on Yellowstone, the main problem is that there is a hill blocking the

view of eastbound traffic on MPR. Cars come flying down that hill quite fast and several times I have been "caught" in the middle because the cars appeared AFTER I started out into the intersection. I did not see the fact of this hill in the description from the city, but I hope they take that into account when they assess this request.

2. There is a bus stop on the south/eastbound side of MPR, and there are several large apartment complexes on the north/westbound side. I have seen people trying to cross MPR to that bus stop outside Summit Credit Union and have a difficult time doing so. Especially in the dark, it is dangerous to cross there to get to the bus, and I have seen close calls with people trying to dart across the eastbound side as those cars come flying over the hill. I think a traffic light there will make pedestrian crossing to-and-from that bus stop to the apartments safer. If the traffic light could hold the Yellowstone traffic from turning onto MPR (eastbound) until pedestrians have passed, that would also help.

Not sure if this is helpful, but I think this stoplight is a great idea and wanted to help if I can!

Thank you for your advocacy on this,

-Jennifer Sheridan

Gettysburg Drive