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**Subject:** Transportation Comm Comment: Agenda Item 70601--Atwood Ave, Olbrich Sledding Hill & Bike Path  
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The Upshot: The Bike access needs to be maintained, pretty much as is: Option 2. It works pretty well for everyone. Maybe delineate pedestrian space from bike space (keeping it wide enough for both), but that direct access to the super popular Lakeland Ave Lake Loop route must be maintained. If it is officially blocked, I guarantee there will be a muddy rut following the current trajectory. High speed crashes will follow. More below on this 3-season route.

All four of the options have fundamental problems. I've settled on Option 2 (essentially the current trajectory) as the least bad. It's downside is that it will be unplowed during winter given the sledding hill. I don't like that. Indeed, along with the inimitable Tim Wong (rest, Tim, though I know it won't be in peace, let's say happiness in agitation!) and Betty Chewing & a few others, I led the fight for year-round bike access (through timely bike path plowing) back in the mid-90s when bicycling was not the cool thing that it is now. It was a major fight, and we were denounced by the powerful, but we made it happen and bicycling was able to flourish as a significant year round transportation thing because of it. (Previously they wouldn't get to the paths for days, leaving icy ruts, making the paths unbikeable most of the winter.) Now, more people ride in January than rode in an early 90s July. I take a backseat to no one in pushing for year-round cycling. But, contrary to engineering ideology, not every place is uniform with every other place. The Olbrich sledding hill and surrounding park need special care & consideration. After a lengthy & detailed tour of the park this weekend with Betty Chewing, I've come to see that the uses in the park are just too intense—yet currently convivially working well—to jam a bike path through anywhere near the playground & lakeshore. (Thanks, Betty!) It would behoove each commission member to either experience & observe in person, or listen to those who do. If you go by on any given sunny weekend you'll see for yourself. Kids, toddlers off leash(!), strollers, picnics, ambling, frisbees, lots of easy-going, carefree fun. Jamming a 17' wide bike path in here simply would not be appropriate.

And then there's the dog leg routing of Option 1 (the playground + lake shore route). Why force cyclists to do the A2 + B2 when we all know cyclists are always going to use the C2? (See the muddy rut discussion.)

It kills me, but I have settled myself into the idea that we should live with a 3-season path along its current trajectory. Winter time, sledding fun takes priority, bicyclists just route up the well-plowed Welch & Oakridge (and no, I don't want to climb it either, but I will in the name of fun!). It is important to keep Olbrich the easy-going, family-friendly, riparian habitat-friendly park that it is.

So here's the detailed rundown:

Option 1 rams the path through the toddler play area and the current amble path along the lakeshore. Right now, it is more suited to said ambling, free-to-roam toddler play, frisbees, soccer & riparian habitat. That's how it should stay. This peaceable area definitely must not

become a high stress motorbike whizzing zone. Because that is what the city has turned all of our bike paths into: high speed motorbikeways. Even excluding the motorbike issue, routing the path through toddler/picnic areas has already failed at Brittingham Park where people on bikes are getting injured from the intense picnic & play activity there (one friend, victimized by a volleyball while biking cautiously & slowly through Brittingham, ended up unconscious and hauled off to the hospital with lingering issues to this day). Another attacked by a disgruntled park user. Etc. Compound Brittingham with gravity induced speeds and toddlerland becomes a tyke exclusion zone. Biking through such dense & intense uses is anything but a low stress environment for cycling & everyone else. Why replicate that mistake when alternatives exist?

Option 2 is my preference. It basically keeps the status quo. It keeps the high speed uses separated from play areas better than the other options. Details above in the intro.

Option 3 was originally my favorite option because I thought it threaded the needle of year-round bike access, and separated uses. Unfortunately, it does none of the above. Indeed, it aims the path right into the toddler play area. Sleds make it all the way out across the proposed path route, creating surprise conflicts for cyclists. Plus, we would likely lose several trees. So I now oppose it.

Option 4, while well intended, won't suffice for even 3-season biking. Trying to block cycling from this super popular route and force a hill climb on the hordes of summer cyclists who love this route will prove futile at best, and likely more dangerous than ever. I guarantee that without the direct access the result will be a muddy rut along the current trajectory. Any attempt at a hard block will be overcome. (Witness Mullins's decades-long efforts to keep us/cyclists from accessing the end of E. Mifflin connection to the Yahara Path at his Washington Square building!) But I thank Lou for bringing this out because it woke the SASY neighborhood association out of its torpor. Furthermore, the spirit of maintaining a convivial, relaxed, kid-friendly space should be heeded. I almost always like Lou's plans and thoughtful take on things. Unfortunately, what we've got here, his Option 4, is that one case in a hundred where I disagree.

More issues with the plan:

-As Betty Chewning and Lou Host-Jablonski have pointed out, the SASY neighborhood has been cut out of the decision making and opportunities to comment. You need to consider the machinations that have made this so.

-The parking area at the base of the hill needs to go away. We are already park deficient in this area; every bit of park space should be dedicated to green. People who insist on supporting Putin's war on Ukraine can park on the street or across the street in Olbrich Gardens lot (yes, the westsiders, The Lords of The Gardens, can learn to share). I put this demand to city representatives at last night's Zoom meeting.

There was no response.

-The two-way bike path southeast of Walter is a disastrous proposal. Back in the 70s they did these 2-way contra-flow schemes and ended up getting cyclists creamed from all sides. Think about it: anyone waiting to turn right from one of the cross streets onto Atwood will naturally only look left for a break in traffic. Once the break appears, they'll take it, never

thinking to look right. I mean, why would they? (I'm not saying it's right, I'm just saying it is.) Think about it next time you are driving, because, yup, you (whoever you are!) do it too. There is also the problem of people turning right or left from Atwood onto these side streets easily misjudging the speed of oncoming cyclists ahead of them (in the case of left turners, behind them!). Everything about this proposal goes against intuitive read of the streetscape. The confusion will end up with a lot of people hauled off to the hospital. And Traffic Engineering will not record the injuries because they don't meet the damage thresholds for reporting (because in an engineer's mind, bent metal is more precious than human tissue & bone).

The question is, why does the city continue to put these 1970s death paths in with every new major road reconstruct?

At last night's Zoom meeting I asked this question. Mr. Petykowski's answer was that people are interested in grade separated paths. My response last night: Wonderful. So why design them in a maximally dangerous way that motorists are not expecting? Why not follow the lead of the Dutch who have decades of experience doing it right: have each side of the road with a one-way separate bike path, essentially riding on the "right" side of the road in all directions, aligning cyclists with the expectations of drivers (and fellow cyclists). Please leave the bell bottom planning in the 70s.

He had no answer.

-The 2nd westbound lane needs to go. It's so obvious that if only one lane is needed eastbound, we can live with only one westbound. Or do cars just miraculously materialize overnight for the morning rush 1/4 hour? It's time for City Engineering to learn how to live within budgetary limits (the paving schemes you people vote for has driven debt service from 10% to 18% and rapidly rising). It's time for City Engineering to live within climate limits (the #1 destroyer of a livable climate is the deathmobile that you people so worship with your votes). It's time for City Engineering to recognize—and act—on its role in fomenting a wasteful transportation system that requires bombing grannies, babies and young mothers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine while poisoning our own communities—with Black & Brown communities taking the brunt—on behalf of all that goes to service the Deathmobile (where's your concern for equity now, commissioner?). One car lane in each direction is my demand.

I presented this demand at last night's Zoom meeting.

There was no answer.

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