

Staff Report

6th Street Bridge Fence Request Staff Report

May 22, 2012

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2011, during the City Council budget process, a request was made to place a fence along the traffic side of the pedestrian/bicycle areas of the 6th Street Bridge. The cost of this request is estimated at approximately \$8,000 for a four-foot high black chain link fence. This request referenced the safety of the elevated pedestrian/bicycle area with no separation from traffic. **On February 14, 2012, City Council directed staff to have a discussion with bicyclists on possible solutions to improve the safety of the 6th Street Bridge.**

City staff contacted several bicyclists in Ames who have been active in bicycle issues within the City. On May 9, 2012, City staff met with four people on-site to discuss the request in more detail and to be able to look at and discuss the request and issues it may cause and other potential solutions. It is also important to note that the 6th Street Bridge is currently shown for replacement in the fifth year of the Capital Improvement Plan.

FEEDBACK

During the meeting with local bicyclists, the request was discussed and several items were brought to the attention of staff. The following items are the main issues that were discussed at the on-site meeting:

- The bicyclists are concerned about the lack of space to safely cross these areas, especially when hauling a trailer. Therefore, if a fence is to be installed, the bicyclists would prefer to use the street when crossing the bridge. Because of this preference, there would be a need to make transition areas for bicyclists to leave the shared use path areas and enter 6th Street to cross the bridge. There would also be a need for sharrows to alert traffic to expect bicyclists on the road (see Attachment 1).
- Should the bicyclists be required to remain on the raised path, they would prefer that a different railing be used in lieu of the chain link fence. There were concerns that chain link could cause snagging for bicyclists who are trying to pass or avoid other traffic.
- There may be a need for additional signage to warn that passing bicycles on the bridge may not be possible

The City staff also received additional comments from emails in opposition to installing a fence due to concerns regarding the reduction in width of the path and the difficulty in removing snow from this small area.

At the on-site meeting, the four people in attendance thought that placing a fence or railings is not a preferred alternative, although they understand the concerns with safety. If the fencing is approved, they would prefer that sharrows and transitions be placed, and that the City work to inform motorists to expect more bicycle activity on that stretch of roadway.

NEXT STEPS

With this information, the City Council must decide whether or not to move ahead with installation of the fence. If you choose to do so, it is recommended that transitions and sharrows also be installed. Authorization will be needed for the expenditure of \$8,000 from the Road Use Tax Fund balance to accomplish this task.



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