From: James Kreft
To: Evers, Tag
Cc: All Alders
Subject: Agenda Item 92491. We can do better with Regent Street. Reject this planned geometry.
Date: Saturday, May 2, 2026 5:00:39 PM
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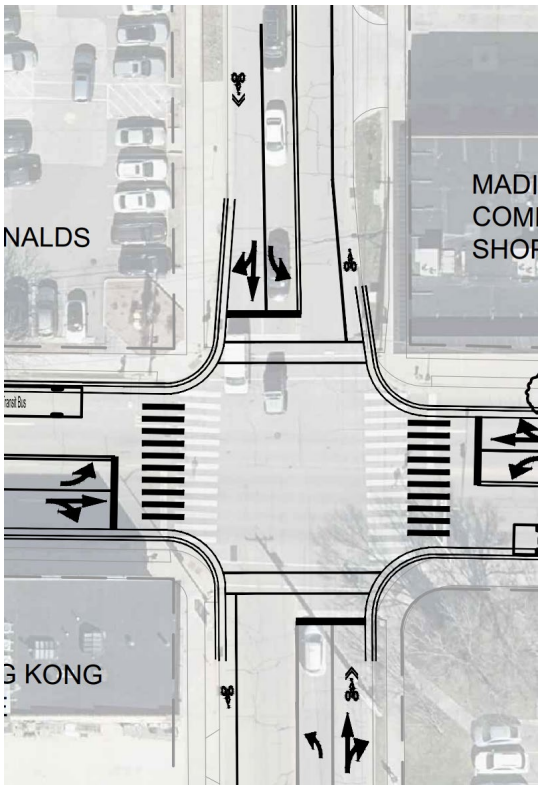
Dear Tag and Alders-

I am writing today to urge you to reject the proposed geometry for Regent Street. There is already ample public comment on this project, including from me, so I am going to keep this short. I regularly patronize businesses on the Regent Street Corridor, and was so excited for this redesign to truly take to heart Madison's rently adopted Complete Green Streets and Vision Zero policies. Unfortunately, we instead have ended up with a deeply mediocre design that makes only token improvements to the status quo.

- Regent Street is changing, and for the better. In just the past few years, thousands more people live and stay directly on the Regent corridor, as the 1-2 story buildings that historically defined the corridor are redeveloped. There are more and more people that are going to be living on and near Regent over the next 30 years. We need to build Regent for these people, rather than for the relatively small number of people who drive their cars through Regent at peak hours. The current Regent Street design prioritizes peak hour level of service of people in cars to the detriment of the safety of people living and walking on and across the street.
- The current Regent street design prioritizes parking on both sides of the street, driven by the desires of Regent Street businesses. It is this parking that makes it impossible to add any sort of bike infrastructure. There is ample evidence that, in fact, removing parking and adding bike infrastructure is good for businesses on the street. Study after study shows that adding protected bike infrastructure has either a positive or neutral impact on businesses. To add a local flavor to this, I surveyed 54 cyclists on the Southwest commuter path over the course of about 40 minutes on a blustery Friday afternoon. Of those 54 cyclists, 44 said that they would visit Regent street businesses more, or at all, if they could safely ride on Regent. Among the more striking comments was someone who noted that she had ridden the path on a near daily basis for years, but actually had no idea what businesses were on Regent, because she could not ride by them safely. Another said that he would go to a specific business, but it was always a pain because he had to remember the right cross street, so often wouldn't bother. As part of a family who primarily moves through the city by bike, I can't emphasize enough how valuable safe bike routes on corridors are to trip chaining. If there are multiple businesses on a street, I am much more likely to visit them if I can move linearly down the street, rather than having to go back and forth out of my way. Regent Street businesses are leaving money on the table by lobbying for a handful of additional parking spots rather than allowing for a street that cyclists (and their money) can safely navigate.
- Level of Service is brought up frequently as a driving factor in many of the small decisions that led to the design we have today, from the widening of the last block of Regent to five lanes to having bus pullouts and dedicated left turn lanes on minor

cross street intersections. In the book Killed by a Traffic Engineer, Wes Marshall takes apart the concept of Level of Service. He actually dedicates multiple chapters to this dangerous concept. The most important part is that Level of Service ONLY considers vehicle throughput. It specifically does not consider safety of the system, either for the people outside or inside of the vehicles. It also does not consider the safety of the system OUTSIDE of peak hours, which is most of the time. In practice, increasing Level of Service for cars almost always decreases the safety of the system as a whole. Yang Tao, director of Traffic Engineering, agrees. At the Transportation Commission meeting on April 15 (at 1:58:45), he said that we need to "prioritize safety for all users over vehicle level of service." Unfortunately, the Regent Street design currently does the opposite. A few specific examples:

- Dedicated left turn lanes at small streets may allow for more vehicle throughput, but also means that the pedestrian crossings are much wider than they need to be. The shortest pedestrian crossing on Regent is still over 30 feet, despite these crossings being some of the busiest in the city, and are only going to get busier as more housing is built in the corridor. Wide crossings are always more dangerous than narrow crossings. A vehicle in a left turn lane can make a speeding car in the next lane invisible until it is too late.
- Bus turnouts were added specifically to increase vehicle level of service. Turnouts make crossings significantly wider for pedestrians, which again makes crossings less safe, while decreasing level of service for people on the bus, who are all forced to wait for the bus to find a gap in traffic to turn back into. With the wide lanes, people in cars are going to accelerate to get past a bus. When a bus isn't in the turn out (the vast, vast majority of the time) the turnout provides a tempting merge lane for people making rights from side streets, effectively increasing the corner radii and decreasing safety for pedestrians trying to cross.
- On cross streets, even those that are noted as all ages and abilities bike routes like Mills, there are dedicated north-south turn lanes, and bikes have to mix it up with traffic, protected only by painted sharrows. I ride Mills regularly with my daughter to get to camps on campus every summer, as it is the only reasonable route to campus from our home on Fish Hatchery. This configuration is not in any way an all ages and abilities design, and is sacrificing safety at the alter of Level of Service.



- The current design is to have 14 foot lanes, wider than a freeway. I live the reality of overly wide lanes every day here on Fish Hatchery Road, where wide lanes and unused parking lanes make for a wide open road that people use as such. Safe streets guidelines from NACTO and others make it clear than lanes should be no more than 11 feet wide on a bus route, and parking, if it is part of the design, should be at the edge of those lanes to increase complexity and slow traffic. Instead, a new requirement was introduced during the Traffic Commission Meeting and then expanded upon during the board of public works meeting to ensure that people parking could open their doors while traffic was flowing by. This, again, is absolutely not something that is required or recommended in any design guide, and is instead being used as a retroactive justification of these unjustifiably wide lanes.
- It's unclear what the fate of the five lane expansion between Park and Brooks is, but it is clear that this is also entirely unjustifiable from a safety perspective. This block should be the gateway to Regent for people getting off the BRT, or for all the people who live just to the East. Instead it appears the goal is to make this section a very short stroad (even eliminating the pedestrian crossing on the east side of Brooks), for no good reason.

There is much more that I could write here about my frustration with this process, and the undeniable mismatch between the words of Traffic Engineering, Vision Zero, and Complete Green Streets, and the actions that are taken when actually designing these roads for the next thirty years. Please. Let's design roads for people, not cars. Let's build safe systems rather than prioritizing the unscientific and dangerous concept of level of service. Let's build a Regent Street that we can be proud of in 20 years. I know that Traffic Engineering can do better. Please give them that opportunity.

Respectfully,

Jim Kreft
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