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To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Lake Mendota Drive reconstruction project
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I am writing you to voice my opposition to installing sidewalks in the 3 year Lake Mendota reconstruction Project. Agreed, there is a need for street repair, possible sewer, water updates, and in some areas curbs and gutters. Almost all residents I've spoken to in the area would agree with that. The streets have been bumpy for 40+ years. Chipsealing has always been the method of improvement with minimal or somewhat shoddy pothole repairs. They need work, no doubt. The main bone of contention with this project is the addition of sidewalks in this historically scenic, natural and fragile habitat within 300 feet or less of the lake. Here are some points to consider

1. Topography- both natural and man made makes adding sidewalks virtually impossible in many places along LMD. I encourage you to drive this 6 block section to see for yourself of what I speak. Pictures do not do it justice. Besides it's a pretty Sunday drive! At least go to Google Earth online in street view and forward arrow from 5798 Lake Mendota Drive (Baker Avenue) to 5000. (Shorewood village limits) Both sides of street have large canopy trees, plantings, structures and steep embankments that will require significant landscaping and run off mitigation. So many trees and plants would be destroyed by adding sidewalks with their additional runoff heading right into the lake. Not to mention the significant additional cost to the city to do all that landscaping.
2. Historic significance- once designated a "Madison Park and Pleasure Drive", many have moved to this area because of that very reason. Off the beaten path. Natural and undisturbed green space. Near and access of the lake. I have lived here since 1961 and we were always told that sidewalks would never be a part of this neighborhood because of that and the run off their additional impact would impose on the lake. When we moved in it was the outskirts of town. My parents wanted that for us growing up here. They moved from Tonyawatha Trail to here because of the similarities. Talk of sidewalks has come up before on this area and the neighborhood voted to keep the bumpy streets rather than disturb the peace with sidewalks.
3. Safety- the city's own data is showing no pedestrian accidents, 6 car hitting parked car accidents and an average of 17-18 mph speed along this area. The number of cars is low (300-450) on west end and (1150) on east due to people using it to escape University Avenue. It is not an unsafe street. I'm sure there are a few speeders as there are everywhere, but If speed is truly an issue, narrow the road, install speed bumps or islands, stop signs. I don't like these either but I'd take these over sidewalks in a heartbeat. It's non neighborhood folks trying to bypass University Avenue rush hours that are the bulk of traffic and I bet they are the speeders, as well. As a child I walked to and from Spring Harbor Elementary School daily and learned to walk facing cars and move to the side of the road when they were coming. They in turn, gave us a wide berth. My mom always said to wave. (We have a lot of wavers in this area. Must be a thing)The same is true today as I walk the drive. (I will also say I enjoyed and jumped in mud puddles and examined many bugs and plants along the way. Not sure that would have happened to the extent that it did walking on a sidewalk.)
4. Environmental impact-The distance from the lakeshore to Lake Mendota Drive varies but most properties run around 90-200 feet deep give or take from lake to street. The DNR and Dane County have building regulations limiting the amount

of impervious space constructed within 1000 feet of a lake in non municipal areas. Madison city ordinances only has impervious limits within 300 feet of a lake and even this can be waived by the city. But it seems in this very progressive city and a time of climate focus, that environment, particularly our lakes and the areas surrounding them, should have more protection from excessive impervious spaces here and throughout the city. Sidewalks have never existed here. And if you look at other lakes in the area, they don't have sidewalks either. (Shorewood, Middleton Beach Road, St. Cyr Road, Camelot Drive, Westport, Maple Bluff, Lake Wingra and numerous neighborhoods on Monona, Waubesa, Kegonsa. Even UW second point area has no sidewalks. The theory is that the closer to the lake you are the more pervious land you need to have to absorb run off water adjacent to a body of water. Adding almost a full mile (5280 feet) of sidewalk at 4 ft wide on just one side of the proposed area will add 21,120 square feet of impervious space. Add in that it's most likely going to be 4 inches thick(.33 feet) or more, makes for 6969 cubic feet of concrete that allows no absorption and causes more run off in the immediate vicinity to the lake. Double those numbers for sidewalks on both sides. That's a lot of concrete! Measurements are not exact but in the ballpark. Obviously, I'm leaving out any increased thermal impact of all that concrete on the area and lake and the carbon footprint of concrete construction and installation. I'll leave that to the engineers and scientists. But it's Way too much added impervious space this close to the lake

5. Lake Mendota Drive is not just another Madison city street and should not be treated as such. It's proximity to the lake in a suburban, non thoroughfare area makes it one of a kind and really can't be compared to any other in the city. There are no businesses or bus routes on it. From what I understand street improvements typically come with sewer, water, curb, gutter and sidewalks. That's the norm. I also understand you're planning for the long term of this neighborhood. So are we. I don't think we ARE the norm here. It's not selfish to want to protect our natural spaces and preserve the aesthetics and kwan of the area. The monetary (and snow shoveling) costs of sidewalk installation to those affected is frustrating and for some perhaps may even be the straw that breaks the camel's back in forcing them to move as some have said. But those costs, at least in my, and many of those I've talked to's opinion, is not the point. People moved here because of its uniqueness. Because of the natural environment. It's the spirit here. We ARE not the norm. Sidewalks are not in our repertoire.
6. Finally, I'd like to elaborate on what was said and omitted at the transportation commission meeting. 1) there was no mention of the 100 plus attendees and 100 questions from the 2.5 hour, 1/11 neighborhood meeting the previous night. Nor was there mention of the 200 person response survey generated by our Spring Harbor Neighborhood Association voicing our opinions (that they were reluctant to even accept and that I hope you now have a copy of...It was sent to James Wolfe) I think he seemed a bit perplexed as to the level of interest in this project. You should know there is a big interest in this project and that was not communicated

2) the two examples our alderman used of our concerns not only were misquoted, but completely mischaracterized and belittled the opinions and legitimate concerns of this neighborhood. The highly vested interest in this project is far beyond what he eluded to. He did not paint us in a very favorable light. We are a very progressive and inclusive neighborhood. Much more than many in my opinion and I don't think that was accurately conveyed 3) This neighborhood was not informed of the extent of this project. The city survey which I, and many were not even informed of, I happened to see in a post on Nextdoor 4 weeks ago and forwarded it to others that I had emails for. It doesn't even mention sidewalk preferences. I'm still not sure who initially was included in notifying us of the project. I'm sure others in the neighborhood are still unaware that it's even in the works. It's interesting, since there are already stakes in the ground along drive and a timeline presented that purports the plan to be finalized by March and construction starting in August. We feel like we've missed the first half of the ball game coming in on the end of third quarter. 4) only once was it even mentioned during our 1/11 neighborhood meeting that we could speak at the commission meeting on 1/12. I guess it was on one of the slides and was mentioned then. I missed it completely. So had others. Had we been specifically reminded of it at the end of the meeting that we could give our input at your meeting, I'm sure you would have had many more speakers on the topic other than just Faith Fitzpatrick who I believe voiced our concerns fairly accurately. The bottom line here is that Many are feeling a bit blindsided by the whole process along with some disingenuousness of our alderman. It is not sitting well to have not included our input from the get go. If the city survey doesn't even ask about a preference of sidewalks or not, you have to wonder whether that was intentional to avoid a conflict Or just an oversight.

I'm confident that you will take careful consideration of what I've said here and all the input you receive from our neighborhood. (There are so many living here with much expertise who are far more eloquent than I in expressing our concerns. Some very impressive neighbors). Please review the results from the SHNA survey sent to James Wolfe. I'd also like to suggest you view 200 plus comments on Nextdoor (both Colin Punt("The number of people opposed...")and Tanya Cunningham ("if you're opposed to sidewalks...")started threads regarding the topic). Many good thoughts there. I'm also confident and appreciative of the time and expertise Mr. Wolfe and staff, have spent and will spend in completing a well thought out plan for Lake Mendota Drive. Please, please please come look at the street. It's hard to visualize with all the snow but it's beautiful, natural and it needs to stay that way as much as possible. If for no other reason than that. Then Try to visualize what sidewalks would look like there. Everyday I walk and drive it and try to see how sidewalks would impact each tree, planting and yard. It makes me very sad. There are so many alternatives to traditional sidewalks and we need the city to explore all of them and present them with full transparency. Thanks for your time and efforts.

Lesa Reisdorf

██████████ Camus Lane 53705

*In full disclosure, I currently live on Camus Lane which is in the Spring Harbor neighborhood slightly off of LMD. I grew up where my family lived at 5702 Lake Mendota Drive from 1961-1998. I know and converse with many neighbors and drive it and walk it daily.

*I think a great idea for designated sidewalk or bike path placement would be the entire perimeter around the outside of Spring Harbor Park and maybe even through it. There are no paths there or even leading to there from the school. It could even connect to the bike path on University Avenue. ♀