From:	Mary Carbine
To:	Transportation Commission
Cc:	Martinez-Rutherford, Dina Nina; Baumel, Christie; Price, Jessica M; Saqqaf, Tariq
Subject:	Transportation Commission 3/27 meeting agenda item 7, Ped/Bike Bridge at Hermina St
Date:	Sunday, March 24, 2024 12:05:19 PM

Dear Transportation Commission members,

I am writing with input on the Hermina and Union Streets Reconstruction and Bridge. I have lived on Hermina Street just east of Starkweather Creek for more than twenty years. I regularly walk and bike the neighborhood on both sides of the creek, and kayak on the creek. I also volunteer to remove invasives, plant native species, and clean up trash along Starkweather Creek.

I want to thank city staff for a reconstruction plan that is responsive to the Darbo Worthington Starkweather Neighborhood Plan, which has brought worthwhile and appreciated improvements to our neighborhood. I especially support the option for native terrace plantings.

My input is to express concern about the scale and impact of the proposed additional bike-pedestrian bridge and ramp up/retaining wall. I ask that we reconsider whether a bridge is truly needed. If so, I urge a smaller, human-scale option that does not require the large ramp up and would not pave over so much native plantings that the city and volunteers have worked hard to implement. I also support adding minimal-impact water/canoe/kayak access enhancements.

The proposed additional bridge at Hermina St. is roughly 45 ft long and 14 ft wide with a 65-ft by 10-ft ramp-up/retaining wall. It is just .1 miles (around 528 feet or 1.5 blocks and an est. 3 min. walk or 1 min. bike ride) from the existing 80-ft long and 14-ft wide bridge at Darbo Drive, and equidistant from the Milwaukee Street bridge.

The ramp up/retaining wall alone will pave over 650 square feet of native plantings and remove hackberry trees which serve as a host for butterfly species and whose berries are food for birds. The abutments for the 14 ft. wide bridge (as wide as a typical street vehicle lane) will replace even more creek bank and native plantings with impervious surface. The cement and concrete production for the bridge and ramp up would generate carbon emissions.

Starkweather Creek is identified by the city as a watershed of greatest concern. The city's plans for shoreline stabilization, water quality and flood prevention call for native plantings in the area, which were planted I believe starting around 2007. I question the need to pave over a large portion of the restored creek bank for a bridge that duplicates a bridge just 528 feet away.

The neighborhood plan calls for convenient access to services, workplaces and recreation. It also calls for pedestrian and environmentally friendly, human-scale building characteristics, and plant pollinator habitat and tree canopy. The plan calls for creative ways to provide fitness opportunities and "promote biking and walking among residents of all ages." I understand the bridge is a response to the Darbo-Worthington Neighborhood Resource Team request that kids have difficulty getting across the neighborhood (accessing Hawthorne Public Library), and that it is also intended to improve bike connectivity.

At the same time, we are facing a biodiversity crisis driven largely by habitat loss, and flooding driven by climate change and paving over too much of our environment, which have accelerated since the 2017 neighborhood plan. As a community, we need to shift our mindset. We need to view habitat that absorbs and filters stormwater and feeds birds and insects – even small patches of it – as an asset, and as a priority to preserve and expand. The creek is not an artificial barrier to neighborhood connectivity; it is part of the natural environment, and we can adapt to it. We need to stop asking the city to engineer every part of the environment

and install hardscape to maximize human convenience.

I am happy to walk three extra minutes or bike one extra minute so that the city does not have to expend resources to pave over roughly 1,000 feet of native plantings on a watershed of greatest concern to install yet a third bridge within .2 miles. We do not have to come up with creative new ideas to promote walking and biking. We can take the opportunity we already have to walk or bike 528 feet to the existing bridge.

I observe that the highest density of housing and children on the east side of the creek is closer to the existing Darbo bridge than to the proposed bridge. For those on the west side of the creek, the bike path and Darbo bridge provide a more direct route than the proposed bridge does for crossing the creek by foot or bike to access Worthington Park and the Salvation Army activity center.

I frequently walk to the library from Hermina on the east side of the creek using the Darbo bridge –all on neighborhood streets and sidewalks – and I don't have difficulty getting across the neighborhood. As a child, starting in first grade I walked over a half a mile to school and back (including walking home for lunch, so over 2 miles a day), which was considered normal at the time. By incorporating walking into daily life, we did not have to come up with new ways to promote walking. I agree that children in Darbo-Worthington need and deserve additional investment, but I don't think this bridge is it.

If a new bridge is truly necessary for a ped/bike alternative to the busy Milwaukee Street bridge, I urge a smaller, human-scale, lower-impact bridge. An example is the 6-ft wide bridge just across Milwaukee Street in the Dixon Greenway, presumably installed by the city, and built by Custom Manufacturing in Clinton, Wis. Perhaps they offer an arched model (as staff said was needed to allow boat access on the creek) that would not exceed the cost of the proposed bridge plus ramp-up construction. I oppose any bridge that would require a 65-ft by 10-ft hardscape ramp up.

I also support minimal-impact elements that facilitate canoe/kayak access to the creek. Perhaps this could involve adding a rectangular flat stair or two at the existing rip rap (large rocks) along the open turf grass area on the east bank, just south of the sanitary station (already used by some as an informal access point), or a few stairs under a smaller bridge.

Thank you for your work on the Commission and for considering my input.

Sincerely,

Mary Carbine

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