

**STATEMENT TO MADISON COMMON COUNCIL
CONCERNING
PROPOSED CAPITAL AVENUE TRAFFIC ISLANDS**

February 27, 2007 Meeting

by Roy U. Schenk
1640 Capital Ave.
255-4028

To Members of the COMMON COUNCIL

SUMMARY

Some residents of Capital Avenue decided to seek Traffic Islands as a way to slow traffic on Capital Avenue. (See enclosed Map.) Alderman Radomski evidently became convinced that the neighborhood supports what Madison's Traffic Engineering Division calls Pedestrian Refugee Islands.

Almost unanimously (12 to 1) responding residents of Baker Avenue, Julia Street and Julia Circle, which dead-end from Capital Avenue, **oppose** the proposed Islands at the top of the Baker Avenue hill which they must drive up, and two residents of Laurel Crest expressed opposition to the Islands. Also less than half of the responding residents living on Capital Avenue support the Islands to slow traffic. Many of the proponents also support Speed Humps. Much of the opposition results from recognition that Capital Avenue is not suited for these Islands, especially at Baker Avenue.

Traffic Engineering Division insists that Pedestrian Refugee Islands are designed for pedestrians and are not designed to slow traffic while Speed Humps are quite effective in doing so.

The two engineers on the Board of Public Works voted against the proposed Islands, and one of them gave detailed warnings that the road is not adequate for the islands (Michael Rewey, 249-6673).

We can expect few injuries or deaths but lots of auto accidents from the Islands because, as we observe from our windows overlooking the street, few people cross Capital Avenue at Baker.

The proposed location of the Pedestrian Refugee Islands is racist, providing two islands for the almost exclusively white children at Baker Avenue while no Islands are proposed for the substantially greater numbers of mostly minority children who cross at Laurel Crest.

REQUESTED ACTION: SEE LAST PAGE.

RESIDENTS DO NOT WANT THE TRAFFIC ISLANDS

Alderman Radomski referred the Capital Avenue Traffic Island Proposal to the Board of Public Works because he believed the Neighborhood wants the Traffic Islands. Our experience is that there is low support in the neighborhood for the islands. Our records to date show 12 residents who support the islands [4 others supported and later changed their minds.] and 27 who have expressed opposition to the traffic islands. There is substantially more support for Speed Humps (18 yes, 9 no, 2 mixed). The recent responses received by the Board of Public Works (BPW), by the Common Council, and by Alderman Radomski support our experience. (LeAnne Hannan of Engineering Dept. has originals.)

Madison's NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC PROGRAM Manual (NTMP Manual) reports how street changes are to be made. It states that all the stakeholders in a project area are required to be

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given an opportunity to be involved. There are 98 to 100 stakeholders in the affected area, including the 24 households whose dead-end streets exit at Baker Avenue onto Capital Avenue. In two surveys done in 2004 and in 2006 only 26 stakeholders were contacted (plus 3 city owned properties). These were property owners on Capital Avenue and one owner on Baker Avenue. Also occupants on Laurel Crest (who legally must enter their street from Capital Avenue), and the residents of the six apartment buildings along Capital Avenue were not consulted or involved.

In short, only 26 of the approximately 100 stakeholders were provided an opportunity to be involved or to respond or be involved until the BPW Hearing. Therefore the initial efforts did not even begin to meet the NTMP Manual's notification and involvement requirements for approval of installation of the proposed "Refugee" Islands on Capital Avenue at Baker Avenue. The recent notice of the BPW hearing sent out by the Traffic Engineering Division was expanded at our insistence to cover other stakeholders. With our further contacts most of the stakeholders were reached; and 27 people have reported their opposition to the traffic island proposal (vs. 12 in favor). So not only is there no legal basis for consideration of this Traffic Island proposal on Capital Avenue at Baker Ave., but also the neighborhood does not want the Traffic Islands!

PROBLEMS FOR BAKER AVENUE AREA RESIDENTS.

The proposed traffic islands would add more obstacles for residents of the dead-end streets Baker Avenue, Julia Street & Julia Circle, as well as our home at 1640 Capital Ave., who must drive up the Baker Avenue hill onto Capital Avenue. The added obstacles include the islands themselves as well as traffic backups in front of Baker Avenue which will result from Metro busses stopped at the bus stop, UPS trucks, Postal Service (mailboxes are at the road), garbage pickups, and other commercial vehicles which stop in the Island areas; as well as the increased numbers of accidents which will result from the unfortunate locations of the proposed traffic islands on a curve. Snowstorms especially create problems for reaching Capital Avenue, and we don't need more obstacles.

WHAT ABOUT LAUREL CREST?

If Pedestrian Refugee Islands are to be installed, why are they both placed around Baker Avenue, when Laurel Crest is where far more children, mostly minority, cross the street? The Island at the bus stop is especially dangerous and would better be placed elsewhere. If the Common Council insists on installing these Islands, the Bus-Stop Island would better be moved down to Laurel Crest.

EXPECT INCREASED AUTO ACCIDENTS, BUT FEW ADDITIONAL INJURIES OR DEATHS FROM THE ISLANDS

Among the serious problems with the proposed Islands is that they are on a curve. Islands at curves might be okay on four lane roads but not on two lane roads like Capital Avenue. Most Islands I have experienced are on straight streets where one has a block or more to adjust to them. Even there I see black skid marks or tracks in the snow up onto the islands. The curve is especially serious for the Bus-Stop Island. Driving east, the Island will be just around the curve, so with snow piled up in the winter, a first-time driver might not become aware of the island until about 30 yards away, which at 30 mph is only two seconds away.

The driver could easily be on top of the island before seeing it if distracted, for example, by a car shimmying and sliding to a stop after coming up the Baker Avenue hill. It would take an additional

2/3 of a second to hit any pedestrian standing at the other end of the “target” island. Fortunately, as we have observed by looking out our windows, few people cross there, so there will likely be few “refugees” there. As a result we can expect mostly to have car accidents with only a few injuries and deaths, except for handicapped people who may lack the sight or mobility to dodge the vehicles, and people walking out to get their mail.

Another hazard for eastbound drivers will be coming around the bend and suddenly finding a bus, postal delivery, UPS or other delivery vehicle at the Island. If unable to stop, the driver’s choices will be to go over the Island, go into the oncoming traffic in the left lane, or backend the bus. None of these choices seem particularly desirable.

Westbound drivers will be forced to swerve to the right just before our mailbox on Capital Avenue. This will endanger my handicapped partner when she walks eastward down the road to our mailbox. In addition westbound cars swerving to the right will be more at risk of hitting cars coming up the Baker Avenue hill during a snowstorm since they are at risk of sliding out into Capital Avenue when they finally succeed in reaching the top of the hill.

In summary, I really think the City of Madison should not put these traffic hazards in our street.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION: SPEED HUMPS!

I firmly believe the Islands should not be built; and speed humps should be installed instead. Speed humps are what Traffic Engineering recommends for traffic calming. Speed humps are about 22 feet long and rise up about 3.5 inches at the center. The road is actually ideally suited for three such humps which could slow traffic along the entire length of the road. (See map for suggested locations.) Some residents say they were told that speed humps are not permissible on Capital Avenue, perhaps in part because it is considered to be a collector street. However, the NTMP Manual does not reject Speed Humps. Its general policy statement is “Each collector street is unique and a determination of the need for and type of traffic calming will be made on a case-by-case basis.” (Policies, #7.)

NTMP Manual does state that “Speed humps should **typically** be installed only on streets with 5000 vehicles per day or less (Appendix D Traffic Management Devices, #3. Speed Humps, Traffic Volume). Capital Ave.’s traffic flow was measured at 5,300 vehicles per day. The measurements are made on a weekday. If we included the greatly lower rate of traffic on Saturday and especially Sunday, the average rate would likely be closer to 4300 vehicles per day. But again, the Manual emphasizes that “Neighborhood collectors may be considered on a case-by-case basis with consultation with Madison Metro, Traffic Engineering and Madison Fire Department.” (ibid, #3, last lines) Speed humps would be at right angles to the direction of the bus movement, which meets the major concern of Madison Metro.

I urge the Common Council to approve speed humps on Capital Avenue.

IF TRAFFIC ISLANDS ARE INEVITABLE

If the Members of the Common Council insist on putting in the Islands in spite of the failure to meet legal requirements for approval, in spite of the serious harm they will create, and in spite of the opposition of over two-thirds of the neighbors, and the many valid reasons opposing the islands, an

obvious and creative solution would be to put the Traffic Islands in front of the houses of the strongest proponents of the Islands. They surely would not complain; and indeed should welcome the Islands there with open arms. A further advantage would be that the islands would be spread out and so would slow traffic over a longer stretch of the road, and avoid the danger at the curve and Baker Avenue hill.

If the Common Council insists on approving these road hazards on Capital Avenue at Baker Avenue, at least please make some decision as to how many accidents, injuries, perhaps even deaths, will be necessary before they can be removed again. Recall that the two engineers on the Board of Public Works voted against the proposal, with one of those engineers giving detailed warnings that the road is not adequate for traffic islands (Michael Rewey, 249-6673). Perhaps you should also consider the legal ramifications of putting in these hazards after having been provided such significant warnings. How many lawsuits will the city want to defend?

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Amend the proposal to delete any references to: "Traffic Islands" or "Pedestrian Refugee Islands" and replace these with: "Install three Speed Humps at appropriate locations."

IF THE COMMON COUNCIL CANNOT AGREE TO DO THIS, THEN

Refer the proposal to the Traffic Engineering Division with the direction that they design the installation of three traffic humps on Capital Avenue between Old Middleton Road and University Avenue.

OR

Table the proposal until the new alderman is elected and can deal with it.

If neither of the above are acceptable, then please:

Alternate 1: Reject the proposal.

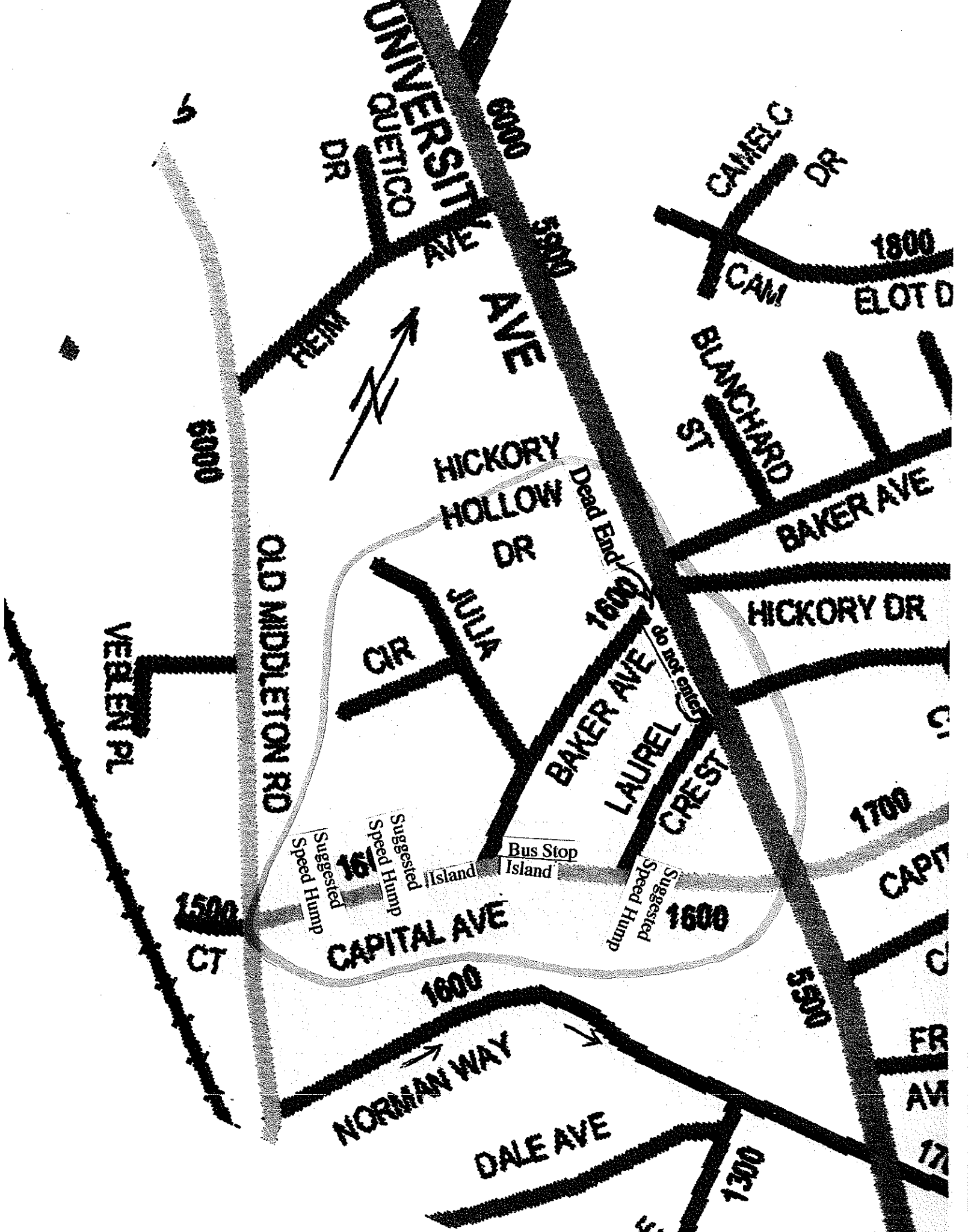
Or,

If the Common Council insists on accepting Pedestrian Refugee Islands:

Alternate 2: Move the more easterly island at the bus stop down to Laurel Crest.



The NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PROGRAM Manual (NTMP Manual) describes the procedures needed to obtain a street modification approval by The Board of Public Works (BPW). The Manual states: "The NTMP process is intended to ensure that all neighborhood stakeholders are provided the opportunity to be involved." (Procedure) "Petition area...will encompass those households and property owners within the area of influence of a potential traffic calming installation." (Step 1) "Each household, business, and non-resident property owner is entitled to one ballot." (Step 5) There are 98 to 100 stakeholders in the affected area.



UNIVERSITY AVE

6000
5500
5000
4500
4000
3500
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500

CAMEL C DR

1800
ELOT D

BLANCHARD ST

BAKER AVE

HICKORY HOLLOW DR

Dead End

HICKORY DR

JULIA CIR

BAKER AVE

LAUREL CREST

VERLEN PL

OLD MIDDLETON RD

Suggested Speed Hump
1500

Bus Stop
Island Island

Suggested Speed Hump
1600

CAPITAL AVE

1700

CAPIT

1600
NORMAN WAY

DALE AVE

5500

1300

FR
AM

1700

STAKEHOLDERS AT CAPITAL AVENUE BETWEEN OLD MIDDLETON ROAD AND UNIVERSITY AVENUE

TOTAL NUMBERS, AND NUMBER CONTACTED IN 2004 & 2006
SURVEYS

	STAKEHOLDERS	
	Total No.	No. Contacted
<u>Residents, Landlords and businesses</u>	98-100	26
<u>On Capital Avenue</u>		
Owner occupied residences	17 or 18	17 or 18
Landlords	8 or 7	8 or 7
Rental residences	43 or 44	0
Businesses (Brennans) (Primary entry to store is on Capital)	1	1
<u>On Baker Avenue, Julia Ct & Julia Circle</u> (Dead end, enter onto Capital Avenue)		
Owner Occupied Residences	22 or 23	0
Rental Residences	1 or 0	0
Landlords	1 or 0	0
<u>Laurel Crest (all seem to be owner occupied)</u> (Entry to Laurel Crest is legal only from Capital Ave.)	5	0