

From: [Jeff Bauer](#)
To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Lake Mendota Drive construction proposal
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As a homeowner on Lake Mendota Drive (LMD), I appreciate the professionalism of city employees who are working with residents on a plan to upgrade the street. However, I am unimpressed with the official position that sidewalks will be included in the project because that's the Madison way. Sidewalks are simply not appropriate in residential areas like ours. I beg municipal leaders to renovate LMD with an eye on the future, not the past! Rather than creating one more issue to divide us, let's take a new look at the real problems and truly responsive solutions.

Because climate change is generally recognized as the biggest threat we all face, comprehensive inquiry into the environmental impact of sidewalks is essential. A preliminary proposal presented to the public this week does not adequately address the issue. Several neighbors emphasized in public comment how sidewalks prevent water infiltration into the soil—a critical concern for the future of Lake Mendota—and how the lake will be further damaged by anti-icing chemicals used on sidewalks in the winter. The net negative impact of sidewalks will be even clearer when analysis accounts for the carbon costs of installing concrete and the heat it subsequently generates. Having a background in atmospheric physics and economics, I believe the current proposal should be rejected solely on the basis of sidewalks' contributions to global warming. We should agree to solve LMD's problems without sidewalks and proceed with planning accordingly.

Formalizing a mixed-use approach would be a great place to start because city statistics show that pedestrian and automobile traffic on LMD have coexisted quite well since the 1950s. Speeding—not the lack of sidewalks—is the #1 problem, and there's no evidence that sidewalks would cause fast drivers to slow down. My wife and I walk LMD four miles every day of the year and believe people will continue to walk in the street even if sidewalks are installed; it's part of the neighborhood culture. Some combination of traffic circles, speed bumps, marked pedestrian lanes, a circumstance-sensitive speed limit (e.g., reduced speed in school zones when children are present), and clear rules of the road for all users would be economic and environmentally appropriate solutions from all perspectives.

The other major problem is parking. I believe the official statistics included in this week's presentation are gross underestimates of reality. Topography and short distance between garages/driveways and the street would make the current plan a disaster for most homeowners. In reality, cars parked along the roadway help solve the speeding problem, so any reduced parking would only make matters worse.

In conclusion, I ask you to slow down the planning process as necessary to allow time for residents and city planners to explore new solutions together. This project is great opportunity to be creative, not coercive.

Jeff Bauer, Ph.D.
Minocqua Crescent
Madison WI 53705