

From the Mayor...

September 2, 2022

For almost twenty years, developing a system of cycling and walking trails has been a goal of our community. A temporary project with a designated bike lane was recently installed on two blocks of West Market Street. It will be removed at the end of this month. A little history will help to explain this project and put it into perspective.

The Ride/Walk Advisory Committee was formed in 2013 to oversee the implementation of the county-wide ***Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan***, approved by the Warsaw Common Council in early 2013. The plan was funded from a \$50,000 grant awarded by the Indiana State Department of Health in 2012, specifically to “create a city-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan for the City of Warsaw”.

Prior to the Master Plan and with the advocacy and leadership of the KCV Cycling Club, the City of Warsaw, and Town of Winona Lake engaged in projects in their respective communities, developing the Lake City Greenway. Significant greenway projects included the Beyer Farm Trail, Chinworth Bridge Trail, the Heritage Trail, and the Beyer Trail extension into Hodges Addition. Other early neighborhood improvements included the Smith Street Project and the Krebs Trailhead Park.

The City of Warsaw and Town of Winona Lake’s commitment to community bike and pedestrian use, was clearly demonstrated with the completion of these projects, along with their dedication to bicycle education and local events that promote safe cycling (e.g. Fat and Skinny Tire Festival). As a result, and in addition to the grant award from the Indiana State Department of Health, they were awarded ‘Bicycle Friendly Community Bronze Level’ status in the Spring of 2013.

With the completion of the Master Plan, the community now had a formal blueprint to build out its network of ride/walk facilities and wasted no time getting started. “Planning for a comprehensive, connected bicycle and pedestrian system is an economic development, transportation, and quality of life initiative” (taken from the Executive Summary of the Master Plan). To appreciate the value of that statement, look no further than the economic impact that the Town of Winona Lake has enjoyed with its Heritage Trail or the neighborhood improvements that continue to be stimulated by the East Market Street trail extension.

The *Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* proposed over 87 miles of multi-use paths, dedicated bike lanes, and greenways connecting our community. Market Street is the backbone of that plan. You may remember it was the focus of our Stellar Community Projects, designed to connect the City of Warsaw and Town of Winona Lake. Those projects included the recently completed ‘802 Center’ senior housing project, Krebs Trailhead Park, Argonne Road improvements, and the soon-to-be constructed Winona Lake Roundabout.

One of the unfinished projects on that list is the Downtown Cycle Track project. It is the seven-block final segment of the Market Street trail. It is a project designed to provide a safe

connection into and through our downtown. A dedicated ten-foot-wide multi-use path will bring families safely into downtown Warsaw to patronize our shops, eat at our restaurants, and visit our beautiful Central Park. The project will not eliminate any parking and will retain current sidewalks.

Which brings me to the current temporary multi-use path project. The goal was to demonstrate the safety of a dedicated side path and highlight the importance of the project. The temporary path will remain until the end of the month. Information and data gathered from the two-month project will be analyzed and could impact current Cycle Track final design. Improving connections for our families to neighborhoods, parks, recreational activities, schools, and endless community quality of place amenities has been the benefit of almost twenty years of ride-walk infrastructure development. It clearly demonstrates the value our community places on recreation and an active lifestyle that our citizens deserve!