

**Anthony J. Pellegrin
Amanda K. Williams
6512 Creek Drive
Edina, MN 55439
952-941-1960**

February 22, 2009

Edina City Council Members: Mayor James Hovland, Joni Bennett, Mary Brindle, Scot Housh, Ann Swenson
Edina City Engineer & Public Works Director: Wayne Houle
Edina Park & Recreation Department: John Keprios

Three Rivers Park District: Kelly Grissman,
Senior Manager of Planning with Three Rivers Park District: Jonathan Vlaming

Dear Sirs and Madams:

We moved to Edina nearly nine years ago and chose to purchase our home in large part because of the wonderful stretch of Nine Mile Creek that runs behind our home. It is a natural habitat for a number of birds and animals and we enjoy the quiet privacy provided by living along the creek. We were both surprised and taken aback to read in the Star Tribune about the plans to put a bike path along Nine Mile Creek. Our concerns motivated us to attend the open house at the Edina City Hall on Wednesday, February 11 to learn more about the proposed route and design of the bike path.

One of the other things that attracted us to Edina was a sense that residents actively participated in community decisions based on open sharing of information. Unfortunately, in addition to the realization that the creek bike path plans had been quietly shepherded to their current state without meaningful visibility, nearly all of the information we learned at the February 11 open house served to raise serious concerns regarding the proposed bike path along Nine Mile Creek. These concerns include:

1. Environmental Concerns: Edina has few truly natural areas remaining – especially wetlands. In the area along Nine Mile Creek behind Creek Drive, we have personally observed deer, owls, egrets, foxes, wild turkeys, returning families of mallard and wood ducks and many other species of birds as well as turtles, fish and frogs. The creek watershed provides a valuable corridor for wildlife to move along and is particularly narrow in the area behind Valley Lane and Creek Drive. It is difficult to imagine that the habitat and its animals can co-exist much less thrive with a paved thoroughfare for walking and biking along the

creek. Pollution of the creek is also a significant issue. Road salt, fertilizers, and trash continue to be issues we struggle with while trying to keep the creek healthy. The building of a sixteen foot path (10 feet for a paved path & 3 feet on each side for “shoulder”) will do nothing to alleviate and will most likely add to the pollution burden on Nine Mile Creek. A project of this significance should have a thorough environmental study. We fully expect that no work will proceed on this proposed project absent acceptable, publicly available results of a detailed environmental impact study for the project. Anything less would fly in the face of responsible stewardship for the Nine Mile Creek Watershed.

2. **Nine Mile Creek Watershed/Flooding:** Nine Mile Creek in the area of Valley Lane and Creek Drive often overflows the banks and floods into the yards of the neighboring homes. After a day of heavy rainfall or snow run-off, we have often observed the creek bed rising several feet to a width of more than 40 feet. If this bike path is to have year-round access, we assume the path would have to be built up above the yearly flood level. It is hard to see how a path could be built up to four feet above the existing grade, allow for proper drainage and still be environmentally friendly. Ms. Grissman of Three Rivers Park District indicated that the bike path might be built on stilts in a boardwalk style, elevating it off the ground. Not only does that sound costly and environmentally invasive, it would also be an aesthetic eyesore. In addition to the fully predictable environmental degradation such a project would cause, building the path along the creek inevitably leads to impractical and expensive recurring repair and maintenance, extensive periods of path closures each year, significant and rapid deterioration of path conditions and/or significantly costly and aesthetically repugnant structural alternatives.

3. **Safety and Security:** Many areas of Nine Mile Creek running through Edina are secluded and relatively remote. If a path is built along the creek allows for biking or walking during any hour of the day or night, we question the safety for our home and our children at play given our proximity to the creek. We also question whether the bike path can be adequately supervised by the police since at many points the creek is far from any streets they currently patrol. We also question the proximity of the proposed trail to our schools - the proposed path will connect to the Three Rivers Park District’s regional trail network, which currently has more than 90 miles of trail. This will bring a large number of people each day into close proximity to Creek Valley Elementary, Valley View Middle School and Edina High School, creating a safety concern for many of us who have children attending those schools. Building such a path along the creek would significantly increase the burden on Edina’s police force and impose significant safety burdens on those families and schools near the trail.

4. **Financial Concerns:** The proposed route along the creek is clearly the most costly alternative we have seen in terms of initial capital expenditure AND ongoing costs of policing, maintenance and repairs. Today’s current financial climate hardly seems the appropriate time to be spending precious financial

resources on such an undertaking. The construction and ongoing maintenance of a bike trail does not fall into the “need-to-have” category as we face difficult financial and budgetary choices. Street-based routings would be more cost effective to build and to maintain in the long-run. On a related issue, we would also expect that the higher property tax rates paid year over year by residents with homes along the creek would be decreased immediately and substantially to reflect the degradation in property values brought about by the path running along the back yards. (This is in addition to the acquisition price premium historically paid for homes along the creek.) Thus, in addition to an increased financial burden the City of Edina should expect decreased property tax revenues if the creekside bike path project is pursued. While there is never a good time to do so, the current economic environment clearly is not a time to pursue an alternative that imposes the highest possible near-term and long-term cost on taxpayers and increased pressure on the City’s budget.

5. Apparent Lack of Oversight and Responsibility: From what we have been able to ascertain, the proposed project is being run by a loose confederation of organizations, such that when we press for more information on the proposal and any details, every party seems to point toward another and no single organization or group seems to be in charge or have a comprehensive set of information. From what we can tell, each of the groups involved has input on what may happen but none holds the ultimate responsibility for the project. Beyond the frustration this brings in simply trying to receive a comprehensive set of facts regarding the proposed project, it also does not bode well for the future of the project in terms of execution – whether in design, environmental impacts, construction, monitoring or ongoing maintenance and repair.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our concerns. We look forward to learning of your thoughts and solutions to the issues we have raised.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Pellegrin and Amanda K. Williams

cc: Nine Mile Creek Watershed District Managers: LuAnn Tolliver, Corrine Lynch, Steve Kloiber, Bob Kotejin, Geoffrey Nash

Nine Mile Creek Watershed Administrator: Kevin Bigalke

State Senator Geoffrey Michel, R-Edina

State Representative, Keith Downey, R-Edina

