

From: Ken Fall [mailto:kenfall60@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, July 21, 2017 4:55 PM
To: Hatfield, Meagan
Subject: Bikes on sidewalk, Philosopher's Grove

Dear Commission: These are my written comments on the proposed ordinance that would allow bikes to ride on the sidewalk through the former Philosopher's Grove at State St. and the 100 block of W. Mifflin. (Legistar file no. 47798). I oppose the ordinance.

The proposal should be rejected unless it also requires the city to make other changes to improve pedestrian safety there, such as pavement markings and signage to restrict bikes to only a limited corridor. Long ago the city decided that bike-riding on sidewalks should be banned in business districts and on most parts of the State St concourse. That was a sensible decision supported by obvious concerns for safety and pedestrian peace of mind. Nothing has suddenly changed to make 100 W. Mifflin an exception.

I am a regular pedestrian through that block, and bike use of it is fairly heavy, even though banned. I have had near accidents with bikes there, and seen others. There is also a blind corner at the edge of the State Historical Museum that bikes pass too close to. Pavement markings and signage should be required to keep bikes in the center of the space and alert pedestrians that it is a shared area. Bikers who support bike lanes understand the value of separating more-vulnerable users from larger, faster users. That concept should be applied here.

Backers of the ordinance may say that no restrictions are required because now the statues have been removed from the space, creating a center corridor that bikers will naturally ride through. There are three problems with that idea.

First, while it may be true that westbound bikes off the square will do that, the eastbound users coming up to the square will do so less. Those who intend to turn on Carroll will still be drawn to the side of the area, where the blind corner is. I would say that roughly half the users are eastbound.

Second, the Streets Dept usually uses that dead-end of Mifflin to make a giant snow pile in the winter. That pile will block the center corridor and funnel bikes to the narrow sides of the space where the pedestrians are, as has been happening for years. So, unless Streets has agreed to keep that center space open, there are potentially six months of the year when the basic premise underlying this ordinance -- that there will be a channel continuing the straight path of Mifflin -- is a fiction.

Third, the idea of a center corridor is irrelevant to pedestrians on State. For them, the bikes on Mifflin are cross-traffic, regardless of exactly where they ride on the sidewalk. Currently, there is nothing to warn those pedestrians that they are coming to a place where they share the sidewalk with bikes, after long stretches of the Capitol Square and State St that are bike-free. There should be.

In sum, the sidewalk at issue is a retail and museum area with heavy pedestrian use. Nothing significant has changed that justifies abandoning the city's existing, standard rule against riding bikes on sidewalks in places like this. If riding is going to be allowed there, pavement markings and signage must be required to improve pedestrian safety.

Thanks for your attention,

Ken Fall
453 Charles Ln.
Madison 53711
