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To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: TC 4/13/22 Agenda 70626
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Please register these comments on the registrar and provide them to the Transportation Commission for the meeting April 13, 2022 in reference to agenda item #5 70626: Final approval of roadway geometry of LMD.

Hello,

It saddens me that we are back here with you, as our neighborhood has been working in a collaborative way to get the City to slow down approval for the Lake Mendota Drive construction plan. The City hasn't done a bad job. It just is in everyone's best interest for the City to do a better job.

The last time we were here, the TC seemed to hear "we don't want sidewalks." And that just isn't true. The Spring Harbor neighborhood and LMD are so unique, there isn't even a one-size-fits-all alternative to sidewalks. Our message is "Conventional sidewalks don't fit everywhere. Alternative pedestrian walkways need to be included to meet the needs of each area." Because, guess what? Standard sidewalks probably belong in some places. They just can't be the first priority.

The Historic Region (East End)

Nearly all the properties on LMD from the City limits at Shorewood Hills to Minocqua Crescent are registered as a National Historic site under the auspices of the the National Park Service. The Site comprises 25 effigy mounds, three of which were excavated to create LMD. All three effigy mounds reside on slopes and merit careful attention, as the items within them may have shifted with the decades of freezing and thawing since the initial road was put down. In addition, LMD cuts through an indigenous road to Lake Wingra designated on maps from the 1700's and 1905. And, there were Ho-Chunk encampments from Mąąką' Mąą'í (Merrill Spring) up the hill through the properties on the southern side of LMD. Neither the road nor the encampments are documented by the City, so are not even being considered as a focus of protection.

Per current policy, the City is not required to involve the Ho-Chunk nation or the City archaeologist until after approval of the geometry. Only then can action be taken to protect the archaeological, historical and cultural features of this region. Given that the 1200 year old dugout canoe pulled from the lake at Spring Harbor Beach garnered international attention, this area is not 'just like the rest of Madison' where the course of time has wrought irreversible changes to our shared human history. The waters of Mąąką' Mąą'í has been flowing year around for all of time. The sacred spring speaks of the need to restore reverence for the water.

It's inconvenient to protect and honor Native American culture and history. AND yet the City must require a comprehensive evaluation of the Historic region before approving the geometry in that area. There must be a plan to protect archaeological and historical features that are being disturbed **before** the digging begins.

The West End

Much of the West End of LMD from Norman Way to Baker Ave is built on swamp. Many of the residents literally have springs in their basements and flooding is so common, one neighbor charmingly pointed out that the house came with a self-cleaning system. The roads to University Ave shoot rainwater down the street so rapidly, drainage systems are insufficient to prevent occasional flooding.

This end doesn't hold much indigenous history, but it does hold a tree canopy that is at risk of being decimated by the current plan. It also holds a much higher flood risk than any other section of LMD. When stormwater flows too freely, it contaminates Lake Mendota and the Well 14 aquifer. When it flows too slowly, it floods homes.

There are compromises required to balance utilizing rain gardens, catchments and the like to absorb rainwater with using gutters, curbs and drains to move the water quickly. When the City prioritizes approval of the geometry of sidewalks over addressing these critical design questions, sidewalks become an encumbrance on water management and an impediment to optimal solutions.

It's inconvenient to intentionally balance the needs of individual homeowners with the need to protect our water. AND yet the City must prioritize these needs over sidewalks. While sidewalks may eventually be part of the solution, they should not be part of the problem.

The Recreational Area

The Spring Harbor recreational area from Minocqua Crescent/Spring Court to Norman Way includes a playground, a dog park, a nature trail, an historical park, two public boat storage areas, a beach, a boat launch, and a school with recreational field and a sledding hill. All in less than two city blocks.

The City is proposing 5 ft wide sidewalks along LMD in this highly utilized area. That one-size-fits-all policy runs counter to serving the actual pedestrian needs in the area. The walkways in that area should be off-road for safety and wide enough for social recreation. Crosswalks to the beach and to Spring Court (road to Mąąką' Mąą'í and boat storage) should be wide and noticeable, and designed as visual traffic calmers.

The dog park is actually a prime location to install natural water management strategies. The slope and the slant of the hill (it has both!) can be utilized to draw down stormwater rather than allow it to shoot directly into the lake. The pedestrian walkway through there should provide a park-like experience, meandering into the greenspace and bordered by rock gardens, rain gardens and tall grasses that optimize green water management. Installing standard sidewalks with standard width terraces precludes working with Madison Parks in the future to integrate naturalized pathways that provide equitable access to the micro-forest that houses the nature trail.

It's inconvenient to consider the recreational value of LMD because framing it as a residential transit route makes it easy to apply a one-size-fits-all sidewalk policy. And that isn't good enough. The City must slow down and do better.

Money

So what would keep the City from taking the time to do a better job? It's been implied and stated almost explicitly. Money. Additional design efforts would cost precious staff time. The

budget has already been approved and who knows what might happen in the future. There isn't any way to get more money for this project because federal grants are scarce.

This is a \$2.5 million project. Is that a lot of money? Well, the City has a \$350 million annual budget. The LMD reconstruction is a .7% of the budget. Double the cost to \$5 million and the percentage is just over 1.4%. The rules for 'rounding off' actually put both those values at 1%. Even doubled, it is not a lot of money if taken in perspective.

No one wants to waste taxpayer money, but the cost is not the problem. There are federal grants available to optimize water management using green technology that focuses on sustainability. The City just has to commit to doing an Environmental Impact Study first. And integrate this design with work on the Spring Harbor Watershed project (also a City department). And that takes time. The East End's designation as an Historic Site allows access to competitive public and private grants. If the City provides the parklets, waysides and pedestrian respites by design, funding that brings forward indigenous voices and the importance of water through art installations and experiential education is gifted from outside the City budget. That kind of design takes time. And, it could be done with help from the Madison Sewerage District 'ShopOne' that was established for the purpose of providing outreach to the community about the importance of water. The City just needs to use the full complement of its resources.

Its inconvenient to consider alternatives to 'sidewalks belong everywhere'. AND yet there are many alternatives that would improve the recreation, cultural value and sustainability of this area. The City must slow down and make a better plan. It's inconvenient. But the consequences of rushing this decision will have consequences for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Maureen Rickman