

Sauk Creek Greenway Comments concerning the proposed, but not yet designed “all ages, all abilities” paths proposed to go along the creek north-south and make connections east-west:

First, the creek reconstruction (to facilitate adequate water flow through the corridor) must leave enough of the existing and/or (native) restored woods along the creek intact to allow continued wildlife use, and make any new paths suitable for users’ continued immersion in quality urban nature in the greenway. Also, no trees should be removed for the project except those that are absolutely required for the creek reconstruction along with any non-native trees (and the latter does NOT include box elders which are native). I and many neighbors I talk with cannot judge whether construction of any paved “all ages, all abilities” path would be acceptable because we do not have any plans for what is actually proposed for the creek work itself. Thus, there must be no decisions made about building proposed paths until we can see and comment on the creek reconstruction work itself.

That said, any north-south path for bicycle transportation is unnecessary to begin with since surrounding roads are more than suitable, and in fact, are shown in the West Side Plan as being so. All connecting routes for this proposed path are also on streets requiring riders to be capable of safely riding on such. Thus the disturbance to nature in the greenway for such a short stretch of additional, unnecessary bike path makes little sense.

Then the goal of such a path must be to simply enhance citizen enjoyment of the urban nature of the greenway, at least whatever is left after the creek reconstruction! Since we do not know what will be left it is impossible to decide if the quality of any nature experience is worth enhancing with an upgraded path, so path decisions must wait. Making this path useful for ADA accessibility, thus perhaps paving it, must also wait until the quality of nature in the greenway can be accessed post creek reconstruction. However, the greenway is already so narrow that there are multiple problems with building a new paved path. I agree with all problems my neighbors have already elaborated on.

There is an existing path from Bruce Circle down into the greenway for walkers, so improving/changing it for better access, including ADA accessibility, to any improved north-south path must also wait given the above uncertainties. This path is somewhat steep so improving it will likely include unacceptable grading.

The proposed plan also suggests using this path for part of an east-west bike route all the way across the creek up to Walnut Grove Park. This idea must be scrapped for a number of reasons. First, it is unnecessary for city park users west of the creek, who already have easy access to city park amenities in Sauk Creek Park, to have better access to Walnut Grove Park amenities they would simply duplicate. Any new path up the steep grade from the creek up would also require substantial and unacceptable destruction of the existing woodland to provide room for an acceptable slope for a disability access path. There is also no good reason for this to be a bike path through Walnut Grove Park to the east since all biking further has to be on roads, and nearby bikeways on roads are already established around the park making this additional access east duplicative for biking such a short distance. It cannot justify the necessary woodland destruction.

All lighting that is proposed for these new paths is totally unacceptable and must be eliminated from the plan. Any of these paths constructed should be useful primarily for enjoyment of nature in the greenway and not for through-biking (see above). Unnatural lighting will interfere with normal wildlife habits and compromise both it and any attempts to appreciate night’s unique nature by human users. Since night

use of the paths should consequently be at a slow pace by all users, whether walking (sometimes with bikes) or by wheelchair, lighting will be superfluous, as well as disruptive. Light pollution is ubiquitous now, and further unnecessary lighting simply exacerbates citizens' ability to appreciate what more natural dark night has to offer.

Brock Woods

12/13/2023