

Dear Transportation Commission Members:

I am writing to request that you keep the motor vehicle barriers in place along Vilas Park Drive in Vilas Park.

I strongly support keeping Vilas Park Drive motor vehicle free. After using Vilas Drive frequently prior to it being closed to motor vehicles, and almost every day since, I can testify that Vilas Drive, itself, has turned into an incredible community amenity.

People from all over now come to Vilas Park Drive. It was especially wonderful when the Vilas Drive and Arboretum Drive closures to motor vehicles coincided, forming a beautiful Wingra shore-line stretch into the Arboretum for walking, biking and running. (I'm not alone in sharing this perspective, 1,282 people signed the petition, <https://www.change.org/KeepArboretumDriveSafe> )

I see people with cars readily utilizing the parking lot by the tennis courts as an entry point to Vilas Drive (and the surrounding area, including the Arboretum). I see many others who bike, run or walk to Vilas Drive; all these people are now enjoying a motor-vehicle free Vilas Drive for walking, biking, running, scootering, skateboarding, carting their watercraft to the "hidden" paddle landing, and pushing strollers and wheelchairs.

I question the premise that car accessibility equates to people accessibility, as I've witnessed Vilas Drive, motor vehicle free, become a truly multi-generational community gathering space accessible to people with many different abilities.

I now see more older people enjoying fresh air and exercise, and I regularly see older adults with canes, wheel chairs, walking sticks, and walkers enjoying the road without the threat of a fast car putting them off balance or simply creating a less enjoyable experience.

So many families, including mine, are also now able to take our younger kids safely on bikes, scooters, skate boards, strollers and walks to Vilas Drive--which was previously rendered largely inaccessible due to unsafe motor-vehicle/small kid conflicts. Now, I see parents teaching their kids to bike on Vilas Drive. I see families with small children fishing where the shore is close to the road.

Paddlers are able to safely navigate and cart their canoes, kayaks, and paddleboards on Vilas Drive without the presence of motor-vehicles.

Of critical importance, I've witnessed more racial diversity, and people from all parts of our community, not just the surrounding neighborhood, enjoying Vilas Drive as a destination.

There has just been a huge increase in the general community enjoyment of the Lake Wingra shore at Vilas too. With Vilas Drive motor-vehicle free, I see people on the shore meditating, looking out over the water, fishing with small children running about, relaxing in hammocks, picnicking, and simply sunbathing in the grass. This was not occurring when motor vehicles drove along Vilas Drive. It was often deserted.

In terms of access to the shelter, motor vehicle accommodations can and have been easily be for certain needs such as weddings at the shelter or ice skate rental in the winter (if this is still the plan during the COVID-19 pandemic), and this can continue. There is also parking right by the beach, beach house, and paddler entry and storage along the beach in the current configuration, allowing easy access to these amenities from a car or truck.

I hope you will continue to allow our community to enjoy Vilas Park Drive as a safe place of respite, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic where it is important for people to keep socially distanced while outside--adding motor vehicles to the mix along Vilas Park Drive will not allow for this to safely occur.

Best,  
Sally Lehner

Discontinuing the Shared Street Program for the winter would reopen Vilas Park Drive for through traffic, which is incompatible with use of the Park for recreational purposes. I strongly oppose this action for the Vilas Park Drive and offer the following suggestion for opening part of the Drive to vehicular traffic in order to access the shelter/warming house when the lagoon and hockey rink are open for skating:

1. Keep Vilas Park Drive closed from the stone bridge to the shelter parking lot and allow two-way vehicular access to the shelter parking lot from the east entrance of the Drive. This would leave part of the Drive for exclusive use of pedestrians, bicyclists and other non- vehicular users while providing access to the shelter and skating.
2. Restart the Shared Street Program on Vilas Park Drive, closing the Drive to vehicular traffic, at the end of the ice skating season.

Thank you.

Wendy Fearnside  
■ Van Buren St.  
Madison, WI 53711

To whom it may concern,

We are so saddened to hear that the city will be opening up the Vilas Park Drive again. Sounds like you are not listening to "people" in this community! Makes no sense at all. We walk thru the park every day since covid started and feel so much safer. Especially with winter wear and masks it will be even more difficult to stay clear of speeding cars coming by. Ridiculous to change something that is working so well during this difficult time.

Jane and Michael Ferris

Dear transportation commission,

Thank you in advance for considering our opinions and suggestions regarding agenda item #7 tonight (see attached). In short, we ask you to consider opposing reopening Vilas Park Drive.



**Casey Hanson**

Executive Director at [Friends of Lake Wingra](#)

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**PLEASE NOTE:** *Mr. Hanson's attachment is separated from this document but included in Legistar.*

Please continue to restrict car traffic on Vilas Park Drive.

Sent from my iPad  
James Knight  
■ Keyes Ave.  
Madison, WI 53711

Do not close Vilas Park drive

So many people use it for canoe, kayak, row boat launching. How are people going to get to the skating rink and warming house in the cold winter??

Many people cannot walk to see the beautiful lake and others have little time to find parking and walk that far—speaking of parking—count the number of parking spaces lost-I am really sick of the city taking so many parking spaces from our already cramped neighborhood losing 3-4 spaces for each “boulevard crossing”, duplexes and apartments with less than needed parking, stores that no longer have to have parking, etc Don't even consider closing the drive until you create more off street parking or winter parking will be awful

I favor the plan to keep the drive through

Keep it open for the skaters, the ice fishermen, the kayak/canoe/rowboaters who park and launch from the drive, the elderly who can't walk that far, those that want to enjoy our “Park and Pleasure DRIVES that don't have time to find a parking place and walk that far—speaking of parking—how many neighborhood street parking spaces have been eliminated by “boulevard crosswalks”, new construction increasing the density, stores without off street parking etc Need more parking before taking away others!

I support the idea of leaving the drive through with parking and creating a separate bike/ pedestrian walk way

Dear Commission members and Alder Evers,

I do not understand why the commission is proposing this new change. Who is requesting that the Vilas Park Drive be opened to cars again? I think the traffic engineers need to get out of their bubble and experience the park as it is now. There is no good reason to open it again. The drive has become an amazing amenity for people of all abilities from all over our community to have a space where they can enjoy the lakefront and maintain social distancing without the threat of getting run over by cars speeding to work. Hundreds of people use it everyday including myself and my family for walking, biking, portaging, and soon to be cross country skiing. Alternative measures can be made for people to access the shelter for skating, let alone the idea that those people can walk in from available parking areas by the tennis courts or zoo.

**DO THE RIGHT THING IN THIS PANDEMIC. KEEP IT CLOSED TO MOTOR VEHICLES.**

David Gevers

Former Vilas Neighborhood Association President 2014-2015

Please keep it closed. I love taking my kids along there on bikes or on foot and to lose the space/freedom of knowing there aren't cars coming at us would be such a loss.

Thanks

Melissa

██████████ Madison St, Madison, WI 53711

Transportation Commission Members:

If Vilas Park Drive is closed to vehicles, I would hope provision could be made to allow the current and any future boat ramp to be accessed by car so canoes and kayaks may continue to be launched to Lake Wingra. The alternative Wingra Park ramp is often congested and difficult to access.

Thank you for your consideration.

Thomas Krauskopf

█ Hilltop Drive  
Madison, WI 53711

Dear City of Madison Transportation Commission, CC Alder Tag Evers, I am registering support of Item 7 in today's transportation commission meeting regarding the re-opening of Vilas Park Drive to vehicle traffic. While the pedestrian and bicycle use of Vilas Park Dr is great, I believe the road is sufficiently large enough to allow for safe multiple use. Lack of vehicle access reduces accessibility of the beach, fishing, shelter, and skating options for those with physical mobility needs or young children, especially in winter. The drive also provides an alternate, picturesque drive toward South Madison, alleviating some traffic along residential streets. I would support placement of traffic calming measures, better lane identification/separation, and low speed limits.

Sincerely,  
Ankur Desai, resident of █ Harrison St, Vilas neighborhood

As a 22-year resident of Madison, a homeowner in the Lake Wingra watershed, and a member of Friends of Lake Wingra, I oppose the reopening of Vilas Park Drive. I believe that the lake benefits from less vehicular traffic on the road - keeping the road closed to traffic will greatly reduce the need for harmful road salt or sand, which is very detrimental to lake quality.

i also believe that all members of our west, south and southwest side communities benefit from no cars on this road. It is safer for walkers, runners and bikers. It is safer for children and families picnicking in the park or walking to the beach. It is safer for wildlife such as migrating snow geese, tundra swans, sandhill cranes, salamanders, toads and turtles - all of which do not know when it's safe to cross the road in front of cars.

please keep Vilas Park Drive CLOSED.  
Thank you for the opportunity to submit this comment.

Mary Ellen Gabriel

I want to go on record opposing the reopening of Vilas Park Dr to vehicular traffic. The current system is working fine, the plan is to permanently close it when it is reconstructed in a few years time, so we should leave it closed now since that is the best option for park users.

Donald Katz  
█ jefferson St, Madison, Wi 53711

This is a slam dunk: those who used it as their am commute have long ago figured out another route leaving us walkers, joggers and bikers blissfully Alone. Set up signs on south end for access only to the parking lot And drop off at hockey etc area.

Marianne Ewig  
█ S Orchard St, Madison, WI 53715

Please keep Vilas Park Drive open for bikes and pedestrians, and protected from cars. I walk and bike there frequently.

Thanks.

Glen Ecklund  
█ S. Orchard St., █

Madison, WI 53715

Dear Transportation Commission Members,

Since yesterday afternoon, I have received 39 emails on the topic of re-opening Vilas Park Drive to through traffic.

36 of these emails were opposed, 2 in favor, and one in the middle from a resident who would like special accommodations for handicapped residents should the Drive remain closed.

Prior to the pandemic, nearly all the through traffic was due to commuters cutting through the Park on there way somewhere else, at times at high rates of speed and with apparent disregard for the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

The closure of the Drive as part of the Shared Streets program has activated the Drive in a rather remarkable manner, one that has allowed more appreciation of the natural beauty along the Wingra shoreline by actual Park users.

I believe the closure of Vilas Park Drive was one of the very few actual road closures employed under Shared Streets, rather than reducing traffic to local residents only. The reason for that is simple -- nearly all the vehicular traffic was not by Park users.

There are ways to accommodate Park users in an equitable manner that do not require opening up the Drive to commuters. Let's work on those. It's entirely premature to do otherwise.

Let me close by saying whenever there is a conflict between staff and stakeholders, it's incumbent upon policy-makers to slow down the process to make 100% certain we are engaging residents, to make sure we are not employing top-down decision-making processes that exclude those impacted by these decisions.

For that reason, I ask that this body strongly urge Traffic Engineering and the Parks Dept to refer this matter to the Board of Parks Commissioners. Please view this as a matter separate from the rest of the Shared Streets program, particularly considering the overlap with the ongoing Vilas Park Master Plan planning process.

I have multiple meetings going on tonight, but am hoping to be present to both speak and answer questions.

Thanks for all that you do.

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Tag Evers

**DISTRICT 13 ALDER**

CITY OF MADISON

(608) 424-2580

[district13@cityofmadison.com](mailto:district13@cityofmadison.com)

Hi Tag,

Thanks for sending out information on this and including Jim's assessment. Is the Commission making a decision tonight? Does a decision on this need to get approved by the City Council? This is not enough notice on a very important issue impacting our neighborhood and community. My husband and I can't make arrangements to attend the meeting at 5pm (and I already made plans to attend the virtual VNA meeting regarding the Vilas Park Master Plan at 7). I suppose many others won't be able to participate in this process either because of the lack of notice. This decision really needs to have robust community input--hopefully it will not be made tonight without that.

Take care,  
Sally Lehner