

FOMTT Presentation to MBAC; June 11 2015.

Greetings Commissioner Scheinfeld and other staff and guests.

I stand before you on behalf of the Friends of the Major Taylor Trail and the communities we represent. First let me congratulate CDOT on the opening of the 606/Bloomington trail. Although I was attending the opening to the Cal-Sag Trail, I understand from all the media coverage the 606 opening was quite an event. The kind the Major Taylor Trail never got.

The Major Taylor Trail continues to be a major cycling artery for the far southwest side of Chicago. However, the lack of a connecting system of bikelaned feeder streets continues to be a disappointment. We would like to thank CDOT for the recent improvements to the trail at Vincennes Avenue. Specifically extending the Vincennes bike lanes to 105th street and fabricating treatments at the intersection and along 105th street that clearly define the trail and increase the safety of trail users on bicycles.

My purpose here today is to illustrate and request additional traffic calming at certain major street crossings on the Major Taylor Trail. The streets in question are 107th near Racine, 111th near Aberdeen, 115th at Sangamon and 127th at Parnell. In all these locations there are mid block crossings with no signal or stop sign. There is a stealthily placed speed camera near the 127th crossing which is helpful to crossing trail users. In most cases signage exists that indicates a bike trail and there are pavement markings. However the indicators are not sufficiently conspicuous. Many car drivers graciously allow cyclists to cross but many others do not seem to know that by law a motorized vehicle operator is required to stop for pedestrians and cyclists in a crosswalk. Further measures are required. Certain standards are applied where bike lanes cross streets. This trail deserves no less. At minimum the center lane bollards with a stop sign should be installed. Better yet placing the crosswalk on a table top would serve as an appropriate reminder. Considering that one measure is inexpensive and the other requires significant construction, possibly there could be a two step strategy to protect the public. Unfortunately an opportunity was missed as 115th street was just repaved at the Major Taylor Trail. If we want to promote cycling here for families and the less confident we need to do better. The Major Taylor Trail needs to move from a 'guided trail' to a 'self-service trail' with better branding and signage.

We are also requesting a diagonal crosswalk at the intersection of 119th street and Halsted avenues to connect the trail. Currently a trail user will have to cross one street and then the other to continue on the trail. This is very awkward because there is limited space for a number of bicycles and other pedestrians forced to share the same space. Additionally, there is a slight incline from the street up onto the trail which is difficult to negotiate at low speed in close quarters. I have personally witnessed experienced cyclists tumble off their bikes into the street on several occasions. Not to mention the confusion in taking the correct path across traffic because there are left turn signals on both streets. Make no mistake this is not just an issue of convenience but also safety. This intersection is relatively unique so lets treat it that way. The technology exists and is in use elsewhere in the city to make this improvement. Incidentally, this configuration has been presented to the 119th street Corridor Plan Committee with enthusiastic approval.

The Cal-Sag Trail is now a reality and if construction proceeds as planned will connect to the Major Taylor Trail in Riverdale in 2016. Trail usage will only increase. Let's make a timetable to make these improvements to the Major Taylor Trail So much thought and money has been put into the 606. The Major Taylor Trail only needs a small fraction of that investment to be outstanding. Thank you.