



Willie Karidis  
Project Manager, Route of the Badger  
423 E. Dover St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53207  
414-688-4367  
[willie@railstotrails.org](mailto:willie@railstotrails.org)  
[www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)  
[www.TrailLink.com](http://www.TrailLink.com)

**RE: File# 200695 - Rezoning request for 123 & 147 E Becher St.**

City Plan Commission [planAdmin@milwaukee.gov](mailto:planAdmin@milwaukee.gov)

November 6, 2020

On behalf of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) we are excited by the prospect of the former Filer & Stowell property at 123-147 E Becher St. being improved by Bear Development. RTC is currently deeply involved with a project called The Route of the Badger (ROTB). The ROTB is a partnership with the Southeast Regional Planning Commission and the Wisconsin Bike Fed focused on building a 700-mile trail and on-street connected network in the seven southeast counties of WI. Focusing on existing trail infrastructure such as the KK River, Oak Leaf and Beerline Trails in Milwaukee County, the ROTB has identified potential corridors for development of trail connections and the subject property contains a vital link in providing a safe trail option for literally thousands of Milwaukee residents.

As can be seen in the attached Exhibit, the subject property contains a strip of former railbed which has been vacated. Former rail sections further north and directly south of the property have been developed by the City into the KK River Trail. We believe the Bear Development project should include a provision for an easement that would restore the former rail right-of-way that would enable an off-street trail connection. While an ultimate vision to fully connect the trail sections likely will take several more years, the segment on the subject property is an important link. This segment would not only help connect existing trails, but would bring vitality and engagement to the Bear redevelopment and the neighborhood. It has been consistently concluded that trail development has myriad economic, health, and quality-of-life benefits.<sup>1</sup> As the character of this once industrial area changes and requires rezoning, so too should the supporting infrastructure enhancements.

Building out a network of trails is hard work. It not only takes lots of coordination between various stakeholders but it requires long-term vision to see how a simple trail can transform the lives of community members long beyond our lifetime. Creating alternative public transportation options, the encouragement of public health activities and generating economic opportunities for the surrounding land as businesses grow around new trail infrastructure. RTC supports this landmark opportunity as we recognize the decision for creating a better Milwaukee is now.

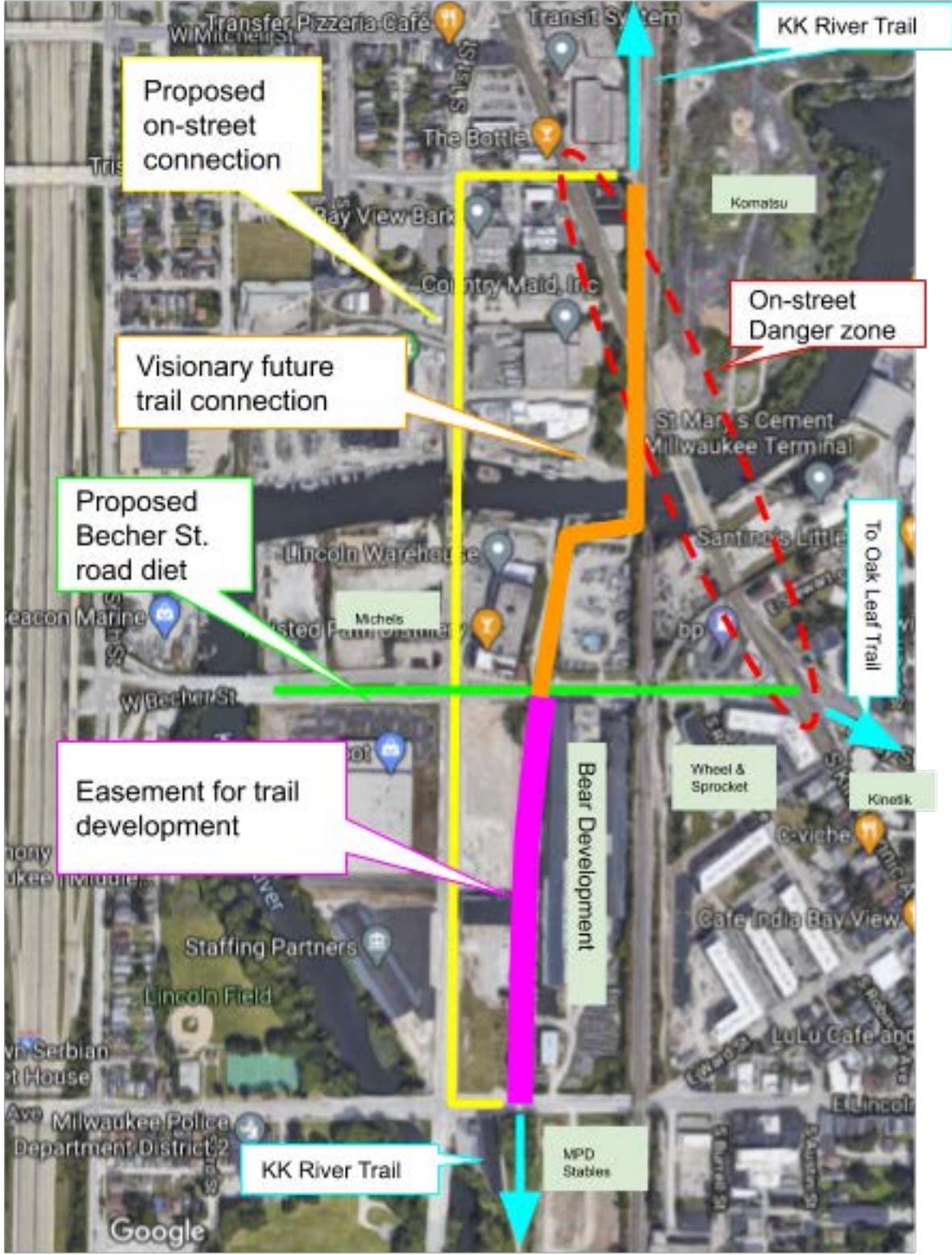
**As part of the City's approval processes, we would support a proposal to include an easement to the City to support connecting the KK River Trail.** We otherwise support the rezoning application.

Sincerely,

*Willie Karidis*

Willie Karidis  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Route of the Badger Program Manager

1. <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/rails-to-trails-conservancy-releases-latest-research-on-net-economic-impact-of-trails-in-wisconsin-during-ceremony-for-2019-rail-trail-champion-award/>



Proposed on-street connection

Visionary future trail connection

Proposed Becher St. road diet

Easement for trail development

KK River Trail

On-street Danger zone

To Oak Leaf Trail

Bear Development

KK River Trail

MPD Stables