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Sent: Monday, November 07, 2011 4:29 PM
To: Waidelich, Michael; Nan Fey; Eric Sundquist
Subject: Comments on amendment to Midtown Neighborhood Development Plan

As one of the alders that served on the LRTPC and Council when we passed the ordinance banning cul-de-sacs (except in very limited circumstances), and being familiar with the purpose of that ordinance, I would like to point out that we have an opportunity to correct bad decisions of the past. I do not feel staff comments adequately weighed the needs of all road users when rejecting some of the LRTPC's recommendations.

Saying that Hawks Landing does not have good connectivity now, so adding connections is not needed when there is an amendment to the neighborhood plan, is simply missing the point. Do we want to fix the problems we created in the past, or perpetuate them? Do we assume, and therefore plan for everyone to drive to all destinations, or do we want to provide future residents and future generations with the infrastructure needed to chose to leave the car at home, especially for those short trips within their neighborhood?

As a professional bicycle safety educator, I know that many people are hesitant to bike on major roadways, such as Cty Hwy M or Valley View, even when there are bike lanes. One purpose of neighborhood connections via smaller, low traffic streets and paths is to encourage these novice or inexperienced bicyclists to use their bikes (or feet) more for short trips. We do not teach teenagers to drive by starting off on the Interstate through Milwaukee. We teach them to drive and become competent drivers by working up to complicated and stressful driving experiences situations. The connections the LRTPC recommended would provide these routes.

Another reason for adding these connections close together, besides giving non-motorized traffic an alternative to busy roads, is to provide direct routes instead of insisting that everyone access an arterial to move from one area of the neighborhood to another, or from one neighborhood to another. Directing a motorist to take a quarter mile detour in each direction (say onto Valley View or Pleasant View and then back into the neighborhood) is a minimal problem. However, for a pedestrian, this amounts to an extra one-half mile walk, or an extra ten minutes. If we want to encourage walking and bicycling, we have to be aware that lack of connections often translate into much longer routes for some.

In the case of the recommended street between Nelson Crossing and Greenside Circle, there is no other way for even motorists to move between these two streets without using Valley View and Cty Hwy M. This does not make sense, and forces additional traffic onto these two arterials, even for a relatively short trip. This is the reason that there was a north-south roadway connection in the original neighborhood plan.

I urge you to carefully consider the recommendations of the LRTPC for this neighborhood plan amendment. We did not make the recommendations lightly, but instead considered the needs of all current and future neighborhood residents, as well as those that might work in the research park or need to traverse this area of the city to access other developments.

If we are concerned about impacts of paving, perhaps the road expansions are what should be scraped, not the minimal accommodations for non-motorized traffic.

Robbie Webber
LRTPC Chair