

June 12, 2009

City of West Allis  
ATTN: Common Council  
7525 West Greenfield Avenue  
West Allis, WI 53214

Dear Mayor Devine and Alderpersons,

As a registered Professional Engineer and certified Professional Traffic Operations Engineer, a member of the City's Plan Commission and other committees, and most importantly a proud West Allis resident, I write on behalf of myself and my family in strong favor of the City of West Allis Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (the "Plan"). I urge a positive vote on the Plan from your subcommittees and the Council as a whole.

I have found positive feedback on the Plan from nearly every friend, neighbor or other resident of the City of West Allis with whom I speak. Interestingly, I have only found dissent among a few alderpersons. I wish to respectfully dispel a few misconceptions that have been raised.

*Misconception 1: "When we were young we biked around just fine without dedicated lanes and such. Parents have to quit relying on government to make their kids safe."*

- There are many responses to address this misconception. Let us first agree that parents need to be parents and should not rely on government to make them safe, and that government exists to serve the common good. Let us next agree that society is different today than it was when most Council members were children. And let us also agree that safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities are for all our residents – not just children.
- *There are far more vehicles on the road today than there were prior the mid 1970's when most Council members were children.* West Allis was once a community where a higher proportion of working residents worked near their jobs within the City. Changes in our demographics and social culture – including nearly a doubling of the workforce with the influx of women to out-of-home jobs in the 1970's and 1980's – have resulted in far more vehicles on the road today than there were prior the mid 1970's. *The roads today really are less safe for the children and adults of the bicycling community, and they can be made safer with the changes outlined in the Plan.*
- *Sidewalks are not proper places for bicyclists.* A motor vehicle and a bicycle traveling in excess of 10-mph are both dangerous and unsafe to pedestrians, and bicyclists can easily achieve speeds of 25-mph and more. Further, sight distances and sight triangles are often designed with specific respect to traffic on the roadway – not traffic on the sidewalk. *The Plan's recommendations for dedicated bicycle lanes are safer for the bicyclist, the pedestrian and the motorist.*
- *We need to be forward thinking and forward planning, not stagnant, if we want to attract and retain the "green conscious" younger demographic to our community.* Today the "green conscious" 20 and 30-something young professionals coming out of college and starting families use bicycling more and more for both errands and travel to/from work.

As energy prices increase we also see more and more people dependant on the bicycling mode. *The Plan identifies the facilities – both for travel and for parking – to encourage and accommodate bicycle travel for our changing socioeconomic demographics.*

- *Obesity has been identified by the previous and current presidential administrations as a national crisis facing children and adults. Schools and workplaces are taking the initiative to teach children and parents the need for exercise. Many families like mine encourage biking to work, to places of commerce and to school for our health and environment. The lack of adequate facilities like bicycle lanes on major roadways and parking at destinations make bicycling inconvenient and unsafe. The Plan outlines facilities that are necessary for safe commuting and that encourage bicycling and walking as healthy choices.*

*Misconception 2: “We never see people on their bikes or parking at shopping centers. What’s the benefit?”*

- *Hypothetically, if we eliminated parking lots or eliminated the roads between home and places of commerce, how many cars would we see parked at the shopping center or on our roads? Until recently there was little in the way of bicycle planning in the City of West Allis. As a bicyclist I find it disheartening that I can commute to communities surrounding the City and find parking, but when I go to the local shopping center I have no place to safely park my property when I get there. I also find it disheartening that I have no designated safe place to ride my bicycle with tow-behind trailer on non-residential streets. I enjoy unforgiving motorists and the need to lock my bicycle in places that are unsafe to me, my property, or both. The Plan provides the Engineering Department and the Plan Commission guidance on when and where facilities should be provided. Where provided the City will enjoy a safer and more robust bicycling atmosphere.*
- *“If you plan for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places.” (Fred Kent, President of Project for Public Spaces) What helps make communities strong are neighbors who see each other on a frequent basis. Walking and biking help neighbors connect. By accommodating both bicycle and pedestrian travel, we encourage existing and would-be bicyclists and pedestrians to get out of their homes and experience their community.*
- *As a resident in the northwest corner of the City I frequently see bicyclists on Greenfield Avenue, Highway 100, Lincoln Avenue, and National Avenue, just to name a few.*

*Misconception 3: “The Plan is too costly to the taxpayers of West Allis.”*

- *The annual material plus labor cost for maintaining painted bicycle lanes as outlined in the Plan is approximately \$115,000 for a total of 41.4 miles. If epoxy lane markings are used instead of paint the material plus labor cost is approximately \$96,000 per year (assumes phased restriping every 7 years). Consider that the Plan would be implemented in phases and not all at once, and further consider that there are funds from State and Federal programs to cover 80-percent of the initial investment, and the cost drops*

dramatically. Most of the marking maintenance could be done when other marking maintenance is done, meaning that the bicycle lane maintenance would not need to be a completely separate project in most cases. In comparison to yearly operating costs for the City – or even just for the Public Works Department – an implemented Plan is a low cost.

- *The maintenance costs for the Plan – including material and labor – are low. I assert that there are few to no other cost effective ways the City of West Allis could better attract and retain today's young "green conscious" families, reduce its carbon footprint, help in the fight against obesity, strengthen its businesses and neighborhoods, and perhaps even increase property values all with one plan.*

Again, I strongly urge a positive vote on the proposed City of West Allis Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and its recommendations. I encourage you to contact me at any time with questions or comments. I can be reached on my cell phone at 414-460-6442 or via email at [trafficengineer@yahoo.com](mailto:trafficengineer@yahoo.com).

Sincerely,



Michael May, P.E. PTOE  
Resident & Plan Commissioner