

## **Pathways are for people**

The News&Guide article on Sept. 3

The News&Guide article on Sept. 3 informed us that, despite public support in all past elections for more pathways, opponents believe we have reached “pathways fatigue.” The pathways critics quoted in the article referred (disapprovingly) to pathways as “bike paths,” and the examples cited were solely of bike riders. For example: “If people don’t want to ride that — if they don’t think it’s safe — then they shouldn’t ride it.”

The article informed us that we have been led to vote repeatedly for pathways by the “inordinate amount of political pull that orchestrated these efforts” by a so-called “pathways lobby.” Pathways opponents were said to be “in fear” of the pathways lobby, “reluctant to speak out, because there’s a perception that they’ll be attacked.” (Fortunately for the N&G article, the writer chanced upon some fearless pathways critics, and they appeared not the least bit afraid to speak out against the pathways lobby.) Has the popularity of pathways ironically provoked a backlash of venom and hostility directed at “bike pathways,” “the pathway lobby” and bicyclists generally? Apparently so.

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In response to these attacks, I propose two personal observations. Pathways are not solely, nor even mainly, bike paths. In fact, my personal opinion is that walkers make much more use of our pathways than do cyclists.

We have no hard numbers. So personal observations of actual use are our best information. I spend about two hours a day on the pathways, rarely less, some days more. I dare say, very few locals spend more time on our pathways. I’m not a pathways fanatic; there is a 2-year old sled dog in my house that insists on walking, running or riding long distances every day and no matter the weather. We mostly walk, as do the majority of other folks we see daily on our pathways. Taking pot shots at cyclists, however,

seems to have become more acceptable than attacking kids walking to school and parents with strollers — or old men with young dogs.

Second, it is interesting that the two precincts in the town of Jackson where the voters did not support funding for the South Park pathway — leading the critics to prophesy our “pathways fatigue” — are in exactly the neighborhoods where there are no pathways at all. If you didn’t see any benefit of pathways where you live, would you support them with your tax dollars? I don’t think I would either.

Maybe, critics, we need more pathways for people.

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