

Gadfly “talks” bridges with Councilman Callahan

The Bethlehem Gadfly Pedestrian bridge, Walkability and Bikeability November 16, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the pedestrian bridge* 

I have some video of the three bridges across the Lehigh, and there is walking

space and biking space on all three of those bridges that’s hardly ever used at all.

And I just think that spending \$140,000-\$150,000 on a study . . . would be a total waste of money.

Councilman Callahan

Bicycles are supposed to ride in the roadway, not on the sidewalks.

Peter Crownfield

ref: **Interviews with design firms yield new insights into the utility and value of a pedestrian/biking bridge across the Lehigh**

ref: **A better use for the pedestrian/bike bridge money?**

ref: **Add your name to the many organizations endorsing the pedestrian/biking bridge feasibility study**

ref: **A pedestrian/biking bridge: “The possible is a big deal”**

Funding sources: DCNR grant \$40,000; Northampton County grant \$60,000; City funds \$40,000 = \$140,000

Gadfly encourages you to back the feasibility study for a pedestrian/biking bridge before Council tomorrow night by emailing Council members now (Clerks@bethlehem-pa.gov) and/or by calling in to the meeting during public comment (instructions will be posted here this afternoon).

Smart, progressive cities are walk and bike friendly these days. It's the big thing. It's the "in" thing.

Gadfly should know.

He spent the summer of 2019 reading walkability guru Jeff Speck (at Tony Hanna's good urging, as he remembers it) and shared his reading with you (for instance, [here](#)).

(Speck did a report for Bethlehem in 2009, and his report can be found on [this interesting page of City reports](#) — a page where some reports go to die — especially noteworthy is the 2016 [Trail study](#).)

Gadfly knows walking and busing in this town.

He walked and bused across town to work for almost 50 years.

Which enabled his family of six kids plus gainfully employed Mother Gadfly to exist on one car all those years — foiling the automobile, gas, and insurance industries all at once and leaving small carbon footprint.

We have never had two cars. How many families can say that?

People on New St. set their morning clocks by Gadfly.

When he retired, noting his absence, those people asked his son the neighborhood UPS driver if he died.

Gadfly knows the beauty of South Mountain in spring framed by the blossoming trees adjacent to God's Acre, a view more valuable than any painting (and worthy of Dana's sacred camera).

Gadfly knows that the simple act of getting on the Fahy bridge on both ends can be an adventure, an adventure that increases exponentially with age and the thinning of your hair.

Gadfly knows the roller-coaster-like thrill caused by going down the widely spaced steps on the east route around City Hall and sweeping helplessly (god forbid there was a car pulling in to the garage) through the portal at the bottom.

It's a real wake-up call in the morning.

You roll to a stop just in time for the intersection.

Gadfly knows that the Fahy bridge is 635 of his strides long.

Gadfly knows that it is hard to meditate or plan your work day walking 8 inches from the north bound lane of Fahy bridge roaring at you with speeding cars and hulking fume-y buses.

Gadfly knows that the Fahy bridge walkway was not engineered for the co-existence of bikes and walkers, or the engineer had a dark sense of humor.

Gadfly knows you are wise to check your rear-view mirror for bikes passing you.

Gadfly knows you are wise to scrunch when you see a bike coming toward you.

Gadfly knows that in the winter there is a bitter wind channel blowing west to east 7/8s of the way across on the south side of the Fahy bridge that, if you are not careful, will render you deaf in the right ear for half a day.

Gadfly knows that it might be days before the Fahy bridge walkway was shoveled after a snow storm, and you'd best bone up on the Act of Contrition before walking in the roadway.

Gadfly knows that the south end of the Fahy bridge debouches (good SAT word) you into one of the worst intersections for pedestrians in town.

He thought often that it would be a shame to walk so far from home only to die at this intersection when he had almost made it to work.

Gadfly, like Walt Whitman, was a friend of bus drivers.

Gadfly remembers the smell of the bus station.

Gadfly called his bus route the United Nations Line.

Gadfly remembers the day when he was the only non-POC passenger, the only passenger whose first language was English.

You can learn a lot about Bethlehem riding a bus, or even waiting for a bus at a busy stop.

(Speck has such wonderfully simple suggestions of how to make people want to take the bus, how to make them enjoy it.)

Gadfly is not as intimate with the Minsi Trail and Hill to Hill bridges as he is with the Fahy.

But it's obvious that those roadways are not safe for bikes and that the walkways were not designed for their co-existence with pedestrians.

You must have witnessed the adult game of "pedestrian scramble" played many times daily at the treacherous crossing at the south end of the Minsi.

Gadfly guesses he would say respectfully to Councilman Callahan that the reason the bridges have walking and biking space hardly used is that those spaces were not properly designed for them.

The roads/bridges were designed for cars.

Do you remember the south end of the Fahy in its penultimate existence, where the walkway was through a tunnel/landfill in which every so often you would meet rodents of the human and non-human kind?

What the hell, simply, what the hell.

The question for Councilman Callahan, sir, respectfully, is why walkers and bikers don't use the bridges more for simply utilitarian purposes much less recreational?

Gadfly encourages you to back the feasibility study for a pedestrian/biking bridge before Council tomorrow night by emailing Council members now (Clerks@bethlehem-pa.gov) and/or by calling in to the meeting during public comment (instructions will be posted here this afternoon).

The Bethlehem Gadfly