



Save Helvetia.org

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Protecting Helvetia's farmland, forestland and natural resources

Date: July 16, 2014

SUBJECT: Adverse effects on farming practices when the rural side of the road is "improved" to urban standards

Below are text and photos EXCERPTED from testimony submitted by Save Helvetia to Washington County Board of Commissioners and Metro Council dated June 13, 2010 documenting the adverse effects on farming practices when the rural side of the road right-of-way is "improved" to urban standards. This testimony was a response to the proposed Ordinance 733 of the Urban/Rural Reserves discussions but the problems to farming activities posed by streetlights and sidewalks on the rural side of the road remain real and valid four years later.

EXCERPT:

Sidewalks cause weed build-up

Metro Council heard testimony on May 20, 2010 from Mr. Bob Vanderzanden, a farmer on Jackson School Road and member of the Board of Directors of the Washington County Farm Bureau about the burden this places on farmers. With sidewalks in place, farmers cannot spray up to the edge of the accompanying landscaping due to the risk of harming the landscaping. So, they must leave a strip of land between their fields and the sidewalk and/or landscaping. This fallow strip of land grows noxious weeds, which contaminates the seed crops of the adjacent fields. Seed contamination results in a lower purity of the crop, causing the farmer more expense in cleaning and/or lower compensation per ton. Attached are photos showing the loss of productive farmable land due to curbing and sidewalks and associated weed build-up next to the curbing. Once sidewalks are installed on the rural side, then farmers are responsible for maintaining them and for any liabilities. Why is this additional burden being placed on farmers?

Streetlights cause crops to ripen too soon

In addition, when street lights are added to the rural, farming side of rural roads, these lights cause crops that are in the vicinity of the street lights (such as wheat) to ripen 10 to 14 days earlier than the rest of the crop. The wheat grows faster because of the extra warmth and light coming from the street lights. Trying to harvest a partial crop is not economically feasible and results in reduced income to the farmer.

Agricultural lands need a buffer

Urban growth should be separated from agricultural lands by buffer or transitional areas of open space. In the case where a strong natural buffer doesn't exist, such as a floodplain or creek or river, roads act as buffers between urban areas and agricultural lands. Crossing the road and placing "urban reserves" on the rural reserve side of the road provides NO buffer or edge to the farming activities on the rural reserve side of the road.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: Photos - 2 pages

Adverse Effects on farming practices when the rural side of the road right-of-way is “improved”



Sidewalks and street lights have been installed on the rural side of the road. Note the broad swath of noxious weeds 20-25 feet wide between the sidewalk/streetlight and the cultivated field.

Seeds from noxious weeds contaminate the nearby crop, reducing the crop purity and reducing the price per ton.

NW Cornelius-Schefflin Rd. at NW Heynderickx Washington County



Note the precise border the farmer has been able to achieve in crop placement when there are no sidewalks, curbs or streetlights. He has a definitive buffer to protect his crop and can achieve maximum cultivation.

NW Zion Church Road and NW Gordon Road Washington County

Adverse effects on farming practices when the road right-of-way is “Improved”



Curbing and street lights have been installed on the rural side of the road. Note the proliferation of noxious weeds, in this case, blackberry, that contaminate the adjacent fields.

NW Evergreen Road at
NE 8th Avenue
Washington County



Note the clean buffer for this field of spring wheat - there are no noxious weeds to contaminate the crop and the farmer can spray up to the edge of his fields without worrying about pedestrians walking on sidewalks or about streetlights causing parts of his crop to ripen early.

NW Gordon Road
Washington County