

1) I read through the comments on the main agenda item (25-1265). Both sides are heavily employing form letters, so it's hard to discern people's true opinions. There is an argument that removing parking will cause economic harm, with no evidence ever provided. Pro-bike lane people have included multiple articles saying the opposite has happened in other cities. There is also an assertion that people don't bike in the winter. I bike in the winter, and I know of several other people here who do as well. One person said "we're not Amsterdam" as if Northern Europe doesn't have snow too. It's just a matter of infrastructure, maintenance, and plowing.

That said, I have never seen so many comments on any agenda item on Legistar, and they seem to be from real people rather than automated, so I think it's safe to say this is a highly divisive issue. I worry that getting this wrong in a way that alienates the vast majority of the population (which is to say, drivers) will make future bicycle infrastructure less viable.

2) I am in full agreement with Committee Member Young's statements that "The public's demand for mobility can be satisfied in many ways" and the exclusive use of car-oriented infrastructure encourages car use and makes non-car mobility difficult or impracticable. However, we can't just flip a switch and go from car culture to a multimodal transportation system. We have to do it in steps.

I am of the opinion that drivers are mostly forced to drive because of infrastructure. Therefore the first step is not to make driving harder, but to make non-car travel viable. We can't ask people to drive less or make driving more annoying until we have the infrastructure for other modes in place. So for now I oppose bike lanes that remove parking, because bike lanes on this particular spot are unnecessary. There's a lot we can do to make biking more viable without noticeably affecting drivers. For example, I point to the bike trail along Highway 16 from the mall to Woodman's, which added blacktop to a trip that could only be done previously by wading through mud, but received zero complaints by drivers as far as I'm aware.

I believe we can get practically the same effect as these lanes would have if we put bike traffic on parallel routes. For example, sending bike traffic along 2nd and 5th is basically as good as 3rd and 4th. 2nd is already in process, and 5th will require some creativity but I think we can do it. We also should consider turning alleys into bike routes. All of these routes will require good intersection design and other minor street treatments. We will need to consult with city staff to see if these tweaks are possible, but it can be done on our schedule rather than waiting for the DOT and Hwy 53 project.

Moving bike/ped traffic away from 3rd and 4th also moves it away from the dangerous high-traffic 3rd/4th/La Crosse intersection, especially if a roundabout is built (regarding which, I would prefer that rather than build a roundabout (because of the disastrous effects of the ones on South Ave to east-west bike/ped traffic), 3rd gets moved west through the current location of an empty lot, credit union, and low-quality old building; but the DOT seems to have decided not to use that real estate).

I don't see in the documentation why the bike routes have to be on 3rd and 4th in particular, just that a bicycle route across/through downtown should exist. I suspect that the 3rd/4th route was chosen by default rather than after a thorough study of every possible option. The phrase "There are no bicycle facilities on US 53 or US 14/61 and no continuous alternative north/ south routes adjacent to US 53 or US 14/61" comes from the slide titled "Multimodal" under "Purpose and need" on the "US 53 and US 14/61 Corridor - Public Involvement" page, but it doesn't actually have any further explanation of that assertion. It is already provably false because of the existence of the 2nd Street Cycletrack, and I think it might be possible to create a route on the east side of downtown to connect to the 7th & La Crosse intersection and the route north from there to the bike trails and La Crosse River Bridge. From these

routes, we can have branches on Main and Vine to allow cyclists to reach businesses in the heart of downtown.

I call upon the Bike-Ped Committee to support the hybrid plan, with the understanding that 1) the hybrid plan is a concept and not the final design and 2) we will work with City staff and the DOT to integrate the north end of the 2nd Street Cycletrack into the Hwy 53 rebuild design and investigate changes to other downtown streets and alleys to serve as multimodal travel corridors on nearby parallel routes, including 5th, 6th, and alleys.

3) I would also like to propose other specific near-term changes to reduce the amount of motor vehicle traffic and parking demand downtown and encourage the use of the existing parking ramps:

- Changing on-street parking to 30 minutes (or unlimited with a disability tag) downtown. This shouldn't affect anyone who's just using it for quick pick-up and drop-off. It should also make on-street parking easier for people with disabilities to access, as fewer people would be parking on the street for one or two hours or more while doing extending shopping or dining.

- The parking ramp app seems very odd, although I don't have personal experience with it; but a few weeks ago I was in a car and the driver turned out of the ramp and sought street parking just because they found the parking app too confusing. The ramps are also considered dirty and unpleasant, so we could make them nicer to use, such as with more cleaning, adding art, and making the stalls wider.

- We need the DOT to design 3rd and 4th in ways that 'nudge' drivers towards the parking ramp entrances, which currently feel hidden. The parking ramp entrances also need better signage, including larger and clearer signage on 3rd and 4th pointing to the entrances.

- We need to make changes to the bus system. It's my opinion that a complete conceptual overhaul of the routes is warranted, changing it from a hub-and-spoke model to a spine-and-rib model. The Regional Transit Plan proposes a new bus route directly from Bridgeview Plaza to South Avenue along George-West, for example, and we should also have a direct route the entire length of Copeland through South Avenue. We also desperately need an overnight circulator, even if it's only once per hour. I intend to talk with members of the MTU board about these ideas.

- Lastly, on a more long-term note, heavy semi truck traffic is a particular problem. This is traffic which brings no business to downtown (as the argument for parking goes), but makes it disproportionately unpleasant. We are probably stuck with this for now, but city and DOT should set a goal to eventually remove 53 from downtown and route heavy truck traffic elsewhere (probably Losey).

4) There are many things that we can do to make non-car transportation more viable that wouldn't make life more annoying for people who are essentially forced to drive because we don't have the infrastructure for other forms of travel. Zoning reform will be the game-changer, because it will increase density, allowing small businesses to have more customers in a 2-3 block radius, making them economically viable, reducing the need for customers to drive. So let's build multimodal infrastructure first to make non-car transportation viable, and then we won't even really have to worry about taking away car infrastructure because people will naturally use cars less if not forced to.

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1/24/26