

From: Michael Gerdes <msgerdes@tds.net>

Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2024 1:25 PM

To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>

Subject: Agenda Item 84383: Oppose Any Bike Path in the Sauk Creek Greenway

You don't often get email from msgerdes@tds.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

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

I have a home that backs up to the Sauk Creek Greenway. I am opposed to any bike path in the greenway. And I have to say that I am distraught over how dismissive the city and its planners are of the desires and opinions of those who are most affected by this proposal and who know and use the greenway the most. Our voices have been united for YEARS now in an effort to have as minimally invasive a creek restoration as possible. Yet no matter how often we write letters, send emails, add comments to proposals and show up to meetings, every new iteration always contains some sort of bike path that will require the removal of healthy trees and will disrupt the active wildlife in the greenway ... we frequently see deer, turkeys, and even an occasional crane or two in our yard. Why spend the large sum of money to pander to narrow interest group – ESPECIALLY WHEN IT REQUIRES removing trees in an area of the city that has few green spaces. There already is a safe on-street alternative and zero need to invade this natural habitat.

Nor does the proposal make sense – they want to cross narrow part of the greenway that has a large grade, which (if the planners stated intention to make any path 'accessible' holds) will require the introduction of switchbacks to travers a short distance. This is madness. It is exhausting repeating all of the reasons this is a bad and unnecessary idea, so I'm going to cut-paste from materials that have been put before committees and commissions, and planners, and alderpeople again and again. **Why can the people who live adjacent not be heard in this matter???? Why does MADISON, WI seemingly care so little about killing dozens of trees and paving over green spaces??? What powerful interests are pushing this expensive, unneeded and unwanted project?????**

Please put a stop to the endless campaign to invade this space with an usightly and environmentally unfriendly bike path!

Thank you,

Resident on Farmington Way

- **Conflicts with Parks and Open Spaces Plan 2023: Walnut Grove Park** is roughly 20 acres and there is a dense steep wooded bluff area with a sharp drop where the proposed East-West Bike Path path would be built and would require switchbacks zig zagging through the woods. It would require the loss of tens of trees on the bluff to make that path accessible to all ages and abilities. Destruction of Trees conflicts with one of the **mission statements** for Parks and Open Spaces Plan 2023 that states that Parks should "Preserve and expand our forest resources through a well-planned and systematic approach to TREE MAINTENANCE, planting and natural area management." and "Steep grades may make accessibility paths unfeasible in some area parks." Friends of Sauk Creek have continually advised city officials that trees absorb water and stop erosion in the greenway.
- **The east-west bike path also can run afoul of the important 2023 Parks and Open Spaces Plan**, which guides park commissioners' decisions. It says that "Studies suggest that the resultant loss of tree canopy....can increase risks of cardiovascular disease and lower respiratory tract illness and mortality. "
- In the plan's Chapter Nine, it recommends these strategies:

 - Protect and Enhance Natural and Cultural Resources
 - Respect and Protect Tribal Sacred Sites. (This area is called Sauk Creek in respect and memory of the indigenous peoples who lived here before us. The Friends of Sauk Creek support keeping the trees and natural environment of the green way as a living testament to the Sauk and indigenous people. Not by removing trees/ vital animal habitat and destroying a bluff for an asphalt, lighted bike path.
- **WHY is the city imposing a wide paved path on the important stormwater channel restoration project?** Planners at the November Greenway Restoration kick-off meeting said that IF the West Area Plan includes a bike path the engineers will have to add one. We are hoping for a minimally invasive creek restoration – to retain as much of the urban forest as possible. Mandating wide paved bike paths will decimate the forest.
- **Paltry 16% Tree Canopy!** The Sauk Creek Greenway is the MAJOR portion of the 16% tree canopy in District 9. With a city-wide goal of 40% and a current coverage of 23% WHY would the city even consider decimating the Greenway for an unneeded, redundant, bike path. Here is a link to 2019 Urban Forestry Final Report for more information: <https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8033567&GUID=9B1BC88B-FD1E-4CC6-B4DC-72D52838455E>. Page 24: There are substantial differences in tree canopy by area. For example, downtown Madison and the UW-Madison campus areas have only 8-13% of canopy. Areas on the far east (District 17) have only 17% canopy and far west (District 9) have 16% canopy. Other areas of the city have canopy levels of 40% and higher. Given these differences, a general citywide goal may not address the deficiencies at the neighborhood level where the absence of trees is most acutely experienced. CITY RECOMMENDATIONS: #3. The city should institute a range of policies and programs designed to increase canopy coverage at the neighborhood level. *In*

conjunction with neighborhood groups, staff should develop strategies for increasing tree population.

- **Good Healthy trees throughout the Greenway.** Documents show that there are GOOD HEALTHY trees – including many old growth oaks – THROUGHOUT the greenway. Don't accept the argument that the greenway is full of "garbage trees"!
- **No GAPS in the bike network surrounding the greenway.** Check out the city's bike network map – especially the low stress bike route map. Add comments about your experience as a bike commuter, casual biker, parent teaching your children to bike. <https://cityofmadison.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=cb7a2e78477044c19bf6a5eaa1820e38>
- **High Point Road IS the on-street alternative the Transportation Commission asked for.** Planners have said that "people are uncomfortable biking on High Point Road". Notice on their map (page 13) that the only stretch of High Point NOT included on the bike route is the section from Sauk Creek Park to Tree Lane. So, they are saying that crossing Old Sauk and Mineral Point Road is fine but this very wide, calm section, with few driveways or parked cars is the problem? https://www.cityofmadison.com/transportation/documents/complete-green-streets/Complete%20Green%20Streets%20Guide_Final.pdf
- **NO Recorded Bike Accidents on High Point Road.** There are rumors that the path through the greenway is needed because of serious bike accidents on the surrounding streets. There have been NO bike accidents on High Point Road and a path through the greenway would not have had any impact on the 2 recorded bike accidents on Westfield Road. Use the following WI DOT interactive map to see for yourself. <https://transportal.cee.wisc.edu/partners/community-maps/crash/search/BasicSearch.do;jsessionid=0E109C131FC1197A17BF06290CAF632B>
- **East-West Path = Significant Tree Loss.** The updated WAP Draft includes an East-West shared-use path from the end of Brule Circle to Walnut Grove Park. We have clarified with city planners that a "shared-use" path has the same width and grading requirements as an "all-ages and abilities" path. The minimum width is 5ft for a walking path but 10ft for a biking path. The maximum grade is 5%. The grade across the greenway is approximately 17% -- more than 3 times higher. City staff have discussed the use of switch-backs to accommodate for the grade. Imagine the tree loss that comes with a 10ft wide path winding back and forth up the bluff. To get construction equipment, and concrete trucks to build a bridge, the area will need to be cleared of trees, as they have throughout Madison when building park bridges.
- **Madison's Nature Everywhere Campaign.** This initiative is designed to increase equitable access to nature everywhere children live, learn and play (see announcement below). The Sauk Creek Greenway is the only natural area in the 9th district. The greenway should be preserved to provide children who live, learn, and play in the neighborhoods surrounding the greenway access to nature. Announced March 14, 2024. The City of Madison is proud to announce it is one of nineteen communities in the country selected to join the

inaugural [Nature Everywhere Communities initiative](#). The initiative is designed to increase equitable access to nature everywhere children live, learn, and play. “This partnership embodies our city's commitment to sustainability and equity, recognizing that access to nature is not only a fundamental human right but also a cornerstone of public health and well-being,” said City of Madison Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway.

- **Cost-sharing required by Federal and State Grants likely will require significant payments from Madison Taxpayers.** (Fed and State grants are matched by City taxpayers). The Autumn Ridge Path & bike Bridge, through Hiestand Park, total project is *estimated* to cost about \$4.5 million, with about \$2.5 million, covered by federal funds. [The city is slated to cover the remaining \\$2 million.](#)
 - **Fill True Gaps in Bike Network.** Why is the city wasting valuable staff time and taxpayer money in the short ¾ mile bike path, that has faced huge opposition since it was announced, when it has already identified true bike network gaps on the NE side and other bike safety issues throughout Madison that need funding. Spend the money on safe bike paths elsewhere, where it is truly needed.
 - **Safe & wide bike lanes surround the Greenway on Tree Lane, High Point and Westfield Roads.**
 - **Paths through the Greenway will not make it any safer to get across Old Sauk Road to the library.**
 - **Lights on trails could cause light pollution –** [Madison is designated a dark skies community](#). July, 2022
 - **Climate issues** [The 2 hottest days on earth were recorded last week](#), ocean temps are rising, [Trees protect environment](#). Save an old growth forest, trees sequester carbon dioxide, emit oxygen, control erosion, stabilize the bluffs and creek bank. Trails allow sunlight, which will *increase invasive species growth* along trails.
 - **Loss of a Quiet Refuge for hikers, dog walkers and walkers.** What about walkers and animal rights? Bikes are not allowed on other nature trails in Madison (Sprecher Pond, Tiedeman Pond, Picnic Point and Raymer’s Cove paths, and others).
 - **[Trees Act As Sound Barriers In Urban Environments](#).** Massive tree removal could remove the sound barrier for us and wildlife from traffic on Mineral Point and the Beltline.
-
- **From:** Gwen Long <gwenlong6@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2024 4:50 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Item 13. WAP Walnut Grove park bike path.
 -

You don't often get email from gwenlong6@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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

- This is what keeps us up at night.
- The tree devastation in Hienstand Park this spring. For a bike bridge. Not what the neighbors expected at all.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lttoZnNFZi0>
-
- Gwen and Jim Long

• **From:** Ted Drewsen <ted.drewsen@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2024 5:44 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Agenda Item 84383: Oppose Any Bike Path in the Sauk Creek Greenway

You don't often get email from ted.drewsen@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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

- Dear Park Commissioners:

-

We thank you for your excellent work managing our parks with your thoughtful nature-endorsing and environment-sustaining policies in your Land Management Plan, particularly the 2023 Parks and Open Spaces Plan.

-

We oppose an east-west bike path in Walnut Grove Park that will cross the Sauk Creek Greenway because bikers say it is unneeded and we oppose the environmental damage of a path and its high cost in a time of a \$22 million deficit that the mayor says may require park

cutbacks or additional park fees. We urge you to remove the east-west bike path from the West Area Plan in your deliberations on Aug. 14.

-

In January, a prominent biker, Craig Weinhold who is a board member of Madison Bikes, told the city that bikers will not use the east-west path because it is inconvenient, and they prefer street bike lanes around the greenway. (See January 2024 letter to the city in the attachment.)

Given this fact, the cost of cutting down dozens of life-promoting trees, removing important Riparian vegetation and disrupting wildlife outweighs the benefits of unneeded bike paths. Endorsing the bike path this week will show us that you have not listened to us after the 2022 protests against another inappropriate bike path proposal.

-

Sauk Creek Greenway neighbors gained trust in the Board of Park Commissioners because you stopped that problematic mountain bike trail that was too disruptive in Walnut Grove Park. Your

public engagement plan failed because we learned the bids for the project already were approved before the May 5, 2022, engagement meeting. We are impressed that you realized those issues after our protests and made an important decision to stop that project.

However, recently we were very concerned when we received a letter through a FOIA request in which Park staff members described us in May 2022 as "older folks" who "aren't great or willing users of the internet." It also said that we "disliked" children. Neither of these statements were

correct. We were not allowed to ask as many questions and were muted during this online-only meeting. The technology, new to all of us in COVID time, was used to silence our concerns by parks employees and we wanted a more open online meeting. And any spin through our neighborhoods or the greenway shows we do not "dislike" children or grandchildren because we are out playing with them. Both characterizations of our neighbors were disrespectful, and we

need to work harder to rebuild our relationship.
See attached FOIA letter.

-

We never heard back from the parks staff when we notified them of our chagrin, so we request that you show us your good intent to work with us in partnership in the future by stopping this unneeded east-west bike path with a robust engagement process that avoids these incorrect assumptions about your supporters.

-

The Friends of Sauk Creek, the area environmental advocacy, has studied this east-west bike path and other city plans for two years. It finds that the city's practice and plan to cut swaths of trees---as it did in recent years behind the nearby Walgreens---does not adhere to your mission statement in the Parks and Open Spaces Plan 2023 calling for the city to "preserve and expand our forest resources through a well-planned and systematic approach to TREE MAINTENANCE, planting and natural area management."

The current east-west proposal includes a route that has a 40-foot drop on the slope at the west end of the park where Walnut Grove Park meets city land managed by city engineers. You acknowledge in your plan that "(s)teep grades may make accessibility paths unfeasible in some area parks."

-

In addition, neighborhood opposition in the form of petitions and letters to you in 2022 show that a bike path in the busy Walnut Grove Park would conflict with children playing soccer, using the playground equipment and elders and dog walkers often using the asphalt path. Your stakeholders vociferously opposed it, and we don't see any reason since 2022 that would change our minds. We are concerned that the city is proposing a bike path again that you know your stakeholders oppose for many solid reasons.

-

The east-west path was not on city planning maps and was not under consideration until December 2023 when Robbie Webber, a Transportation Commissioner and Madison Bike

board

member, broached it and our alder proposed it in April 2024. Yet City planners admit in the recent Transportation Commission meeting that there is no link for this bike path to other paths in the city because of the significant problems facing a Beltline overpass. Despite compelling evidence of the lack of worthiness of this east-west bike path, Webber and others linked to the bike lobby voted to keep it in the West Area plan. We urge you not to make the mistake of taking advice from the bike lobby.

•

Many of us in the Sauk Creek neighborhood are bikers and our children and families are bikers. We support bicyclists. However, there is ample evidence that the Sauk Creek Greenway and Walnut Grove Park are not appropriate locations for an expensive, unneeded bike path when Tree Lane, Westfield Road and High Point Road offer safe, convenient bike lanes that do not require any money from Parks or other city agencies to build and will not raise the ire of your constituents particularly those in the neighboring

Tamarack Trails community that strongly opposed the 2022 mountain bike path in the park. Federal or state grants can pay for part of the costs of a bike path but in recent years the federal government requires co-pays of 50 percent of the cost from the city and the grant application needs community support.

-

The FOSC effort to gather additional FOIA information about the parks and city planning/engineering process shows us that for many years prior to 2022, your agency and other city agencies were considering bike paths and other environmentally detrimental actions without consulting with your taxpaying stakeholders. For example, employees discussed removing box elder trees in the area where your policies only target buckthorn and hackberry as invasives. Given the \$22 million deficit and potential cutbacks to the parks and added fees, we strongly urge you to stop that process of secretly planning for changes in the Sauk Creek Greenway and Walnut Grove Park if you want our support for financial turbulence.

If you approve the West Area Plan with an unneeded east-west bike path that even prominent bike leaders say is inconvenient, too steep and fraught with conflicts between bikers and dogwalkers/child hikers/elders, you will send us a signal that you do NOT want a robust engagement process with your neighbors and others about the use of park land and that you will not adhere to your Parks and Open Spaces Plan 2023 and your Land Development Plan.

Remove the east-west bike path from the West Area Plan before you send it back to the city council as a strong statement of your intent to manage the parks with your thoughtful guidelines, your keen attention to the city's deficit dilemma, and your growing relationship of trust with your stakeholders who cherish the environment more than unneeded bike paths.

Thank you,

Edmond & Debra Drewsen

Ted Drewsen

7621 Farmington Way

Madison, WI 53717

ted.drewsen@gmail.com

920-251-9640 (cell)

From: Faith Fitzpatrick <fafitzpa@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2024 6:40 PM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Agenda Item 84383: Oppose Any Bike Path in the Sauk Creek Greenway

[You don't often get email from fafitzpa@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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

Dear Commissioners, the proposed bike path(s) in Sauk Creek Greenway, including the crossing of the creek, take up valuable floodwater space and cause removal of important canopy tree cover in the creeks riparian zone, compact soils important for infiltration, and will need maintenance and replacement after the first flood due to erosion issues (learn from what happened to the paths on pheasant branch after the 2018 flood). slow down and think about the consequences.

thanks,

Faith Fitzpatrick
5156 Spring Ct
