

February 11, 2009

Edina City Council

Mayor James Hovland
Councilwoman Joni Bennett
Councilwoman Mary Brindle
Councilman Scott Housh
Councilwoman Ann Swenson
Edina City Hall, 4801 W. 50th Street, Edina, MN 55424

Three Rivers Park District Board of Commissioners

Larry Blackstad, Marilyn Corcoran, Mark Haggerty,
Sara Wyatt, Dale Woodbeck, Rosemary Franzese, Joan Peters
3000 Xenium Lane North, Plymouth, MN 55441-1299

Dear Council Members and Commissioners:

We are writing to express our strong objection to the proposed routing of the regional bike trail between Nine Mile Creek and adjacent homeowners such as ourselves. Specifically this is section 9 on the map that was provided to us. We have many objections to this route, but these are some of the more significant:

- 1) Safety and Security of the Neighborhood: Our children have been raised with the understanding they could not play in the front yard unaccompanied by an adult due to the busy thoroughfare street and busy public sidewalk (Valley Lane). For the past 45 years, the backyards in our neighborhood have provided a safe, secure area for children.....separate and private from the busy car and pedestrian traffic in the front. The safety and security that we have come to expect and appreciate would be forever lost with the addition of a public regional trail through our back yards.

There have been several incidents at nearby Heights Park including reports of young people with a gun, a man fleeing police in clothes taken from a nearby house, an intoxicated man approaching children. Edina is a wonderful place with some lovely parks. But it is not immune to the safety challenges that hidden park areas present. Most parents would never allow young children to play in parks unattended. Must we now have the same concerns about our own back yards?

- 2) Habitat and Wetland Destruction: Unlike Minnehaha Creek through Edina, most of Nine Mile Creek has remained undeveloped in the midst of the asphalt and manicured lawns of the city. Despite its narrow swath, most adjacent landowners have left the creek banks wild in order to enjoy the beauty of the habitat and the wildlife it supports including Wood Ducks, Deer, Egrets, Herons, Beaver, Muskrat, Fox, and Coyotes. Paving a 10 foot wide public trail through the narrow flood plain would essentially eliminate much of the last undeveloped wetland and wildlife habitat in Edina.

- 3) Loss of Privacy and Loss of Property Values: Our street, Valley Lane, has become a very busy thoroughfare between the High School and the Southdale Shopping district. In addition, we have a public sidewalk in front of our homes that has become one of the most popular walking and jogging routes in the city. The addition of a public regional trail immediately behind our homes would turn the houses on Valley Lane into virtual "Fish Bowls".....homes without privacy. Our quality of life would be dramatically compromised and our property values would be significantly impaired. We understand why paths through natural areas are popular. Our family frequently bikes on metro trails. But we would never expect to have a trail built that is so intrusive to homeowners. Trails that are mere feet from backyard decks and swingsets are uncomfortable for both the homeowner and the trail user.

- 4) Many Good Alternatives Exist: The maps produced by the task force indicate that there are a number of route alternatives that do not negatively impact homeowners and neighborhoods. Creating bicycle routes on city streets is less expensive, less invasive, and has the advantage of slowing auto traffic. Valley Lane is a good candidate for bike lanes. It has a separate sidewalk for pedestrians and it has few cross streets to compromise rider safety. We urge the city to more closely examine such alternatives.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our objections. We are confident that your careful consideration will result in alternative routing of the bike trail that will be acceptable to residents and trail users alike.

Sincerely,

David Thompson

Tami Thompson