

June 3, 2010

To: Madison Pedestrian/Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Commission

FROM: Schenk - Atwood - Starkweather - Yahara (SASY) Neighborhood Association

RE: PEDESTRIAN-BICYCLE PROJECTS SOUGHT

Based on discussions with neighbors and our own experiences, we offer the following guidelines and specific proposals for new capital (construction) projects for the 2011-2013 Madison Capital budget. Please note that while some of these suggestions are construction-based, we are taking a more holistic approach and are also proposing projects that might not quite fit that criterion.

We also encourage the Commission and civic leaders to try to use bicycle lanes, paths, and routes all year long, to get a better sense of what works well, and what doesn't. There's no better way to learn than through direct experience.

I. Education/Awareness

Guidelines: While there seems to be a fair amount of contention from all sides on who is flaunting the rules, breaking the law, and simply being rude, much can be done to educate cyclists, pedestrians, and cars.

Bike Paths: Educational signage on bike paths could be used to instruct cyclists and pedestrians on the rules, good behavior, and safety--to stay right, to ring a bell or shout when passing, wear a helmet, to use hand signals when turning or stopping, etc.

Where Paths Cross Streets: While the law and default might be that cars and cyclists must yield to the right--there is often confusion at these points: cyclists don't yield to cars, or try to beat them at crossings; and cars often yield when they don't have to—which causes confusion, and slows everyone down. Often, there are cross walks painted at these intersections, also adding to the confusion. Again, signage and education could go a long way to reducing confusion, and hopefully avoiding collisions.

At intersections with traffic lights: make the timing work best for cyclists—making sure that there is enough time to cross safely, that any triggering switches are on the right, and that the lanes are clearly marked.

Bike Lanes: These are often poorly marked, with paint wearing off, with cars parking into the lanes, and with cars turning into the lanes. Better markings and educational signage would help.

Year Round: To encourage people to make biking a way of life, Madison needs to commit to year-round access to paths, lanes, and streets for cyclists. This means that not only the bike paths should be cleared of snow and ice, but also the bike lanes. And that parking enforcement to keep cars out of lanes needs to happen

year-round. Also important is spring clean-up of salt and gravel on the paths and lanes—a serious hazard for bikes.

Capital Proposals

1. **Signage/Street markings where bike paths cross streets:** many of these intersections have cross-walks painted, but no clear direction for cyclists or motorists on who should yield. We would like to see clear signage and markings for cars and bikes at these risky intersections. Specifically, we would like the City to install “YIELD” signs for all the cross-streets crossing the bike path between Blair and Ingersoll.

ALSO: we think there should be “**YIELD**” signs facing vehicular traffic where bike paths cross non-arterial streets, and remove the “STOP” signs for bikes. Specifically on the Capitol bike path where it crosses intersections between Waubesa and Atwood (heading west). Most cars naturally yield, and many cyclists ignore these stops when there is no traffic.

2. **Educational signage:** along heavy-use bike paths and lanes. Signs should be readable and with strong and creative images to: direct bikers and path users on right-of-way, bike hand signals, and good behavior (stay right, ring bell or call out, etc).
3. **Bike Lane markings:** many of these around the city are faded, unclear, and hard to read. We would like to see new markings that are bright and can be seen by cars and bikes; especially where cars are parked against these lanes. Specifically: on the lanes on East Johnson and East Gorham; the East Wilson “bike boulevard”; the lanes between the bike path and the capitol heading from the east; and the lanes around the Capitol.
4. Extend the **traffic-light timing** where bike paths and lanes cross streets. These need to be timed so rush-hour bike traffic can clear the intersections, as well as long enough for the slowest of cyclists to be able to cross safely. Specifically: the lights at Williamson and Riverside; and at Dunning and Atwood. Also, move the light signal button to the right side at this intersection for those heading East. The left-side trigger causes confusion and dangerous crossings.

ALSO: **Change the signal at Atwood and Dunning** so that it automatically goes green for Dunning at the end of each cycle. At a minimum, install sensors that are bike sensitive on the bike path. Again, there is terrible, poorly accessible signal button placement on both sides of the street.

5. **Clean and Safe Paths and Lanes:** More needs to be done to clear bike lanes in the winter. The City often plows these lanes in during the winter, making them unusable for 4 or 5 months of the year. Specifically, the lanes on East Johnson, East Gorham, and on Wilson. Also, in spring, bike paths need to be cleared of gravel and salt as soon as possible, this is a serious bike hazard.

6. Finish the **patching of the east rail corridor** path between Marquette St. and the bridge over Starkweather Creek. This has been left unfinished for too long and is a hazard.

II. Enforcement

Guidelines: Of course, cyclists need to obey the laws. But cyclists are encouraged to run traffic lights and to create short-cuts when there's a message of "everyone-for-themselves," with: cars in the bike lanes (around the Capitol, for example); short traffic lights; cars that get far too close to bikes and pass inappropriately; and poorly designed paths and intersections. While we think that there does need to be enforcement of laws, this enforcement needs to be equitable and side on greater risks to public safety. This needs to be part of a larger plan for awareness and education for cyclists, pedestrians, and motorists. Much can be done prior to enforcement.

Capital Proposals

1. **Remove the stop signs** at the bike path and the Thornton Avenue cul-de-sac. If there is a risk of bikes and the few state cars coming from the state lot, a yield sign would be sufficient.
2. **Install signs** at Russell St. and Division St., where they cross the bike path, reminding motorists that a two-way bike path crosses there.
3. **Educational signage** (noted earlier): along heavy-use bike paths and lanes. Signs should be readable and with strong and creative images to: direct bikers and path users on right-of-way, bike hand signals, and good behavior (stay right, ring bell or call out, etc).

III. Connections

Guidelines: One of the most dangerous and tricky concerns is when bike paths turn into bike lanes; bike lanes suddenly start or stop; and bike routes are poorly marked, or suddenly disappear. For example, with all of the attention to the new bike boxes at the intersections of Willy/Blair/Nolen, the capitol bike path heading west, turns into a lane (sort of) for those continuing on Williamson/Wilson up to the Capitol, then it suddenly ends and turns into parking, with no markings, and bikes are forced into inattentive traffic. It gets even more complicated heading toward the square with poor signage, and complicated left turn lanes. Many take these routes who work downtown and at the University. These poor connections and abrupt changes make for dangerous car/cyclist interactions. Much could be done with lane markings, signage, and lights to improve these interchanges.

Capital Proposals

1. **Add clear markings and appropriate lanes** from the Capitol bike path where it splits at John Nolen and heads up Williamson and Wilson streets all the way to the **Capitol**..
2. Make East Wilson a true **“Bike Boulevard”** so traffic and cyclists are separated. Otherwise, don't call this a bike boulevard. It's misleading.
3. Add **clear signage and lane markings** where the Capitol bike path crosses Atwood at Dunning.
4. **Change signage in the bike lane around the Capitol** –it is poorly marked and cars often drive in it for more than just turning right.

IV. Creativity/Environment/Amenities

Guidelines: We think there are opportunities to have creative and amenity projects to improve the cycling community and for the greater Madison: public art on paths; shade trees and plantings on paths; imaginative bike racks; covered bike racks; solar/wind (green) demonstration opportunities; colorful lane markings; funding for bike racks in front of stores and businesses; etc. While the large “Ride the Drive” type events are great for public awareness and community building, it's the day-to-day extras that should make it a joy to bike in Madison and encourage people to consider biking more often.

Capital Proposals

1. Have a contest **for best educational signage** for bike safety and courtesy. Use the winning designs on paths and lanes.
2. Offer grants and discounted prices for businesses to purchase and install **bike racks**.
3. **Plant more trees and native plants** on paths, especially along un-shaded portions of the Isthmus Bike Path.
4. Create **solar and wind demonstration projects** on bike paths—maybe in cooperation with MG&E
5. Have funding for **public art** on bike paths—maybe in cooperation with the Madison Arts Commission.