

Craig, Sondra

From: James Longhurst <jlonghur@gmail.com>
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To: Craig, Sondra
Subject: Statement opposed to 24-0348

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I'm James Longhurst, 1503 Park Ave in La Crosse. I served as a citizen member on the steering committee for the La Crosse Safe Routes to Schools plan in 2020, which Council adopted in October 2021. I write to urge the members of the Finance and Personnel committee and Common Council to vote against item 24-0348, for several reasons, but mostly because the infill sidewalks opposed by 24-0348 are projects that were specifically recommended as a high priority in that 2020 Safe Routes to School Plan.

These specific sidewalk projects have already been approved by Council many times over; recommended in the 2012 Bike Ped plan that was accepted by Council, recommended in the 2020 SRTS plan that was accepted by Council; named in the 2024 CIP that was passed by Council, and supported several times over by the Bike Ped Advisory Committee that was appointed by Council. School-age children need safe routes to school. While some opponents argue that Hintgen might be closed, that has not happened yet and may not ever. If it did, the school-age children who live around the school site would still deserve safe ways to get around their neighborhood. Cities need safe mobility and access options for all.

In 2020 the steering committee for the La Crosse SRTS produced a plan based on community feedback, site visits to schools, surveys of parents, interviews with school administrators and teachers, demographic analysis, existing city plans and nationwide best practices. The resulting plan specifically highlighted the missing sidewalks on 28th and 29th streets that 24-0348 opposes, observing that "Missing sidewalks along much of 28th Street and 29th Street present a barrier to walking and bicycling to school." The recommendation in the report was to "Construct new sidewalks to form a continuous sidewalk" on 28th and 29th specifically, as well as Robinsdale and Hass (page 143-4, appendix D).

Beyond the individualised plans for each school, five schools were specifically prioritized above all the rest in the La Crosse district. Hintgen is one of those five priority schools, whose safe routes were recommended to be built with the highest priority. The SRTS plan explains that "The City of La Crosse will prioritize infrastructure projects around the five schools with the greatest potential for significantly increasing numbers of children walking and bicycling to school, and schools with high numbers of students in low-income families" (page 38).

I strongly urge Council to vote against 24-0348.

James Longhurst