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Subject: Traffic signal assessment policy

Dear colleagues -

Although I won't be able to attend the meeting, I want to give you my thoughts on the traffic signal assessment policy that we are being asked to comment on.

This is a new policy, not a reaffirmation of an existing policy, so I think it bears some thought. The Board of Public Works, who does quite a few assessments, felt it bore attention as well, since they sent it back to us for a second look. We are the lead on this, so it goes directly to the Council after us.

The way the policy is written now, condo owners, or anyone else living in a multi-unit building, is on the hook for more than the owner of a detached home. Even in neighborhoods that have the same density per acre - 10 units per acre is the example given in the attachments - a condo owner pays more than the owner of a detached home.

And there are plenty of neighborhoods in Madison with 10 dwelling units per acre (DUA) of single-family, detached homes. My neighborhood would be 8.25 DUA if they were all homes like mine. Since we have several duplexes and a couple of apartments, the density is probably more like 12 DUA. Why would we get a discount, when a condo owner - also paying taxes on an owner-occupied dwelling unit - would not?

And how are townhouses assessed? Or co-housing?

My suggestion is to eliminate the 10 trips per units "discount," or at least reduce it to 5. The city can determine how much (what percent) of the traffic signal should be paid by local property owners, and then evenly divide it up among all owners, whether of detached or attached dwellings. If anything, people in denser developments are more likely to walk, bike, or take transit, so less likely to necessitate the signal. After all, if no one drive, there would be little need for a traffic signal at all.

I am OK with giving residential owner-occupied

I think the discount for living farther from the signal is fair. People living close to the signal are probably more likely to benefit.

I do not think we can make the new policy retroactive, as suggested by Maynard Schneider. If we start down that road, everyone who ever had an assessment they feel was unfair would want reconsideration.

Let's be consistent about assessing taxable residential parcels. Condo owners are taxed on a dwelling unit. Detached home owners are taxed on a dwelling unit. If both dwelling units are worth \$200,000, they are each taxed the same in property taxes. Why would we give a detached homeowner a bigger "discount?"

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