September 6, 2016

Public comment to Morgantown City Council on Bicycle Storage zoning text amendment

My name is Frank Gmeindl. I live at 491 Wilson Avenue.

I am a Morgantown bicyclist, a member of the Morgantown Municipal Bicycle Board, former chairman of the Bicycle Board, former member of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Citizen Advisory Committee and former member of the Morgantown Traffic Commission. I am also a certified bicycling instructor.

I am here today to provide some context that will hopefully encourage you to vote yes on the Bicycle Storage zoning text amendment.

Nationwide, making communities bicycle friendly has been demonstrated to improve the communities’ safety, health, property values, business climate and social climate.

For the past 4 years, Morgantown has been the only West Virginia community recognized by the National League of American Bicyclists as a Bicycle Friendly Community.

Over the past 4 years, Morgantown has made progress implementing the Greater Morgantown Bicycling Plan that City Council unanimously adopted in 2012.

Clearly, more people of all ages and appearances are riding bicycles in Morgantown today.

Last month, the Bicycle Board submitted a Bicycle Friendly Community award renewal application. We are moderately confident that we will at least keep our bronze status.

Last week, I attended the new I-79 exit 123 ribbon cutting ceremony. Eldon Callen; University Town Center developers; Governor Tomblin; Oliver Luck and WVDOH Commissioner Paul Maddox all stated that the success of that $22M project was the result of continuous leadership and communication, coordination and collaboration among all key stakeholders.

From the beginning of that project, the Bicycle Board was represented on the MPO CAC and accommodating bicyclists was in the project plan practically from the beginning. Now, there are Shared Lane Markings, Share the Road signs and a Bike Lane over there.

The same kind of leadership and communication, coordination and collaboration that realized that new bicycle friendly interchange will be required in any development and any transportation project in Morgantown. The leader and the key stakeholders must be able to see their project with a cyclist’s eye view.

* Is there a safe and convenient place to store my bike?
* Is there a quick, easy and safe route to my destination on which I won’t get harassed?
* Is there a safe and convenient place that I can park my bike when I get there?
* Is there a place that I clean up before my meeting or my class or shopping?

If a cyclist doesn’t have positive answers to questions such as these, he or she will probably not ride the bike but rather choose a means of transportation that provides positive answers.

Today, in Morgantown, it looks like the single occupancy motor vehicle provides the best solution.

However, we are gradually making strides towards making bicycling more attractive.

* We have short-term bicycle parking throughout the WVU campus and on High Street and Walnut Street.
* All our busses have bike racks. All the PRT stations have bike racks.
* We have a grant for applying Shared Lane Markings and Bicycles May Use Full Lane signs throughout the City and for providing sheltered bicycle parking at bus shelters.
* Bicycle storage is required for developments of significant impact in the downtown business area.

Passing the Bicycle Storage zoning text amendment will move us one step closer to making bicycling irresistible in Morgantown.

Frank Gmeindl