



MAY 29, 2018

To: Chris Petykowski, Alder Rummel, Alder Verveer,
Pedestrian/Bicycle/Motor Vehicle Commission

From: The Marquette Neighborhood Association Board

RE: Blair-Nolen-Williamson-Wilson Proposal for Traffic Plan Improvements

Dear Alders, Committee and Staff:

On May 21st, the Marquette Neighborhood Association reviewed the work of our Traffic Committee on the Blair-Nolen-Williamson-Wilson Intersection upgrade. Our Board voted unanimously in support of their studied assessment of the revised plan.

As we wrote to you last month, we are happy to have seen the design for this complicated intersection evolve. New elements of the plan were introduced at the April 24th PBMV meeting that we would like to comment on.

We continue to believe that the alterations to the plan have not gone far enough to comply with the visions for the City of Madison and the Marquette Neighborhood in terms of safety, walkability and sustainability. Our neighborhood would like to the City adopt the following improvements:

1. We continue to believe that the design is based on data that is biased in favor of car movement rather than accurate data for all modes (pedestrian, bike and motorized). Studies on bike and pedestrian volume, movement, and accidents have been recommended over the years, but apparently have not occurred. Limited data is available on bicycle use, but none is available on pedestrian traffic. Observation even on a short-term basis is critical to assuring that attention is given to the high volume of non-automobile traffic. We would like to see a decision on the design postponed until those studies can be conducted, evaluated and incorporated into the final design.
2. We continue to advocate for the elimination of the channelized east-bound right turn and “pork chop island” from John Nolen to Williamson. The speed at which cars may enter Williamson street, particularly with a second lane offering a wider turn-angle, is unacceptably dangerous. A solution would be to extend the east-bound outer lane on John Nolen Drive to the existing intersection of John Nolen and Williamson Street as a dedicated right-turn lane. It would continue to run adjacent to the two existing Blair-bound lanes and be governed by the same traffic signals.
3. We believe that the current design continues to be biased toward automobiles over other modes of transportation. Examples of this include: the length of the green light at the channelized right, which limits time for safe crossing by bicyclists and pedestrian; the current difficult to access user-activated walk signals (rather than timed) that put bicyclists and pedestrians in a secondary, not priority, position; and the sheer amount of pavement dedicated to cars.

Designing for higher levels of pedestrian and bike usage would have the benefit of increasing the efficiency and robustness of the intersection as a whole.

4. While we are pleased with the narrowed median on Williamson to permit more uses on the south and north sides of the Street, we would like to see wider terraces, better storm water planning and better “placemaking,” (i.e. space for trees and landscaping, sidewalk restaurants etc.) rather than narrow terraces and more parking. Wider terraces and narrower lanes would have a traffic calming effect that would impact driver behavior the length of Williamson Street.

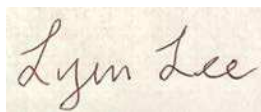
The pathway adjacent to Machinery Row needs delineated space for two-way pedestrian traffic and two-way bicycle traffic, in addition to safe access to businesses and their sidewalk activity. In addition, wider terraces devoted to the activity and movement by people out of their cars would have a traffic calming effect that would impact driver behavior the length of Williamson Street.

5. While we are pleased that the design extends to Blount and Williamson Street, we would like to see the design take into consideration the intersection of Williamson and Jenifer, where auto drivers regularly make illegal right turns on to Jenifer to cut through the neighborhood, and often at a high rate of speed. As the bike and pedestrian path ends at this point and flows onto Jenifer Street, any traffic design needs to attend to the multi-modal traffic entry into the neighborhood at this point.
6. Since last month, we have learned that this intersection is exceptionally low-lying and the current design, with an increase in impermeable surfaces, is not appropriate to managing downtown storm water. We would like to see this addressed.

While our Board recognizes the difficulty of consensus on a project of this magnitude and we respect that projects must have boundaries, we must advocate for best-in-class corridor planning. As was noted in the April PBMV minutes, the design that leaves many questions unanswered (what is the design for Wilson?) and many opportunities unaddressed. Our board agrees.

We look forward to your assistance championing the Marquette Neighborhood’s point of view on this critical intersection in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn Lee". The ink is dark and the background is a light, textured paper.

Lynn Lee
President
Marquette Neighborhood Association

Cc: MNA Traffic Committee
MNA Board Members
SASY Board President – Brad Hinkfuss
TLNA Board President – Patty Prime
TLNA Traffic Committee Chair – Jonny Hunter
Madison Design Professionals