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From: cvm <cvanmaren@protonmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 8, 2024 10:59 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Cc: ZZ City Clerk External
Subject: No UWL 2nd parking ramp please

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Hello,

I am emailing about the parking ramp UWL hopes to build near the Fine Arts Center. I am opposed to this project for many reasons and hope you will pull the plug on it.

Briefly (as brief as possible for me!),

We are in a climate emergency. This is a real and serious issue voiced by eminent climate scientists and researchers and agencies, and confirmed by the council in 2022. We have an (expensive) climate action plan that prioritizes reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled and transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions. (And, by the way, there will be a big carbon impact from construction as concrete is a major greenhouse gas emitter (see <https://www.cnn.com/2023/06/16/world/concrete-carbon-emissions-researchers-working-to-make-it-greener-climate-scen-spc/index.html>)) This project would induce *more* driving and produce more ghg emissions. And, it will do nothing to steer students/faculty/staff away from driving. I could go on and on about this, but at some point, everything must change and someone has to break it to UWL.

UW-L has been a laggard in sustainability. I know they have some LEED buildings (full of gas fireplaces) with solar panels and, finally, a sustainability coordinator, but these have been hard, decades-long slogs and incremental victories by individuals and student groups, not, for the most part (I am pretty sure) administrative policy. The decisions made by UWL, including and especially the decision to remove MTU service through the heart of campus several years ago, have contributed to the traffic “issues” this facility is supposed to address. There is an MTU nearly-free pass system on campus, but UWL has done very little to promote and educate about it. There's been little effort to work with and provide incentives for faculty and staff to reduce their driving to campus. There are few to no good secure covered bike parking facilities on campus. There is much UWL could do besides building a parking ramp to ensure long-lasting behavior change and more sustainable transportation by everyone at the university.

Use what we have. This is a very expensive project that we will all pay for. It will do nothing to serve those students and UWL workers who are non-drivers. I am pretty sure that for an eenth of the money we are destined to spend on more housing for sleeping cars, UWL could instead reserve parking spaces at lightly used existing lots and ramps downtown and pay for extra circulator buses between campus and downtown so car drivers could park where there are already spaces to park and get to campus in a timely manner. Honestly, when I attended UNC in the 1970s that historic town had already figured this out, with established secure park and ride lots around the perimeter and good, frequent bus service that fed commuters directly to campus. In fact, there are parking lots all over the city that people could use in combination with bus service to avoid parking on campus, including the park and ride lot near Valley View Mall that no one seems to know about, but also including other areas. As a decades-long bike and bus commuter (to UWL) myself, I know this works.

Money. Besides the expense of building the facility, it's very expensive to own and operate a motor vehicle ([up to \\$12,000 per year and more per the AAA](#)) and we (the university and the city) should be looking for and supporting ways to ensure driving is not a requirement for living a full life, especially for students who may be barely able to afford university. If we spend lots of money to support and encourage and make driving more convenient, we will have less to spend on what is really needed – better support for low-income families, better public transit, better bike infrastructure, and even better promotion and

education about these more sustainable transportation options. There are countless studies, books, articles, and webinars that revolve around this advice: "[We should be building cities for people, not cars.](#)" When we spend more and more money on cars (and the people who own and drive them), we have less for people.

Health and safety. More cars means more car crashes and more severe injuries and death from car crashes. More cars means more pollution from exhaust and tires that causes dangerous and chronic illnesses including asthma and heart disease. More cars means less safety for children, families, elders, and all pedestrians. Just as adding more highway lanes induces more traffic, [adding more parking induces more people to drive cars.](#) So, this expensive solution may not have the desired result and may make street safety and health consequences of more driving worse.

Common sense. I have kind of a sentimental stake in this, having grown up and lived on this very block for many years as an Emerson and then Campus School student. There used to be houses all around this block and even a little "stationery" store. Like many other places around town, including near WTC, Gundersen Health, and Mayo, what used to be housing, shops, and restaurants is now parking. If we want people to thrive, we must focus on what helps that happen and it's not more car parking, I think. I can't imagine this actually is what our updated comprehensive plan would support either - more parking. What good is making (expensive) plans if the day to day decisions made lead away from them?

I could say more, but this is what I think and what I hope you will consider as you decide on this issue. It's directly opposed to our community climate action plan. UWL has done very little to explore and promote options that would help people not drive to campus. We have enough parking already – we just need to connect the parking for those who really need it with the places they need to go. It's expensive and inequitable. More cars means worse health and safety for humans. It does not support or promote the kind of people-centered future we need to be building.

Thanks for listening.

Cathy Van Maren

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