

# FINAL REPORT

## CHAPTER 5. PATHS AND PARKS

CITY OF  
MADISON, WI

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### **SOUTH CAPITOL TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)** DISTRICT PLANNING STUDY

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August 2014

Prepared for:

**CITY OF MADISON, WI**

Prepared by:





# **SOUTH CAPITOL TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) DISTRICT PLANNING STUDY**

## **Downtown Plan**

The 2012 Downtown Plan recommends that the area east of Monona Terrace be transformed into a signature city park and public gathering place. The existing Law Park is squeezed by John Nolen Drive and Lake Monona. This creates limited recreational space in addition to the 10-foot-wide Capital City Trail that provides for pedestrian and bicycle travel through Law Park between the East and West Gateway intersections. Today, separated space is not designated along this shared-use path for bicyclists and pedestrians, with the exception of the area near Monona Terrace, creating conflicts between the two. This safety concern is amplified along the Lake Monona Terrace wall, where separate travel lanes are designed for pedestrians and bicyclist, but fishermen do not always have ample space within the defined pedestrian lane to coexist with other users forcing pedestrians and bicyclists to be in conflict. In addition, the lack of wayfinding and etiquette signage makes it difficult to safely and conveniently

navigate the park and path and encourage appropriate self-policing. Opportunities exist to improve lake access and provide amenities such as seating, lighting, bicycle parking and restrooms. Improvements should be considered to address these issues.

The South Capitol TOD District Planning Study evaluated a number of alternatives to improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities through Law Park for visitors and daily users. Through a public process that engaged members of the South Capitol District Planning Committee, City Staff, and members of the general public, path and park improvements were proposed and evaluated.

This chapter includes an overview of the following:

- Design Constraints
- Design Concepts
- Recommendations

## **Trail Users**

Conflicts are created along the Capital City Trail by a diverse trail user population. This includes walkers, runners, inline skaters, skateboarders, bicyclists, and fishermen. Runners and walkers enjoy the path on their own as well as in pairs or groups. Those traveling in groups of two or more can create greater conflicts as they occupy the full travel lane in one direction and they are difficult to safely pass with oncoming traffic. Some walkers



**Figure 1. Path Concept from the City of Madison Downtown Plan, Adopted July 2012**



**Figure 2. Path Concept from the City of Madison Downtown Plan, Adopted July 2012**



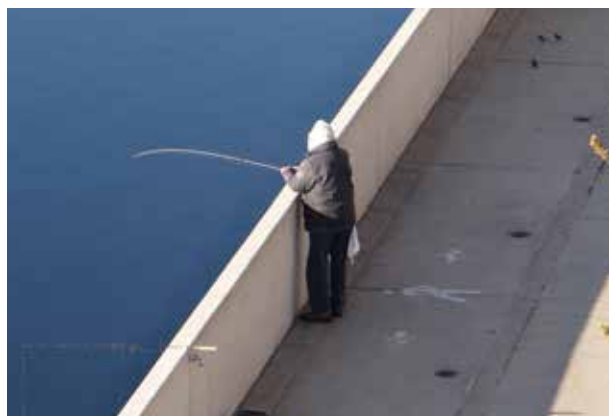
**Figure 3. Bicyclists on Capital City Trail**

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travel with strollers and small children. The same is true of skateboarders, inline skaters, and bicyclists (with and without trailers). Fishermen enjoy the path most prominently along the wall of the separated Monona Terrace path, occupying space defined for pedestrians. As such, pedestrians are forced to move in to the lane defined for bicyclists in order to safely pass, creating a conflict and safety hazard. All of these users occupy varying amounts of space (based on use) and travel at varying speeds. It is the volume of traffic combined with the variation in speed that creates the conflicts along this path.

### **Design Constraints**

In order to address spatial problems within Law Park, the South Capitol TOD District must overcome specific design constraints. John Nolen Drive defines the northern limit of the park, and the Lake Monona waterfront determines the southern limit. Within the narrow park space, existing trees enhance the landscape but limit flexibility in the potential relocation of sections of the path. Any design concepts that call for relocation or widening of the existing path must consider impacts on existing trees and roots. Expanding Law Park into the Lake Monona waterfront would require adding lake fill. This process requires an extensive and lengthy environmental and regulatory process to ensure any potential impacts are properly mitigated.



**Figure 4. Fisherman Along Path**



**Figure 5. Bicyclists Along Path**

### **Public Process**

The most common issues associated with the Capital City Trail expressed by the public were focused on safety and separate path uses. Issues that were often discussed included conflicts between pedestrians, bikers, and fishermen.

Members of the public expressed preference to increase the overall path width in order to accommodate separate bicycle and pedestrian paths, to increase park/green space, and requested additional opportunities to interact with the water. Amenities such as lighting, additional seating, receptacles for animal byproducts, restrooms, concessions, and wayfinding signage were often mentioned as desirable additions. Furthermore, a significant number of individuals expressed opposition to adding additional fill to Lake Monona to accommodate these improvements.

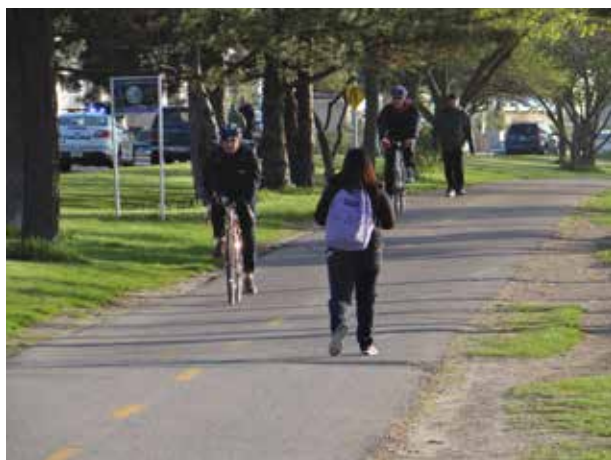
Many individuals expressed a desire to tunnel John Nolen Drive underground to accommodate new park space. The City of Chicago's Millennium Park was often referenced as an example.

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## **Path and Park Issues**

Path and park issues, relevant to this planning study, along the Capital City Trail and in Law Park include the following:

- Pedestrian/bicycle conflicts
- Pedestrian/bicycle/fisherman conflicts
- Lack of access from the Downtown core
- Limited path lighting
- Lack of bicycle parking



**Figure 6. Bicyclists and Runners Along Capital City Trail**



**Figure 7. Narrow Portion of Law Park**

## **Public Involvement**

### **Survey Results**

Important Capital City Trail features (from most to least important):

- Designated pedestrian paths
- Marked center lines
- Trail lighting
- Wayfinding signage
- Bike racks
- Public restrooms/rest areas

Additional park issues within Law Park as identified within the Downtown Plan include the following:

- Limited recreation space
- Limited seating
- Limited access facilities for water ski, rowing, and other groups who use the lake
- No restrooms or other public park building amenities

As noted previously, the Downtown Plan recommended that Law Park undergo a transformation east of Monona Terrace into a signature city park and gathering space. The South Capitol TOD Consultant Team sees similar potential for this space and echoes this recommendation for the City to explore this opportunity. This study is focused on the issues of movement through Law Park as well as connectivity of the park with the Downtown core. The following design concepts and recommendations are offered with the anticipation of more holistic transformative long term study and the understanding that all proposed path changes must compliment any future changes at the gateway intersections or any bridge connection across John Nolen Drive.

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### Parks and Paths Focus Group

A focus group was formed to capture thoughts, opinions, and sentiments regarding Lake Monona, Law Park, and the South Capitol District. The meeting occurred August 22, 2013. Individuals in attendance represented the Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara neighborhood, Wisconsin Bike Federation, American Volkssport Association, Downtown Madison Inc., Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, Madison B-Cycle, City of Madison Parks Department, Clean Lakes Alliance, Mad-City Ski Team, and State Smart Transportation Initiative.

### Design Concepts

An initial design concept was presented at the November 2013 Planning Committee meeting to add fill to Lake Monona to accommodate enhanced and separated bicycle and pedestrian paths. The committee voted to advance the concept but within the existing lakeshore and to build out a fishing pier concept. A revised proposal was presented in December 2013 to maintain the existing lakeshore and integrate separated bicycle and pedestrian paths. This concept included the following general and long-term recommendations by the Consultant Team.

Separate facilities for bicycles and pedestrians between Broom Street and Monona Terrace should be created. This includes evaluating opportunities to engage the lake shore via pedestrian path with greenspace between the pedestrian and bicycle paths. Bicycle facilities should include a 10-foot-wide bikeway with 5-foot lanes in each direction. Pedestrian facilities should include a 6-foot-wide pedestrian path. Where possible, a wider path could be considered. Enhanced signage for wayfinding and etiquette were also recommended. Long-term enhancements to compliment potential bridge/gateway intersection concepts were also included as a part of this concept.

In December, the Planning Committee also heard from Greg Fries with City of Madison Engineering, regarding the feasibility of adding lake fill for the purposes of bridge columns and supports.

He provided an overview of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources rules and regulations regarding this process. Greg noted that the process to obtain a permit of this type would likely be long, arduous and in all probability involve litigation. In spite of these difficulties, it is likely possible to ultimately obtain this permit. The consultant team highlighted the following considerations regarding path enhancements:

- General
  - Separate path facilities for entire district lake front (minimum separation zone = 1 foot)
  - Evaluate opportunities to engage the lake shore with pedestrian path (create greenspace between the pedestrian and bicycle paths)
  - Enhance signage for wayfinding, promote good etiquette and path behavior by users
  - Compliment future bridge(s), intersection modifications and Law Park enhancements
- Considerations
  - Location of path relative to trees
  - Maintenance/snow removal
  - Creating “dead” space between paths

### Recommendations

The paths and parks design concept shown in Figures 8 through 10 is recommended by the Consultant Team to advance for further design and implementation. Recommendations for both the near- and long-term horizons have been made, consistent with the design objectives for the South Capitol TOD District paths and parks.

Near-term (five years or less) Consultant Team recommendations for this concept include seeking separation of modes between the East and West Gateway intersections. A pedestrian path delineated from bicyclists, with possible green space, would provide an improved experience for both modes. It is recommended by the Consultant Team that the pedestrian path meander along the Lake



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Monona waterfront and that the bicycle path remain close to John Nolen Drive. Further evaluation of existing tree roots should be conducted to determine the location of the pedestrian trail. Should further evaluation prove problematic for relocating the pedestrian path closer to the water, it is recommended by the Consultant Team that a simple separator concept be implemented. This would consist of a 6-foot pedestrian path and a 10-foot bicycle path separated by a 1-foot divider. Where possible, a wider path could be considered. It is also recommended by the Consultant Team that seating along the path be considered as a park enhancement. The Fishing Pier concept shown in Figure 10 is recommended as a solution to existing conflicts between fishermen and bicyclists and pedestrians. This pier would provide dedicated space for fishing, separate from bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

Long-term (five years and longer) Consultant Team recommendations for path and park improvements include further consideration of extending the lake edge. An expanded Law Park allows for improved path separation concepts, increased recreational space, and overall greater flexibility in how Law Park functions as a destination and a corridor. Although path and park options are enhanced by potential relocation of the

lake edge, the consultant team recognizes that fill efforts would require a significant and potentially lengthy regulatory process. Understanding these challenges, it is recommended by the Consultant Team that lake edge modifications be considered to enhance the design concepts.

In both the near- and long-term scenarios, it is further recommended by the Consultant Team that additional signage be installed along the Capital City Trail and throughout Law Park to improve wayfinding and etiquette. Signage that directs bicyclists and pedestrians on designated areas for each mode within the intersections would help create an environment in which users feel empowered to navigate the path and park safely themselves and help others do the same.

These Consultant Team recommendations have been made after careful consideration of stakeholder feedback, as well as weighing the trade offs of the proposed design concepts. These tradeoffs include:

- Environmental challenges and regulatory hurdles to expanding Law Park



Figure 8. View of proposed Capital City Trail looking east toward proposed bridge and Monona Terrace

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Figure 9. View of proposed Capital City Trail looking west.

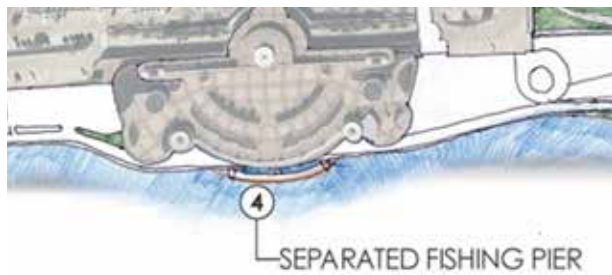


Figure 10. Fishing Pier Concept