

Craig, Sondra

From: Elsen, Nikki
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 3:49 PM
To: Craig, Sondra
Subject: FW: 24-0068 (again)

From: Kevin Hundt <kevinhundt0@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 12, 2024 3:24 PM
To: Elsen, Nikki <Elsenn@cityoflacrosse.org>
Subject: Re: 24-0068 (again)

You don't often get email from kevinhundt0@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

***** CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. *******

I would like to respond to some of the points I see in the several letters in support.

To the point that foul weather can make bicycling unpleasant- I find this argument strange because there was foul weather prior to the invention of the automobile, yet people were able to get to their jobs and schools. But also, before the 1950s, we had higher population density and streetcars.

To the point that "the time has not yet arrived" for funding for more mass transit- The Climate Action Plan disagrees with that assessment. Let's tell the State that ~\$15 million would be better spent on improving the mass transit system, building housing, or solving practically every emergency problem faced by La Crosse for the next several years, rather than building a single parking ramp.

To the point that students who live far from campus or are on the waiting list for parking need this additional parking- UWL does not prioritize parking passes based on need, but rather on seniority and a lottery; this makes it impossible to tell how many parking spaces are really needed and how many students and employees drive just out of convenience.

To the point that "A parking structure in this location will help to alleviate the unsafe street parking conditions on State St, Main St and other feeder streets near UWL."- There is no evidence for this. A parking study has not been provided. We're apparently just going with the assumption that extra parking in a ramp means less parking on the streets. I argue that the opposite is true.

The problem that parking amenities creates for the city as a whole is "induced demand"- basically, it means that efforts to expand capacity can encourage use, meaning capacity will never outpace demand. The number of people who use each transportation method is not static, but rather a result of each person considering the available options and picking the best one; changing the infrastructure changes the calculation. Think of it like this: suppose 100 people currently drive and 100 people walk, take the bus, live close to their job/school, etc. This implies a need for 100 parking spots. So 100 parking spots are built, at the cost of whatever was there before. But this has made it easier to find parking and removed other buildings (which pushes people and destinations farther apart), meaning some of the non-drivers decide to start driving- now there are 120 drivers and 80 non-drivers. So we build 20 more parking spots. 10 more people decide to drive. And so on. Rather than just accommodating the existing demand, building infrastructure for a behavior encourages that behavior.

To the point that building this parking ramp will allow the University to convert another parking lot into housing- I was not aware of this and would be interested to learn about this, because it does not appear to be reflected in the submitted documents. It would also be preferable to convert both lots into housing.

To the questions of "Do you, yourself, have plans to sell your personal vehicle?" and "[In the evening] would commuting by bike

or bus be the option you'd be most likely to choose?"- If we change our infrastructure to make non-car transportation viable, then, yes, many people will make the decision to ditch the car. I haven't had a car in almost 20 years. It's not currently viable for everyone, but it could be viable for more people with infrastructure changes.

To the question of "If your constituents live or often drive by campus, would they rather travel streets clogged by parked cars?"- If we make driving to campus less convenient and build the infrastructure and systems to make it unnecessary, then the streets will not be clogged by parked cars. If there are 5000 people trying to decide how to get to campus but only 100 parking spots, it's not like there will be 4900 people circling the block until a spot opens for them- they'll recognize that it's futile and figure out a different way to get there before leaving home. But if there are 4000 parking spots, then you might have 1000 people deciding to roll the dice. Tell students that driving to campus is an option only in exceptional circumstances, and change the infrastructure to match that policy, and the clogged side streets will drain even as the number of parking spaces shrinks.

To the question of "The University currently, and in the past, has had significantly more requests for parking than they can accommodate. Will this demand diminish if the parking ramp is not constructed?"- Consider this article from UWL's student paper The Racquet in 2018:

<https://theracquet.org/5159/news/uwl-evolves-parking-strategies-to-provide-more-parking-for-students/>

In it, UWL Director of Parking and Transportation Services Victor Hill lays out their parking situation and strategy at the time. Hill stated that there were 90-95 resident students on the waiting list at the time. Rather than implement any plans to mitigate student driving, they added 112 parking spots; today the waiting list is in the hundreds. Why should we expect that building this ramp will solve the parking problems when adding parking hasn't worked in the past? He also says that "We have reduced our rates twice in the last five years" which is a great way to encourage more driving and more need for parking.

To the point that riding the bus or biking is currently not realistic- It's the City's job to make them realistic.

To the point that "Riding the bus or biking is not realistic for the vast majority of the commuter students who live or work more than 2+ miles away."- I invite UWL to publish data about how many students fit this category. Regardless, we should change our bus system to make a 2-3 mile trip as fast as driving. Our current hub-and-spoke model is great for getting downtown and back, or along very particular winding paths in between, but not so good for going practically anywhere else; instead, we should consider switching to a faster and simpler spine-and-rib model with arterial lines running north-south on Losey, West, and 3rd/4th, tied together by neighborhood routes that circulate East-West every four blocks. Based on some very rough estimating, it's plausible that this system would have a comparable number of route-miles as the current system, so it might not even be more expensive.

To the point that "This is a win-win for La Crosse residents and UWL without it costing La Crosse money."- It will cost Wisconsin taxpayers, including La Crosse residents, around \$15 million, and will not solve the parking problem, and will further reinforce the car culture which has gutted our downtown and facilitated suburbanization with all its externalities.

The Council should reject this rezoning request until UWL comes up with some plans to reduce the number of drivers, give out parking passes based on need rather than at random, creates a written commuting strategy, increases the amount of on-campus housing, caps UWL enrollment, or any number of other things rather than just assuming that the number of cars will always grow indefinitely and building infrastructure accordingly. At the same time, the City should investigate changes to the bus system to make it more useable, and make other changes across the city, such as encouraging high-density building.

This one parking ramp is not the Armageddon of La Crosse's transportation and climate future. It took a lot of shoveling to dig us into this hole. So we have to question every single piece of infrastructure and ask whether this makes the city a better place or reiterates past mistakes. We have to stop just assuming that everyone will always need a car forever. A parking ramp is a major piece of long-term infrastructure and should not be treated as an emergency stop-gap.

Kevin Hundt
La Crosse