

Pien, Janet

From: David Sparer [Sparer@herricklaw.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 28, 2012 11:14 AM
To: Tolley, Sabrina; Pien, Janet
Cc: Amanda.White@WisconsinBikeFed.org
Subject: SW Bike Path lighting

Greetings:

I wish to chime in with some input as a person who commutes to work all year long by bicycle. I have done this, here in Madison, for over 30 years now. I do not happen to use the SW bike path, because I live on the east side. However, I do use the east side corridor bike path nearly every work day. I want to provide my impression about the value of lighting for those of us who do commute by bicycle regularly.

I am VERY MUCH in favor of having lighting on the bike path. Not necessarily the very bright lights recently installed as a test. Possibly the option of lights mounted lower to the ground might work really well. **However, some sort of lights are very important to cycling commuters.**

During the warm weather half of the year one can typically commute to and from work without doing so in the dark. However, during the colder half of the year, such as right now, when I get off work it is already totally dark. Thus, commuting home involves riding in the pitch black. With proper lighting that can be completely fine. I will say that the crews that plow the snow off the bike paths do a most incredible job, and truly make these paths quite rideable during the winter months. Winter riding, even at night, is a very real option for me and for many others.

I know that many cyclists try to get lights that provide them with a clear view of where they are going, sort of like a car's headlights. However, from years of experience, I can tell you that it does not really work. Also, in my experience the best lights, in terms of making sure that others (mostly cars) see you, are the type that blink. Blinking lights are the most noticeable. However, because they blink, they do not provide a clear view of where you are going.

Without proper lighting it is easy to run into debris on the path and then fall, or maybe even run off the road onto the shoulder. Once snow is on the ground, without proper lighting, you cannot see patches of exposed ice, nor see patches of snow build up that can cause you to fall. It truly is the case that with even minimal lighting, these hazards on the paths can easily be seen and avoided and then one can safely commute over these paths all year long.

Riding on a path like the SW bike path, without any lights, is not an idea any honest commuter can propose. It is more an idea put forward by people more interested in living out in the country or in isolated areas, or people who might like to go for a ride once or twice during the winter. Anybody who commutes regularly will tell you that in order to do so safely some amount of lighting is absolutely very necessary. The amount of lighting needed can be quite low, in my experience. However, no lighting at all is simply unreasonably dangerous and will unquestionable be the cause of many accidents.

I am glad to provide any follow up information about winter cycle commuting, if anyone wants to contact me.

Attorney David R. Sparer
Herrick & Kasdorf, LLP
16 N. Carroll st, suite 500
Madison, WI 53703
608-257-1369