

Hacker, Marsha

From: Percy Mather [percy.mather@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 27, 2012 11:34 AM
To: ALL ALDERS
Cc: Tolley, Sabrina; Hacker, Marsha
Subject: Support for SW Bike Path Lighting Dec 11 Vote

To Madison Alders:

I write in support of providing light to improve safety for pedestrians and bikers who use the SW Bike Path after dark. I am a 40-year resident and retired bike commuter who lives within two blocks of the affected bike path. I also volunteer to remove invasive species along the bike path and in neighborhood parks.

It seems self-evident that a transportation corridor involving pedestrians should be lit. Other sections of the bike trail through the City are lit. The SW Bike Path is important for bike commuters as it is safer and faster than travelling on parallel City streets. Bike commuting reduces car use and air pollution and should be encouraged. The SW pathway is shared by bikers, roller skiers, and rollerbladers, some who can go 20 miles per hour, and people walking, with or without dogs, often talking with companions and not focused on other path users. I believe it is just a matter of time before someone is hurt in a collision. Many people have reported near misses because of poor visibility even though they use bike lights. At times, there are obstacles on the path from tree branches and puddles of ice in the winter and spring. Additional lighting will help path users avoid these hazards.

What will be the City's liability when people collide in the darkness and one or more are seriously hurt? I know that many people would look to recover damages from the owner/operator of the transportation corridor and argue that the lack of proper lighting was instrumental in allowing the collision to take place. I think that the City should not put itself in a vulnerable situation with respect to causing injury due to a dark pathway.

I am pleased that the entire City Council will vote on this issue because a small number of vocal opponents have stalled this important safety improvement. Yet the decision whether to light the path affects ALL Madison citizens through the liability issue, whether or not they use that section of the path. Lighting won't eliminate all injuries, but it will allow path users to see obstacles; the proposed project should move forward with no further delays.

Objections to Lighting the Path

Opponents of the lighting proposal have raised several issues to support their position, but most of these concerns have already been addressed by City staff or the objections are contradictory.

--Dark skies/ Light pollution

I believe that the proposed added streetlights are dark skies compliant now. The Dark Skies issue is a good one, but it should be implemented throughout the City, not just on this project.

--Residents next to the path have lights in their yards

It seems hypocritical to me, to object to the very inconspicuous lighting of the path focused downward compared to the large number of yard lights and lights from people's houses (those located along the bike path) that are easily visible from the path once leaves have fallen.

--Impact on Wildlife

How is it that the City of Madison has hundreds of streetlights now, yet we still enjoy wildlife in the area? The addition of 10 or 20 more street lamps won't make a substantial change in the local environment. Lighting

opponents also claim that the area along SW bike path is important for wildlife. It is true that there are wooded areas set back from the path that furnish habitat, but next to the path (where lighting is proposed to be installed), these areas are full of garlic mustard, Japanese knotweed, buckthorn and honeysuckle. The City has a contract to remove these invasive species along the path between Glenway Street and Fox/Sheldon Street. Lighting the path will encourage volunteers to remove these invasive species.

--Alternate patches of light and dark

No sooner did the City Staff reduce the focus of the lights to prevent stray light from reaching adjacent residents's properties than the complaint was revised to focus on problems of night vision of these patches. This ignores the existing pattern of intermittent street lights on sidewalks, streets, and other portions of the bike paths that people navigate safely.

--High cost of this project

City staff have attempted to hold down costs by using standard street lights. Opponents have asked for changes (additional screening to prevent light falling on adjacent homes) then complained of the expenses. The proposed \$225,000 price tag should be compared to the City's legal bills or damages that might be required if lights are not installed and a serious injury and law suit is filed against the City.

I urge you to consider the best interests of Madison and to support the proposed lighting of the SW Bike Path. Thank you.

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Percy Mather, 641 Sheldon St 53711