

SASY

Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara Neighborhood Association

Wednesday, January 21, 2015

Madison Transit & Parking Commission Members, % Anne Benishek-Clark
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Commission Members,

I send this letter on behalf of the SASY Neighborhood Association concerning the proposed elimination of certain bus stops on Jenifer St. The SASY Council discussed this extensively at our 1/8/15 meeting. Based on the recommendation of our Transportation Committee, based on unified public feedback, and based on a unanimous council vote, we request reconsideration of the planned elimination of bus stops on Jenifer Street. Specifically, we request that two of the proposed stop eliminations be of the bus stops slated for elimination be preserved: 1) the stop at Jenifer/Bearly (serving the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center) and, 2) the westbound Jenifer/Few stop (serving westbound riders with packages from the Williamson Street Grocery Cooperative and nearby businesses).

I understand the proposed closures fall within the MNA neighborhood and not SASY, but our council feels certain that the policy driving these closures will have a similar effect in the SASY neighborhood before long. Furthermore, I know that the MNA Board's position is against all closures.

The following points embody our rationale for this request. Please consider these points as we have, as reflections of the greater neighborhood consensus:

- **Public Input:** The 75+ neighbors who attended the 1/5/2015 public meeting at the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center expressed overwhelming and all but unanimous opposition to the closure of any bus stops on Jenifer St. If that meeting was meant to gather input, this is it.
- **Conflict with Larger Transit Goals:** There are greater transit goals than timing and speed. Transit is a public service and not designed to compete with private vehicle for speed. The more transit tries to mirror the speed of other forms of transportation, the more it will compromise convenience and loyalty among choice Isthmus riders. Eliminating bus stops on Jenifer may shave a small amount of time from each bus trip but it also makes transit less manageable and more difficult for many long-established riders, especially in winter. This makes private vehicles a much more attractive alternative. Alighting from and boarding a bus takes time; build these times into the overall schedule rather than stretching service thin. Keep in mind, the fastest buses would have no stops at all!
- **Choice Riders:** There are many riders that are considered *choice* riders in the sense that they use transit extensively and regularly. The convenience and reliability of transit is the backbone of their patronage. Consider riders with mobility issues who have difficulty walking further distances between stops. A number of such riders made it clear at the February 5 meeting that Madison's icy and snowy sidewalks in winter would make getting to and from a stop would be prohibitively difficult if stops were spaced farther apart, forcing them to use alternatives to Metro. This also applies to choice riders carrying bags of groceries and other items from Williamson Street businesses or home; riders

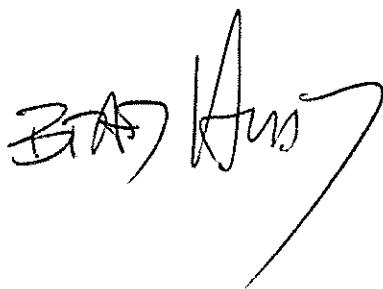
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with young children; and elderly riders. Hollowing out service on Jenifer St and other Isthmus streets is likely to reduce choice ridership.

- **Property Values and Lifestyle Choices:** Many Isthmus residents have made deliberate long-term commitments to live on the more densely-populated Isthmus (e.g. by buying a house) so as to gain amenities including more convenient transit service, compared to living a car-dependent lifestyle on Madison's periphery. This choice comes with a price: higher inner-city property taxes and housing costs than in the suburbs or satellite communities. However, the higher Isthmus tax base disproportionately helps support the entire city. Eliminating long-established bus stops, around which many have made important life decisions, undermines the quality of life many Isthmus residents have established.
- **Sustainability:** Eliminating well-established stops on Jenifer St makes it more difficult to catch a bus in this densely populated neighborhood. Making public transit a more difficult choice will inevitably increase pollution and vehicle congestion on the Isthmus, which is contrary to the City's sustainability goals. Transit is demonstrably more energy-efficient and less polluting per trip than the same trip in a private vehicle. Making bus ridership less manageable and convenient on the Isthmus by eliminating stops will make more would-be riders chose alternatives to transit. This is surely contrary to Madison's sustainability plan; Our policies and practices must reflect truly sustainable priorities.
- **Trip Time:** It may be missed in the considerations so far that the proposed practice of eliminating some stops and thereby spacing them more widely also increases trip time by requiring longer walks for many riders. In effect, this increases door-to-door trip time. This inefficiency for the individual may make other transportation alternatives more appealing in comparison.
- **Population Density:** The Isthmus has a higher density of residents per square mile than the outlying areas. Long-established urban planning principles/practice recognizes that higher population densities better support transit services than low densities. The denser Isthmus warrants closer spacing on bus stops because there are more riders per square mile than on the periphery, and supports making convenient transit a viable amenity compared to the sparsely populated periphery.

Sincerely,



Brad Hinkfuss, Chair - SASY Neighborhood Association

Cc: Mayor Soglin