

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: November 13, 2024

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Guy Smith, Executive Director for Milwaukee County Parks

Subject: Bike Lane Delineations on Park Roadways

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

From the Executive Director of Parks providing an informational report on bike lane delineations and park roadways.

POLICY

Wisconsin State Statutes:	
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	
Specific Adopted Budget:	
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	WH025001

BACKGROUND

The Milwaukee County Parks system includes several trail systems used by bicyclists that vary from informal social trails, paved park pathways, separated Oak Leaf Trail segments, and on-road bicycle routes. In addition to wayfinding signage, Parks uses a variety of site applications to delineate these biking facilities.

Color Considerations – Green Paint Preferred on High Volume Park Roads

When selecting signage, road paint, or other applications for color, Parks follows federal and state guidance regarding color selection. Per WisDOT's Bicycle Facility Design Manual, "[r]egulatory controls are associated with red, black, and white¹; warning devices with yellow and fluorescent yellow-green; informational devices with blue, green and brown." Green is often associated with safety and permission, which can psychologically reassure cyclists and alert drivers.

In situations warranted by traffic volume, accident data, or greater risk of conflicts between motorists and bicyclists, green paint is used to identify bike lanes. Green paint has become a standard color for bike lanes and is used by communities in Milwaukee County as well as nationally² and worldwide. Examples of green bike lanes can be found in the City of Milwaukee³, on the Milwaukee County Regional Medical Center in Wauwatosa, and elsewhere.

¹ *In striping, however, yellow is also a regulatory color.*

² [06 13 2014 BIKESAFE Lit Review FINAL.pdf](#)

³ [6 Things You Might Not Know About Biking in Milwaukee](#)

Green paint offers high contrast that alerts users to a variation in travel patterns for different modes of transportation, thereby increasing awareness and safety.

Alternative Applications for Delineating Bike Lanes

With the exception of signage, paint is the most cost-effective application aside from adding on-road bike lanes. As an alternative to a continuous bike lane, parks has also used markings called sharrows (outlined in the image below) to alert users to travel lanes that are intended to be shared between bikes and cars. Sharrows can be found on Menomonee River Parkway, Underwood Parkway, and continue to be added into the parkway system where traffic volumes do not require definitive separation through use of a dedicated continuous bike lane.



Other construction methods include colored asphalt, thermoplastic markings, and textured pavement. Each of these is more expensive than paint, and therefore should be evaluated according to the site needs and available budget.

- Colored asphalt is integrated into the pavement, offering a more seamless and potentially more durable solution than paint.
- Thermoplastic markings are applied hot and harden upon cooling, creating a durable and skid-resistant surface. They are available in multiple colors and reflective.
- Textured pavement involves creating patterns in the pavement surface, which can be colored or left natural.

In addition to paving selections, alternative design options⁴ can be evaluated to protect bicyclists on roadways.

⁴ [2-4_FHWA-Separated-Bike-Lane-Guide-ch-5_2014.pdf](#)

- Separated Bike Lanes
- Delineator Posts
- Bollards
- Concrete Barriers
- Raised Median
- Raised Lane
- Planters
- Parking Stops
- Parked Cars
- Combinations of the above

Mason Street Bridge Project

The Mason Street Bridge, the subject of current Milwaukee County capital project WH025001, is situated on a high-traffic roadway, requires careful planning to address both safety and budgetary needs effectively. Key points include:

- **Safety Requirements:** High-traffic roads like Mason Street, especially those with complex geometry, necessitate enhanced protective solutions. In line with Bike Lane Best Management Practices (BMPs), painted textured lanes are recommended where traffic volumes and accident data indicate the need for added cyclist protection. Texture is recommended to reduce slip risk.
- **Maintenance Considerations:** Alternative methods, such as concrete barriers, could impede maintenance activities, particularly snow removal in winter, presenting operational challenges.
- **Budget Allocation:** The cost of green paint is currently within the project scope and budget of project WH025001, which has a total budget estimate of \$2,335,000, of which \$1,884,000 is allocated through federal transportation funds.

Parks supports the use of textured green paint on the Mason Street Bridge as a safety measure and has recommend advancing the prepared design to enhance visibility and protection for cyclists on this high-traffic route. It should be noted that this design solution has also been the subject of public engagement during the design phase of the project and has received support from the biking community. Conceptual plans for bicycle lane improvements in the immediate area including a project on the adjacent Michigan Street also include green painted bike lanes.

Related File No's:	
Associated File No's (Including Transfer Packets):	
Previous Action Date(s):	

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity

FISCAL EFFECT

n/a

TERMS

n/a

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

n/a

PREPARED BY:

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APPROVED BY:

Guy Smith, Executive Director Milwaukee County Parks *Guy D. Smith*

ATTACHMENTS:

n/a

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