

**From:** [Ellen Foley in Madison, WI](#)  
**To:** [Ellen Foley in Madison, WI](#)  
**Subject:** No surge of support for Sauk Creek bikepaths  
**Date:** Thursday, August 22, 2024 8:20:21 AM

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## **LOW SUPPORT FOR SAUK CREEK NORTH-SOUTH BIKE PATH AS \$22 MILLION CITY REFERENDUM MOVES FORWARD**

Dear Commissioners, Alders and City Staff,

Ben Zellers, a city planner with the West Area Plan, made a comment at the recent Board of Public Parks Commission that support is growing for the north-south bike path in the Sauk Creek Greenway when research shows it is not.

Research by The Friends of Sauk Creek (FOSC) shows that **opposition to bike paths in the greenway continues to outpace support for any bike path. Between Dec. 13, 2023, and today, opponents of the bike paths in the greenway have commented to the city 667 times and proponents have commented 214 times.**

In the past year, FOSC's concerns about bike paths in the greenway have only increased because alders and advocates also have deep concerns that with the city's **\$22 million deficit, expensive, unneeded bike paths should not be under consideration for city funding---particularly those bike paths like the ones in the Greenway that do not link the bike network and have NO TRANSPORTATION PURPOSE.** Any bike path---including the east-west bike path---in Sauk Creek Greenway will harm the environment to the detriment of all Madison residents during this time of dangerous **climate change**. And it could make **stormwater management worse.**

Even in recent weeks, the opposing comments on the bike paths in Sauk Creek Greenway outpace the proponents. FOSC's count is **173 comments in favor of a bike path in the greenway and 198 against between April 2024 and today.**

The increase of email support mentioned in **casual comments by city planners in charge of the West Area Plan should not encourage commissioners or city officials that there is support for a north-south bike path.** [Ald. Nikki Conklin in April made the decision to pull the north-south bike path](#) from the West Area Plan for strong reasons that should not be disregarded by city leaders, commissioners and staff.

Records show that the support for a north-south bike path in the Sauk Creek Greenway increased with 157 emails in recent weeks. This was not a spontaneous reaction to removal of the north-south bike path by Conklin from the West Area Plan; **it was a response to an email campaign led by Madison Bikes**, an area bike advocacy group. **This is not a sudden surge in interest for a north-south bike path.**

One FOSC concern is that city planners **only included feedback in commission agendas** in the past few weeks from the city's community surveys. **Feedback shared with the important commission members does not include a fair representation of opponents to the bike paths. The FOSC information needs to be in the feedback section for agendas for all commissions and alders along with planners' surveys.**

**FOSC's chart below captures both types of feedback.**

The spike in positive comments about the north-south bike paths occurred after [a request by Madison Bikes in its newsletter for its members to comment on the bike path change.](#) And while it is fair and acceptable for Madison Bike to encourage its members to send emails, it is also important to know that the increase in **pro-bike path comments was**

**likely a blip in one point in time** and it has ebbed significantly in recent weeks.

We can see from the analysis below that in the past 20 months that proponents of bike paths commented 214 times and opponents have commented more than three times as much with 667 comments. In addition, FOSC submitted petitions with **300-plus signatures opposing bike paths in the greenway which this chart does not count.**

FOSC also notes that its feedback is not limited to quick emails but includes the time-consuming submission of **white papers, in-person and virtual testimony at most commission meetings, and lengthy and tailored statements for each commission.**

The Friends of Sauk Creek continues to oppose an east-west path and any other paved surface because even commuting bikers have said they will not use it. Craig Weinhold, a spokesperson for area bikers and a board member for Madison Bikes, wrote in a letter to city planners and engineers in January 2024 that **bikers will not use bike paths in Sauk Creek Greenway, because it is inconvenient with the alternatives available on Tree Lane, High Point Road and Westfield Road.** We have also attached that letter.

FOSC also has deep concerns that with the city's **\$22 million deficit, expensive, unneeded bike paths should not be under consideration for bike paths that do not link the bike network and have NO TRANSPORTATION PURPOSE.** Any bike path---including the east-west bike path---in Sauk Creek Greenway will harm the environment to the detriment of all Madison residents during this time of dangerous **climate change.** And it could make **stormwater management worse** if it interrupts funding and construction of the Sauk Creek Corridor creek cleanup and reconstruction.

| Feedback to Planning Division<br>Jan. 2023 to Aug. 14, 2024<br>Sauk Creek Bike Path(s) |                               |                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dates of Feedback Phases                                                               | Comments that favor bike path | Comments that oppose bike path | Source, event                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Jan. to June 2023<br>(Feedback 1) (6-mo. Period)                                       | 6                             | 69                             | The Community Survey asked about the creek restoration. One question concerned whether residents have concerns with the Sauk Creek restoration and a bike path; The other question asked if residents favored the restoration. There had been a bike path discussed in 2018 so questions about it were expected. Residents did not know there was a bike path yet. In fact, several were told at the meeting at Lussier that |

|                                                                  |                                                              |                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                  |                                                              |                                                            | there was no bike path.                                                                                                                                          |
| Mid July to Aug. 2023<br>(Feedback 2) (2 mo. Period)             | 6<br>EF OC                                                   | 27<br>EVM RPM CS                                           | July 18, 2023, the north-south bike path surfaces at a West Area Plan virtual meeting. There was no east-west path. See map below.                               |
|                                                                  |                                                              |                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Aug. 2023 to April 2024<br>(Feedback 3) (9-month period)         | 14<br>EF OC                                                  | 107<br>EIM12, OC.<br>AVM4, EVM5<br>CFG, SCNA               | North-south path was still alive.                                                                                                                                |
| Dec. 7, 2023, Plan Commission                                    | 4 emails                                                     | 83 letters<br>Send via email                               |                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Dec. 11, 2023, Plan Commission                                   | 3 emails                                                     | 63 letters; 4 speakers                                     | Friends of Sauk Creek (FOSC) included in tis submission petitions with 300+ names.                                                                               |
| Dec. 13, 2023, Transportation Commission                         | 3 emails<br>1 speaker                                        | Letters signed by 47 people;<br>9 Speakers                 | Robbie Webber suggests East-West path at Transportation Commission                                                                                               |
| March 12, 2024, West Area Plan Meeting (videoed by Ald. Tishler) | 4                                                            | 60-plus people on video opposing the West Area Plan        |                                                                                                                                                                  |
| April 20, 2024, to June 10, 2024 (Feedback 4) (2-month period)   | 157 oppose<br>nixing north-south; want it back EF OH20 T6 OC | 38 oppose; 8 approve of drop of north south.<br>EF OH20 T6 | Ald. Nikki Conklin removed the north-south path from West Area Plan and inserted east-west path April 29. Madison Bikes called for an email campaign after that. |
| July 31, 2024, Transportation Commission                         | 14 letters,<br>1 registration                                | 26 registrants oppose; 43 letters opposing, 9 speakers.    |                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                      |          |                                                   |  |
|--------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------|--|
|                                      |          | T= 78                                             |  |
| Aug. 14, 2024, Board of Public Parks | 1 letter | Letters signed by 70;<br>4 speakers;<br>Total= 74 |  |
| Since April 20                       | 173      | 198                                               |  |
| Total:                               | 214      | 667                                               |  |

Meetings in red indicate engagement activities not captured in the city planners' limited surveys.

**Key for meeting descriptors:**

CS=Community Survey Comments July to August 2023  
EVM= Virtual Meeting July 19, 2023, evening  
RPM=Open House Aug. 2, 2023  
EF=Emailed comments  
OC=Online Draft Comments Phase 3 (August 2023 to April 2024)  
CFT=Chinese Focus Group Nov. 7, 2023  
SCNA=Sauk Creek Neighborhood Association Nov. 15, 2023  
AVM4=Virtual Meeting March 4, 2024  
EVM5=Virtual Meeting March 5, 2024  
EIM12=In Person Public Meeting March 12, 2024  
OH20=Open House May 20, 2024  
T6=West Area Plan Transportation meeting June 6, 2024

**LETTER ABOUT BIKERS NOT WANTING BIKE PATH IN GREENWAY**

**(FOSC emphasis in bold)**

From: Craig Weinhold <[cweinhold@gmail.com](mailto:cweinhold@gmail.com)>

Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2024 2:22 PM

To: OBrien, Joanna

Cc: Callaway, Renee; Zellers, Benjamin

Subject: Re: Two Sauk Creek greenway questions

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Thanks Jojo, And thanks for posting the

I've been reaching out to some of the more level-headed voices in the Sauk Creek path

kerfuffle. One is Tom Dosch (public comment on pg 72-76). Another is Simon Widstrand, (cap times letter-to-the-editor).

It's worth reviewing their input.

One question that continually comes up is who and what the "All Ages and Abilities bike network" is for, especially in the context of Sauk Creek. I struggle to answer that. **Few bikers will choose a Sauk Creek path over other routes since it'd be longer, add climbing, and have more bike/ped/dog conflicts. They'd only choose it for novelty and nature reasons. Timid bicyclists will use the path, but I don't see them venturing past Mineral Point Rd, Gammon, Beltline, or Old Sauk. (i.e., the "network" part is a bit hollow)**

That doesn't mean a path isn't worthwhile, but the current messaging is unpersuasive. I'd recommend some adjustments:

1. Stress the need for east/west connectivity through the greenway, especially given WisDOT's plans for a bike/ped beltline bridge at Sauk Creek Park. Today, the east and west sides of the greenway may as well be on different planets.
2. Stress the value of the path as a neighborhood amenity. The path would look just like Fitchburg's many backyard paths (e.g., Oak Meadow Park, Seminole Glen, McKee Farms, Nannyberry, and Bluestem/Buttonbush). These carry far more local foot traffic than thru-bicyclists.
3. Explain why it's better to put a path through a greenway than along a street. E.g., terrace modification, tree loss, homeowner disruption, loss of parking, etc.
4. Talk about why High Point isn't on the All Ages and Abilities network. It is, after all, already a bike N/S artery with great path connectivity. It seems perfect for a path -- at least south of the greenway.

Best regards,

-Craig

Thank you for your consideration,

Ellen Foley and the Friends of Sauk Creek

