

Item F4 in the Minutes of the Transit and Parking Commission Meeting of February 2015

(entire Minutes available at  
<https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=M&ID=346659&GUID=0461978A-A327-41E6-B3D1-BA41071F8AE5>)

[The meeting resumed at 8:40 PM.] Kamp said the reconstruction of Jenifer Street had recently been delayed to 2016. However, Metro did recommend that the bus stop decision move forward. The Transit Development Plan (TDP) identified several corridors where it recommended consolidating stops. Currently on Jenifer moving eastbound, stops were located on every block, at Spaight, Livingston, Patterson, Bearly, Ingersoll, Few and Baldwin. These were heavily used stops, and this had been a tough decision, as the TDP recommended balancing the issue of coverage and the issue of reliability, in terms of making transfers at all the Transfer Points, since the routes on Jenifer served all of them.

Kamp noted that Metro's original recommendation was to move the stops to every other block. Based on input at several meetings, Metro had modified their recommendation to maintain the stop at Bearly, where the Wil-Mar Center was located. They had some data on how they were saving some time on Johnson/Gorham, following bus stop consolidation there in 2014. Staff was City of available to discuss the data and public outreach. Kamp shared the "Bubble Map" with members, and noted that stops along Jenifer had fairly sizable red dots.

Poulson called registrants to speak.

Susan DeVos, Midvale Blvd., 53705 (written statement attached): She asked that bus stop elimination be reconsidered in the older, more dense areas of Madison. These areas were TODs; and taking away stops promoted more sprawl. Madison should be looking at ways to increase density within the city limits, rather than creating areas on the periphery for low income, senior and disabled people. The Long Range Plan was cited as the basis for eliminating stops in order to speed up travel. However, the Plan also stated that expansion of Metro service should only be done if it did not harm existing service; and adding new service on the periphery should not be at the expense of existing routes

Laurie Wermter, Williamson Street, 53703 (written statement attached): She opposed removing stops on Jenifer Street. The stops served Willy Street businesses and one of the densest residential areas in the city. The neighborhood was the sort of TOD the city wanted. The stops were not only heavily used by residents, but also by visitors from all over the city who enjoyed what the area offered. The TDP itself said that its guidelines were not meant to be rigid; and that consolidation should include substantial public outreach and data collection/analysis, which was not the case here. She did credit Metro for changing their original proposal and deciding to retain the Bearly stop. But the Few Street stop was also vital to many community organizations and businesses. And people had settled in the neighborhood because of the bus stops, thinking they could "age in place". Using paratransit service was not a convenient option for all seniors and disabled. Not opposed to removal of all stops everywhere, Wermter opposed removing them based on an arbitrary distance between stops, without consideration for these other issues.

Melanie Foxcroft, Lakeland Avenue, 53704 (written statement attached): She was a frequent rider on buses traveling along Jenifer Street. She seconded Wermter's comments re: outreach and data collection; and didn't think Metro had done sufficient analysis of what was at each of the stops, because it was clear they served substantial numbers of disabled people. She cited the info in her statement about the ADA requiring mass transportation for elderly/handicapped that they can effectively utilize, be assured. Removing these bus stops went contrary to this. Also, Metro's paratransit service was not considered mass transit under the federal definition, and steering riders away from mass transit toward

paratransit as an alternative might be a violation of federal law. The TDP seemed to prioritize faster trip times over all other transit goals. But transit was a public service, not designed to compete with private vehicles for speed; and to expect buses to adhere to a sped-up schedule was not realistic esp. with a large number of elderly/disabled using the system. Shaving a bit of time from each trip wasn't worth making service less convenient for many long-established riders. It would make private vehicles more attractive as an alternative. Her statement contained info about current bus stop spacing standards by land use. Metro and the TDP might be a little behind what other systems were doing.

Christina Lor, representing the Tenant Resource Center (TRC), Director of the Social Justice Center, Williamson Street, 53703: When a student and resident of Audre Lorde Co-op, she and her roommates had used the Few and Jenifer Street bus stop frequently to get to the Willy St. Co-op and the TRC. Her main concern today was the TRC clients who were low-income or disabled people, who used the buses, and who may not be as literate as those present. She would have to draw a map for some clients for them to walk a block away; and the extra block would be hard for disabled clients. A new tenant at the TRC was "Sanctuary", which provided storage for individuals who were homeless, many of whom used the "Bubbles" laundry on E. Washington and used buses to transport their clothes there. W-2 workers also utilized the bus stop on Jenifer/Few.

Michael Soref, Rutledge Court, 53703, representing the Marquette Neighborhood Assn. (MNA statement attached): The MNA opposed eliminating stops on Jenifer Street, based on input from public meetings and the recommendations of MNA's Traffic Committee. Per the MNA statement, transit provided vital links, and residents of the neighborhood had used Metro for years. While appreciating scheduling conflicts, they hoped Metro would rethink this. Also, the neighborhood had just lost a bus stop at Baldwin and Williamson.

Yvonne Schwinge, S. Franklin Street, 53703 (written statement attached): She opposed closing bus stops on Jenifer St. corridor. She rode the Routes 3 and 7 frequently, and often had to make connections at the Transfer Points. So she understood the need for buses to arrive on time at the TPs. However removing the stops would limit access, and make the service more inconsistent and unreliable. Also people made decisions on where to live and work based on current routes/stops. She questioned whether eliminating these stops would make these routes faster, and made several suggestions for other ways to better accomplish this.

Former District 2 Alder Brenda Konkel, N. Hancock, 53703: For years, residents of her district had fought against removing bus stops on Johnson/Gorham. What she had heard was that residents had moved to the area because of a bus stop. And for some folks with physical conditions, walking an extra block did make a difference. If they decided to remove the stops, she asked that they wait a lease cycle, so that people with those kinds of needs could find a new place to live; so those most impacted would have more time to consider other options.

District 6 Alder Marsha Rummel: Appreciating that they were weighing the global with the local, she did oppose the elimination of the stops as proposed. She also appreciated that Metro staff (Drew Beck and Tim Sobota) had come to the January meeting about the reconstruction of Jenifer Street, which was attended by many people who noted that they had gotten off a bus at Bearly Street, where Wil-Mar was located. She was glad that Metro had decided to put that stop back in. In a straw poll of 75 people there, an overwhelming majority favored retaining all the stops. She understood how seconds and minutes could really make a difference (for drivers to go to the restroom, for example), and we wanted good working conditions for staff along with getting riders to places on time. But in terms of desired percentages for housing density and infill, this population exceeded the percentage. The neighborhood had choice riders and every day riders who really relied on their service. So in weighing the customer vs. geography, they had to keep in mind the customer. And a dozen local businesses also really relied on these stops. One

involved citizen observed that it took longer to walk to a stop further away; that person preferred to wait on a bus than to wait outside. There were trade-offs, inc. ridership growth, convenience of service and reliability. She didn't envy them the difficult decisions they had to make. One item that came up at the reconstruction meeting was "bulb-outs", which extended the whole length of the loading zone area into the parking lane. The bus would load/unload in the drive lane, so they didn't have to wait to get back into traffic. But neighbors wondered about the impact of this on bike riders: Would they be squeezed into the lane of oncoming traffic? What about timed stops, like at Ingersoll, where shift changes occurred, where wait time might be 5-10 minutes? This may be traffic calming writ large, but what about aggressive drivers who would want to speed around the buses? She asked that they think about the ridership generators, business and org's located nearby.

When asked, Rummel described the discussion about how wide Jenifer Street would be after reconstruction. The street was currently 40 feet wide, larger than typical. The project proposed narrowing the street to 38 feet; which added to the neighbors' confusion about how bulb-outs would work. There was no clear consensus.

Poulson read written statements of registrants.

Carl Durocher, Williamson Street, 53703: Oppose.

Tim Wong, Jackson Street, 53704: Oppose. I oppose eliminating any and all bus stops in the near-downtown neighborhoods, inc. Jenifer Street. I believe eliminating these stops will reduce ridership and lead to eventual dismantling of the Madison bus system, something our evolution-denying governor would be happy to aid and abet. It's a bad move. Don't do it!

Aaron Berry, S. Few Street, 53703: I am opposed to removal of any bus stops from Jenifer Street between Baldwin and Livingston. I have emailed some alternate idea to the group/committee, which can contact me at my email (shown on registration slip).

Julie Spears, S. Few Street, 53703: Wished to speak, but no longer present.

Jon Hain, Williamson Street, 53703, representing Mother Fool's Coffeehouse: Oppose. Please keep all the Jenifer Street bus stops.

Poulson noted that Hain had left a petition [attached], signed by 15 representative of businesses and non-profits in the Willy Street Neighborhood, who requested that the plan to remove bus stops on Jenifer and Livingston, Bearly, and Few Streets, be reconsidered. Employees, customers and clients used these stops and removing them would have an adverse effect on the neighborhood. They asked that other solutions be considered.

Marianne Morton, Exec. Director of Commonwealth Development, sent a letter [attached] opposing the elimination of bus stop on Jenifer Street. Her organization had worked for 35 years to preserve the vitality of Madison neighborhoods, inc. the Wil-Mar neighborhood, with a dense residential area, a vibrant shopping district on Williamson Street, and a growing employment center in the Capitol East District. A key to a healthy neighborhood was easy access to alternative transportation modes, inc. bike and ped routes and buses. As development increased the density in the area, alternative transportation would become even more important.

Staff answered questions.

- Staff believed the removal of these stops was not in violation of ADA for a number of reasons. Though they hadn't called the FTA yet, the ADA drew a 3/4 of a mile window around all fixed

routes. When this issue was initially debated in 1991, distances of 1/4, 1/2, 3/4 were considered. So changing a stop by a block was not an issue as long as they went through proper public participation process, which this was. They could look into it further, but this was staff's opinion, based on their experience.

- The westbound Ingersoll stop that was now nearside, would change to a farside stop, and where parking was now allowed, a bulb would be placed. It would extend 2-3 parking spaces in from the intersection. The issues of design of the bulbs and street width were not yet decided. Bulbs and width of street was really separate from Metro's proposal to eliminate stops. Any other changes would wait until reconstruction.
- There was no service on Williamson Street parallel to this segment along Jenifer.

Golden/Weier moved that bus stops be retained at the current intersections, but that Metro be given authority to determine whether they be near- or farside. Bulb-outs were the proper province of BPW, so they were not included in the motion. What persuaded him was the Bubble Map. Jenifer Street had one of the biggest bubbles for residential streets. If there were less ridership, then perhaps the trade-offs between distance and speed would be different, and he might look at strategic elimination of some stops, because not everyone was entitled to 1/16th of a mile. But this was not the place to do it. They needed to think of other ways of saving time. The issue would be moot if BRT ever came in. Jenifer Street would be the "local" and BRT would be the "express". In the interests of riders and maintaining the happiness of riders, he felt the stops should be kept. He was part of the TDP advisory, and he put some softening language in it for this reason.

Dailey said that he grew up in this neighborhood and his parents still lived there, and wasn't sure about how best to proceed. He could see the need for residents and businesses to have some surety in the transportation systems that they lived in and relocated to. On the flip side, he didn't know that a level of service was necessarily a right, and they had to look at the costs and benefits system-wide. He was persuaded that the change was worthy. Though it would eliminate two pair, and people would have to walk a block, giving Metro the freedom to change the level of service to best address the entire system, was better than grandfathering in places that might have an extreme, one-block level of service that couldn't be maintained city-wide.

Poulson had some concerns about maintaining that ridership who depended on making transfers. They couldn't please everyone. BRT was the opening for new ridership for those wouldn't consider taking a bus unless they could ride as fast as they could drive. He had some sympathy for the neighborhood. He didn't think Metro had gone out with a ruler, but he wished there was more ability to collect data about who was getting on, how many and where they were at, related to the businesses and the Wil-Mar Center, obviously a generator. This was the second time they were going through this. With Johnson Street, they had a home for people with developmentally disabled who really depended on the stop at their corner, and he appreciated the flexibility of Metro to keep that stop. But he did have concerns about losing riders on transfers.

Poulson called for a vote. The motion to retain the stops carried as follows:  
Ayes -- Bergamini, Golden, Tolmie, Bigelow, Weier. Noes -- Schmidt and Dailey.