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**Sent:** Friday, April 15, 2022 1:16 PM

**To:** Schoone, Matalin <MSchoone@cityofmadison.com>

**Cc:** Wolfe, James <JWolfe@cityofmadison.com>

**Subject:** Approving roadway geometry for the reconstruction of Lake Mendota Dr. from Baker Ave. to the City of Madison limits. (19th AD)

(BCC: All Alders)

Colleagues,

I wanted to share with you some resources about the upcoming vote for [Approving roadway geometry for the reconstruction of Lake Mendota Dr. from Baker Ave. to the City of Madison limits](#). I expect there will likely be a lot of public comment about this item on Tuesday. This is a three year project that is scheduled to begin this year. It has generated a lot of engagement, including lots of meetings and e-mails. I wanted to provide this e-mail in case you wanted more background. I'm also including an updated version of a [blog post](#) I shared with my residents on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any questions about the info below or the project itself, please feel free to reach out to the me or the project manager, Jim Wolfe.

Thanks!

**Summary of City Meetings and Links to Video:**

PIM #1 (1/11/2022):

- City presented project goals, existing conditions, existing City policies and procedures for road reconstruction and to hear from residents. This meeting lasted 2 hours and 33 minutes and included over 100 questions/comments
- [Jan. 11, 2022 Public Information Meeting Recording](#) | [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Transportation Commission Meeting (1/12/2022). (TC received shorter version of 1/11/2022 PIM presentation). [Video](#) (1:13:22 mark)

PIM #2 (2/24/2022):

- City presented preliminary plan to get feedback. Reacted to previous feedback and concept suggestions. This meeting lasted 2 hours and 53 minutes and had over 100 questions/comments
- [Feb. 24, 2022 Public Information Meeting Recording](#) | [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

PIM #3 (4/4/2022)

- City presented updated plan. Reacted to previous feedback, resident requests and concept suggestions. This meeting lasted 2 hours and 16 minutes and had dozens of questions/comments
- [April 4, 2022 Public Information Meeting Recording](#) | [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

#### BPW (4/6/2022)

- City presented updated plan. The board heard from around a dozen residents.
- [Video](#) : Staff presentation (and Board Q&A for Jim): 2:53:00 - Public Comment: 3:29:00 - Board Discussion: 4:17:00
- Board recommend with one member objection to approve the project, but requested TC consider sidewalks on just one side of the street. In the plan, there is a section with sidewalks on both sides.

#### TC (4/13/2022)

- City presented updated plan. The board heard from around 16 residents.
- [Video](#): Staff presentation 1:42:12 - Public Comment: 2:01:00 - Board Discussion: 3:09:49 (~30 minutes of board discussion)
- Commission voted against an amendment to do sidewalks on just one-side (2 for amendment, 6 against). Commission voted to recommend staff's proposal by a vote of 7-1.

#### **A version of my long LMD Blog post with some updated data:**

As most people in the Spring Harbor neighborhood know by now, The City of Madison is [planning to reconstruct Lake Mendota Dr.](#) Due to the size/scope of the work, this work will be completed over several years, with work being completed on several blocks each year. In 2022, work is planned for the western most blocks, in 2023, the eastern blocks, and the middle blocks in 2024. The length of the total reconstructed street is just about 1.2 miles.

At the 3/29 Common Council meeting, a [resolution](#) was introduced to approve the roadway geometry for reconstruction of Lake Mendota Dr. from Baker Ave. to the City of Madison limits at Shorewood. Public comment in front of the council, Alder debate, and the Council vote will happen on April 19th.

Originally, this resolution was expected to be introduced on March 15th and approved on March 29th, but the new timeline is for introduction on March 29th and approval at the April 19th council meeting.

I wanted to provide a review of major past events involved in this project, as well as the future schedule. This is not an all-inclusive list. I've been discussing this project with neighbors and the neighborhood for many years. This doesn't include all the other

engagement staff and I have done with individuals and small groups in the last few months, including via phone, in person and zoom meetings.

- Past discussion on my blog:
  - [10/31/2021](#): link to new engineering page for the project, info on survey work that started
  - [11/5/2021](#): part of 2022 budget blog article
  - [12/19/2021](#): notice of 1/11/2022 Public Information Meeting (PIM) and survey
  - [1/10/2022](#): Reminder of 1/11/2022 PIM
  - [1/16/2022](#): Sharing of 1/11/2022 recording and presentation, review of project schedule (including future committee meeting dates)
  - [2/10/2022](#): Save the date for 2/24/2022 PIM
  - [2/13/2022](#): Another save the date for 2/24/2022 PIM
  - [2/14/2022](#): Registration link for 2/24/2022 PIM
  - [2/21/2022](#): Another reminder for 2/24/2022 PIM, link to survey results, link to existing conditions
  - [2/24/2022](#): Link to new survey, link to presentation for 2/24/2022 meeting, link to preliminary plan (that was set to be introduced to public that evening)
  - [3/6/2022](#): Reminder for 3/9/2022 Transportation Commission Meeting
  - [3/21/2022](#): Save the date for 4/4/2022 PIM
  - [3/28/2022](#): Long blog post this update is based on
  - [4/3/2022](#): Reminder for PIM and BPW
  - [4/5/2022](#): BPW Timing Note
  - [4/10/2022](#): Reminder for TC
- Fall 2021: survey work to record current conditions
- Late December: Postal mailed notice to residents on Lake Mendota Drive for 1/11/2022 PIM
- 1/11/2022: 1st PIM for City to present project goals, existing conditions, existing City policies and procedures for road reconstruction and to hear from residents. This meeting lasted 2 hours and 33 minutes and included over 100 questions/comments

- 1/12/2022: Transportation Commission received shorter version of 1/11/2022 presentation
- Early Feb: Post cards mailed for 2/24
- 2/24/2022: 2nd PIM for City to present preliminary plan and get feedback. This meeting lasted 2 hours and 53 minutes and had over 100 questions/comments
- 3/9/2022: Preliminary Street Design for LMD to Transportation Commission (TC). Dozens of residents shared their concerns and feedback. TC indicated their support for the preliminary plan and asked for minor changes.
- 3/28/2022: Revised [plan released based on feedback](#)
- 3/29/2022: Introduction of [geometry](#) at Council Meeting (no discussion or debate)
- 4/4/2022: [3rd Public Information Meeting](#)
- 4/6/2022: Geometry for LMD to [Board of Public Works](#)
- 4/13/2022: Geometry for LMD to [Transportation Committee](#)
- 4/19/2022: Geometry for LMD at [Common Council](#) for Approval
- 4/29/2022: Mail Estimated Assessments, Public Hearing Notice for 2022 Project (estimated date)
- 5/11/2022: BPW Public Hearing on 2022 Project (estimated date)
- 5/24/2022: Common Council Hearing on 2022 Project (estimated date)
- 6/9/2022: Bid 2022 Project (estimated date)
- 8/1/2022: Begin Construction on 2022 Project (estimated date)
- Winter 2022: Start public meetings for 2023 reconstruction project

There has been a great deal of misinformation spread about this project. I highly recommend reviewing the [project page](#). It has recordings of the previous public information meetings, the presentations made at those meetings (which should answer a lot of questions) and the preliminary plan.

I wanted to take this opportunity to address some of the frequently asked questions/comments I've seen. I've interacted with many residents about this project. I appreciate that engagement and remain open to discussing all aspects of the project with anyone interested.

## **What does approving the roadway geometry mean?**

The City of Madison Engineering Division is proposing a preliminary design through the entire extents of the planned projects, which includes: reconstruction of Lake Mendota Dr. to include curb and gutter and a typical street width of 24 ft. to 26 ft. to accommodate two-way vehicle and bike travel on the street with parking allowed on one side, and to include sidewalks as shown the preliminary plan (on one side on the westerly and easterly ends, and on both sides in the middle section), along with traffic calming measures such as, but not limited, to bump outs, traffic circles, and speed humps.

Slight modifications may be made as part of the detailed, final design for each project in order to accommodate additional tree protection or space for new tree plantings, modifications for stormwater treatment features such as terrace rain gardens, adjustments to the locations of traffic calming devices, preservation of historic and cultural resources, or as necessary due to grades/topography.

## **How does the updated plan differ from what was presented on 2/24?**

- New bump out at 5431 LMD (helps protect tree, provides traffic calming, and hopefully helps protect private rain garden)
- New bump out at Merrill Springs (street will be even further away from the effigy mound, and more traffic calming)
- Start narrowing LMD just east of boat launch instead of just east of Spring Ct. intersection
- Was able to fit sidewalk along north side from Spring Ct. to Risser – sidewalk stays within existing pavement edge on that side
  - Now have continuous sidewalk along the north side
- Additional narrowing from Spring Ct. to Risser, with widened areas to allow on-street parking and help fit in the sidewalk
- Reduced the speed humps down to 2 (raised crossing is still in there) and moved them to more of the downhill areas
- Save the white pine tree by the bathroom building in Spring Harbor park

## **Trees**

One goal of this project was to always preserve the incredible tree canopy on Lake Mendota Drive. This goal was strongly endorsed in all the feedback we received on the project. City staff walked the entire project with the City's Forestry department to inventory the trees in the City's right-of-way. As part of this inventory, staff identified

trees that need to be removed due to their health, trees that could be saved with a creative sidewalk design and trees that would have to be removed due to sidewalks.

**In the [plan](#), staff identified trees with health issues that would be removed regardless of the project with an X. Trees that are being removed due to sidewalk installation are identified with a X and red circle.**

## **Tree Removal due to Sidewalks**

Baker Ave to Capital Ave: There is 1 tree being removed (an invasive Black Locust).

From Capital Ave to Spring Ct: there is approximately 6 trees that will be remove at 5502 LMD from a large cluster of trees (some will remain in that cluster) and another invasive black locust at 5543 LMD.

Spring Ct to City limits (Shorewood): Possibly 1 at 4938 LMD, 2 at 4922 LMD, ~1 from a cluster of trees at 4918, and ~2 from a cluster of trees at 4900.

Over a 1.2 mile stretch, this is incredible work by Engineering and Forestry staff to balance safety, accessibility, equity, and trees.

**The claim that a large number of trees will be removed due to sidewalk implementation is simply untrue. Out of hundreds of trees in this stretch, fewer than 15 will be removed due to the addition of sidewalks.**

## **Process / Plan**

Like all road reconstruction projects in our city, Lake Mendota Drive has been treated with an incredible level of detail based on the City's long-established policies and procedures for these types of projects. That includes understanding the unique aspects of topography of the area and working to make sure the new configuration addresses safety, accessibility, and equity concerns.

Although I've been talking to people and the neighborhood association about this project for years, the project page on the City's website wasn't launched until late October. The project was in the Mayor's [proposed] Executive 2022 Capital budget released in September.

The City has had a long-standing policy that guides street reconstruction projects and it requires that safety and accessibility be prioritized in all project. An equitable society is one in which safety and freedom of movement are accessible to all and when it comes to

street design, that means including sidewalks wherever possible. This is a significant part of the City's policy.

It's understandable that people were not familiar with that piece of the policy prior to the January 11th meeting, because unless you've lived in a reconstruction area before or have particular interest in these policies, why would you need to know that? However, it seems that people conflated the explanation of this policy with the idea that the city had a full plan prepared all along. In fact, an extraordinary level of effort went into developing a specific plan for Lake Mendota Drive, with the goal of including sidewalks where possible. That plan has since been modified in several significant ways in response to community feedback.

In short, whether or not sidewalks were going to be part of the plan was never up for debate, but that is not the same as saying the plan as a whole was pre-decided. The inclusion of sidewalks is not up for debate because sidewalks in cities (and we live in a city) are necessary for maximizing freedom of movement for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

In addition, though there has been a great deal of protest against sidewalks, primarily for aesthetic reasons, I have received communications from residents who shared their desire for sidewalks and who do not currently walk in the neighborhood because they feel unsafe. Some have shared that they have felt too intimidated by the tenor of conversation in the neighborhood to share those sentiments publicly. I will be honest – this is infuriating and heartbreaking to me. I also live on Lake Mendota Drive, and I want to live in a neighborhood where people feel empowered to share their concerns and positions as neighbors who all care for our community.

There will always be give and take in any project like this and there will always be some people who are dissatisfied. I understand that and it's why I work so hard to respond to every resident who reaches out to me. I will continue to do. If you would like to discuss this project, or any other, please reach out.

## **Environmental Concerns**

I was appointed Alder of District 19 on August 7, 2018. Less than 2 weeks into my term, District 19 experienced incredible flooding due to a huge rainstorm. I had already entered the job worried about the effects of climate change on our City and that event became a defining moment. That wasn't the first time the City experienced flooding and certainly not the last time, but after that I supported substantial investments in stormwater mitigation. I have continued to support our engineering department in their water quality and stormwater management efforts. That includes attending numerous small and large neighborhood meetings and spearheading support for large financial efforts towards

mitigation. Additionally, I have worked with the Water Utility to investigate and mitigate the rapidly increasing salt content at Well 14.

Lake Mendota Drive is not a large contributing factor to salt in Well 14. University Ave and the Hilldale commercial area are the largest contributing factors by a large margin. The plan for reconstruction does not add more pavement by adding sidewalks. Due to the narrowing of the street, even with the proposed sidewalks, the plan actually has less pavement ((existing 25,900 S.Y. vs 24,800 S.Y. in 3/29/2022 plan). That's even before we consider permeable alternatives to concrete for this project, which will be considered.

In addition to alternative to concrete for sidewalks, staff is exploring some unique ways to further decrease salt usage on Lake Mendota Drive. I hope to share more details on that soon.

Staff will also work to promote alternatives to salt for sidewalks.

## **Burial Mounds**

There are a number of mounds and areas of archaeological significance along Lake Mendota Drive, but Lake Mendota Drive as a whole is not on the National Register of Historic Places. The City has contracted with an archaeologist to help research known areas, provide design recommendations, and when necessary, obtain required permits. If required, an archaeologist will also be on site to monitor construction in these areas.

There is no indication that the City can't narrow the street and add sidewalks due to the historic nature of the neighborhood.

The City has spoken to the Ho-Chunk Nation and they were OK with the City reconstructing the street.

-Keith F.

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