

**City of Madison
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL
Correspondence**

DATE: March 27, 2012

TO: Mayor, Alder Johnson

FROM: Owl Creek Neighborhood Resource Team

SUBJECT: NRT Update and Consideration of Various Near-Term Transportation Recommendations

After several meetings reviewing various aspects of the subject neighborhood, the Owl Creek NRT would like to provide a brief update and call out your attention to several potential transportation projects for consideration in the near term.

While the NRT has worked on other issues besides transportation, and the City continues its normal services and activities with this area of the City, a repeating and ongoing concern remains--Owl Creek is very isolated. And to change that the NRT believes transportation plays a key role.

The NRT has reviewed multiple aspects of the neighborhood, including the following:

- Owl Creek Neighborhood Needs Assessment Final Report, dated 1/10/2012, Dept of Community Development
- Transportation Planning / Access Issues Discussions with Dept of Planning and Traffic Engineering, related to the adopted Marsh Road Neighborhood Development Plan, and the Wisconsin Dept of Transportation Plans for Street and Access Changes on USH 51-Stoughton Rd / Voges Rd
- Lafollette High School Owl Creek Youth Project and Possible Metro Transit Route to Serve Owl Creek Neighborhood

As noted in the Needs Assessment Final Report, there are concerns and recommendations for access to transportation, including access to public transportation. Currently the subject neighborhood is far removed from the rest of the City, unconnected from many transportation modes and some 1-2 miles from access to existing transit routes, bike networks, and minimal retail/grocery services. Several residents expressed having to walk over 2 miles to access public transportation at the Stoughton Road Arby's when their vehicle fails, so they could get to work, buy groceries, and/or connect to school and social programming and activities. To walk north, pedestrians have to walk south to Meinders Rd and the frontage road, where no sidewalks exist, and then in the unimproved shoulder of the high speed USH 51 via a foot path to Beltline/USH 51 interchange.

While these transportation concerns were noted in the Needs Assessment survey process, several activities are taking place which could very much help respond to these issues.

Possible Metro Transit Route to Serve Owl Creek Neighborhood

The Lafollette HS Youth Project has been working with Metro in a collaborative and constructive effort to develop a totally new transit route to serve directly the Owl Creek Neighborhood. This study is still in progress, but is an opportunity for 2013. Such a new route is expensive; however, an advantage of this effort is a transit service plan that could actually serve not just Owl Creek but all of the various residential and commercial subdivisions approved in the subject neighborhood, between Siggelkow Rd and Voges Rd. Currently, there is no Metro transit service to these lands (beyond school tripper service when MMSD is in session), although they have been in existence for actually many years (some streets as early as 2001). The City has approved all of these subdivisions for residents and businesses but has not followed through with a full range of urban services. In addition, some residents have commented that the transit service to the Arby's / Dutch Mill Park & Ride lot was cut back eleven years ago, to peak hour and no weekends, meaning service by bus has in effect decreased to this area.

USH 51 EIS project (WisDOT I.D. 5845-06-02)—Needed Local Street Connections, Wetland Mitigation Powers, and Major USH 51 Bike Path

In another effort, the WisDOT has been working with the City since at least the Fall 2011 on a USH 51 EIS project that is exploring access and street changes around the Voges Rd. / Stoughton Rd intersection. While WisDOT's interests are to reconfigure the frontage roads on both sides of USH 51 at Voges Rd, this EIS and follow-on major reconstruction could be an opportunity to include several other local road and bike facility improvements, for multiple interests. Some of the work being considered by WisDOT involves impacts to wetlands—the very same features that have limited any real local street connections further into the Owl Creek Neighborhood from USH 51 and the larger street network. If there were a way for the City and/or WisDOT to use its powers and mobilization efforts to overcome some of the wetlands issues and constraints to better connect Owl Creek, this could be a great opportunity to provide at least some level of linkages to an area that is rather under-served at the present, and unfortunately looks to continue that way in the future, due to the physical conditions and pattern of development in the area.

In addition, a major bike path could be provided along USH 51 from at least Voges Rd, or even to Siggelkow Rd, along the USH 51 right of way and/or frontage roads. This bike path could connect north, past the Beltline, and northward all along the entire length of USH 51 to Pflaum Rd and farther. This would provide a safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle option for the Owl Creek area, and direct access to Lafollette High School and other major activity centers along and around the USH 51 corridor.

In closing, given the information available, the NRT believes some of the efforts noted above are necessary opportunities that the City should explore further—efforts that the NRT believes are of considerable importance to the success of the Owl Creek Neighborhood and environs. The NRT recommends that:

- ❖ Further meetings with managers of appropriate departments be arranged to investigate and develop these interests further.
- ❖ And then the City should work with WisDOT, Madison Metro and others to secure and incorporate these efforts into specific project approvals and budgets.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Respectfully yours, the Owl Creek NRT.