

To: Mayor Merkes and the Menasha Common Council
From: Sue Wisneski, former Alderman, 3rd District
Re: Midway Road sidewalks

When I was the alderman for the 3rd District, I held Meet & Greets each summer. One of the sites I visited faithfully was the Briarwood Cottage apartments, on Midway Rd. behind Shopko. These are housing units for the elderly, with most of the tenants being over the age of 55.

Among the complaints these tenants had was that there were no sidewalks on Midway Rd. because they liked to walk to the grocery store (Piggly Wiggly) or to Shopko to get their prescriptions. They said with their fixed incomes and the high prices of gas, it was difficult to justify running their vehicles that short distance when they could take their fold-up grocery carts to get a few things at the store. However, the lack of sidewalks forced them to have to walk in the roadway, which was dangerous due to the number of vehicles and the speeds those vehicles were traveling.

These people were not the only ones concerned about the lack of sidewalks in this area. I spoke with some employees of the various coffee shops and was told that they, too, decried having to walk in the roadway. I urged the City to consider sidewalks for this area.

Blacktop paths later installed by the City did little to nothing to alleviate their concerns and brought up many more, including:

- Blacktop was uneven to walk on, rendering it highly unsafe.
- It was hard to look down and judge the walkway as dark surfaces are more difficult to see with bifocals or trifocals and they had a hard time judging if they had to step up or down.
- Blacktop would get sticky in the heat and they'd drag the tar from the broken edges into their homes.
- Blacktop or asphalt was much hotter to walk on in the summer than concrete.
- When there was new construction and the blacktop was broken up then repaired, it is unusually rough and even harder to walk on.

Now there is another housing project on Midway Rd. catering specifically to the elderly or over 55 year old group. The number of potential users has risen exponentially, with tenants AND employees, not to mention the casual walkers who stroll throughout the City. While these people are not likely to be in the area now, they conceivably would be there if they had sidewalks to walk on. Any one of these could be viewed as a potential customer base increase.

I also took the opportunity to be in the Midway corridor often in the 11AM to 1PM peak lunch time. I noted that employees from the various businesses in the business park area would walk in the street or in the roadway to get lunch at the Piggly Wiggly or any of the fast food places near Hwy. 47. This was BEFORE Subway moved into their new building so I have since noted that people walk from the businesses across the street and through the grassy area, sometimes on the blacktop path, up to Subway.

The bus routes used to take the buses into the Shopko Plaza. They do not do that any longer. Buses used to run west on Midway Road but that had stopped for a long time now. The only bus service to this area runs on Hwy 47., Appleton Road, and will go east on Midway Rd. past the UW Fox Valley. People wishing to donate plasma (especially in this economy) who travel by bus have to exit on 47 (Appleton Rd.) at Midway and walk to BioLife Plasma. I remember watching a family of four (dad, mom and two children) as they walked in the roadway. Dad led, the two children followed and mom brought up the rear. They went to the plasma center. They walked single file, but I held my breath watching the children because I feared one might dart into the roadway – as children are known to have done. I am concerned, not only from the draw of the plasma center, but now Habitat for Humanity has offices on Midway and pedestrians using the bus have to walk to their offices.

If you look at the area on Midway Rd. in front of the St Elizabeth Surgery Center building, you will see a footpath carved into the lawn area. People walk in the roadways and go up onto the adjacent properties when the grass is cut. IF it isn't they continue to walk in the road.

I have seen students from Maplewood Middle School walk west on Midway and they had to use the roadway in spots where there was no blacktop path. One of those students (who has since graduated high school) told me that with sports or other after-school activities, if they had no ride home, they had to walk that half mile or so and hated it because it was dangerous on Midway Rd.

Some of the larger businesses in the area, RR Donnelley for one, have encouraged their employees to participate on various healthy activities, such as walking. They are unable to walk to work because of the lack of sidewalks. More than one employee from there told me of their dissatisfaction with this. Numerous groups walk around the blocks from Midway to Airport along Earl Sts. and Fatima Sts. One group I talked to said they'd love to walk along Midway but it is too hard with the traffic and the uneven blacktop and the lack of continuity.

It would make for neater picture of our business area at Midway and 47 for a continuation of the sidewalks at least on one side of the street. In a perfect world, we'd have sidewalks on both sides but making it safer for pedestrians in an ever-growing business area without access to buses, but having a sidewalk on at least one side is a lot more acceptable than the blacktop path.

One very concerning point for me was that the money for our portion of the sidewalks along this route had been budgeted and borrowed for several years ago. The project kept getting delayed by legal issues of rights-of-way, etc. We argued then for the sidewalks and convinced everyone of the need, but nothing was done. Now it is time for action for the sidewalks!

Thank you for your consideration of completing this sidewalk mission.