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Madison, WI 53708

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## **RE: Addressing Perennial Traffic Safety Concerns: Request for Action on Williamson and Jenifer Streets**

Dear Members of the Transportation Commission,

On behalf of the Marquette Neighborhood Association (MNA), I am writing to express our deep concern over persistent traffic safety issues in our neighborhood, particularly in light of the most recent crash into the storefront of Mother Fools Coffee Shop. This incident marks at least the third time that this beloved neighborhood business has been struck by a vehicle in recent history, and it follows a troubling pattern of similar incidents.

Crashes in the Marquette neighborhood are alarmingly frequent: Between 2020 and 2024, Williamson Street alone recorded a total of 122 crashes. By way of comparison, Monroe Street, which shares similar characteristics in building setbacks, land use, and cyclist and pedestrian activity, experienced only 46 crashes during the same period, reflecting a notable disparity of 165% more crashes on Williamson Street. Over the past several years, multiple businesses along Williamson Street (Ha Long Bay, Change Boutique, and Mother Fools, among others) have suffered property damage and disruption due to some of these vehicular collisions. These incidents have raised serious concerns among neighbors and business owners alike about the safety and livability of one of Madison's most vibrant and walkable neighborhoods.

In just two short sessions, a mother, concerned about speeding cars next to where her children play, took traffic safety into her own hands. Equipped with a radar gun, she documented a troubling pattern on Jenifer Street.

- May 19th, 4:45–6:25 PM: 223 vehicles, including 20 buses, passed by with speeds reaching up to 38 mph.
- May 23rd, 9:30–11:30 AM: Another 164 vehicles were recorded, including another 20 buses, with speeds as high as 34 mph.

Across both days, 328 out of 391 vehicles, a staggering 84%, were speeding. This wasn't a fluke. It was a snapshot of a street where speeding is the rule, not the exception.

Williamson and Jenifer Streets are not just vehicular commuter routes; they serve as vibrant, densely populated corridors. Families walk to shops and cafes, children bike to and from nearby schools, and many neighbors rely on walking or biking for daily transportation. The streets' character and infrastructure have long reflected this active, people-centered usage. Yet the ongoing dangerous and stressful traffic conditions along our streets create daily concerns for many of those who rely on these modes of travel.

We acknowledge and appreciate the past willingness of City of Madison departments to engage in dialogue around traffic safety. Notably, following the 2022 crash at the former Willy



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Street Treasure Shop location, a round table meeting was convened with stakeholders from Transportation and Traffic Engineering, the police and fire departments, and Madison Metro. That meeting sought to gather feedback and explore collaborative solutions. Unfortunately, despite initial momentum, including a tentative agreement to study and trial a rush hour lane removal, progress stalled. Traffic Engineering ultimately withdrew its commitment based on predictive modeling results that have not been updated in several years.

Given the changing traffic dynamics, however, it is essential that the City take this opportunity to revisit its assumptions. As shared by Tom Mohr from the City of Madison, East Washington Avenue is currently operating at only 50% capacity (still below 2019 traffic volumes), and John Nolen Drive has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. These notable shifts in traffic volume suggest that commuting patterns have fundamentally changed, reducing overall demand for road space and opening the door for transformative redesigns in our neighborhood.

In light of these facts, we urge the Transportation Commission to apply the principles of Madison's [Vision Zero](#) initiative and its adoption of the [Safe Systems Approach](#), which recognizes that humans make mistakes, but infrastructure must be designed to prevent those mistakes from resulting in serious injury or death. Madison has already demonstrated a commitment to this approach through efforts like [20 is Plenty](#), [Safe Streets Madison](#), and data-driven project planning. However, streets in the Marquette neighborhood remain absent in these efforts, despite being part of the [High Injury Network](#) identified in the [Vision Zero Action Plan](#).

We are, therefore, formally requesting the following:

#### 1. Updated Traffic Modeling & Data Analysis

Conduct a new modeling and data review for Williamson and Jenifer Streets by early fall 2025, prior to the John Nolen Drive reconstruction. This analysis should include data from 2017 to the present, accounting for shifting traffic patterns and post-pandemic commuting behavior. Notably, as cited by City staff, East Washington Avenue is still operating at just 50% capacity, suggesting room for rebalancing traffic volumes across the grid.

#### 2. Trial Elimination of Rush Hour Lanes

Revisit the previously supported, but ultimately shelved, trial removal of rush traffic lanes on Williamson Street. This strategy is supported by the Vision Zero Action Plan, which states that "... neighborhoods implementing these changes might be required to remove parking spaces, narrow travel lanes, or reduce the total amount of lanes designated for cars" (p. 11). A simple first step to reducing car lanes could be covering or bagging "No Parking" signs during peak periods, which could yield



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valuable insights. If the trial provides positive results, we ask that the removal be made permanent.

### 3. Vision-Zero Aligned Traffic Calming Measures

Implement or pilot infrastructure aligned with the Safe Systems principles, including:

- Curb bumpouts
- Protective planters between travel lanes
- Raised intersections and speed tables (as seen on Monroe Street)
- Bollards at vulnerable corners
- Leading left turn signals

These requests directly support Madison's Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2035, and align with the strategies already highlighted in recent newsletters and the city's Vision Zero Action Plan (pp. 11, 28-29). The most recent newsletter also specifically noted that high-speed corridors are being redesigned to prevent crashes. The disproportionate number of crashes on Williamson Street, and the excessive speeding on Jenifer Street, are exactly the types of problems Vision Zero was built to address.

Traffic Engineering has noted that while Williamson Street carries less traffic volume than East Washington Avenue and the Johnson/Gorham pair, it experiences a high number of accidents. This situation should underscore the need for implementing safety measures on both Williamson Street and Jenifer Street that slow drivers down. We understand the concern that any changes may redirect some traffic to adjacent residential streets, but Vision Zero explicitly prioritizes the most vulnerable road users, such as people walking, biking, or riding transit, "over high speeds for those who choose to drive" (City of Madison, [Complete Streets Guide](#), p. 1). Endangering the safety of our neighbors, homes, and businesses in order to expedite traffic flow through our neighborhood is neither acceptable nor aligned with City guidelines. To quote a neighbor: "Our neighborhood is not just for the benefit of commuters. We have people living here trying to not get hit by cars and our own businesses suffering from this issue."

The 2015 narrowing of Williamson Street by four feet was a major win for the neighborhood, demonstrating what can be accomplished through collaboration and persistence. It's clear there is growing consensus among neighbors and businesses that eliminating the rush hour lanes, along with other measures, could improve safety and promote sustainability that align with the City's stated goals. Reducing car dependency can encourage more walking, biking, and bus rapid transit use, while also saving on long-term infrastructure costs and generating additional ridership revenue for Madison Metro.



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In closing, we urge the Transportation Commission to act decisively. The recurring crashes are not isolated events; they are symptoms of systemic issues that demand a data-informed, safety-first response. The time to update our understanding and take action is now before lives are lost.

We look forward to your response and to continued collaboration on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Marlisa Kopenski-Condon

President - Marquette Neighborhood Association