

**From:** [Jeff Bauer](#)  
**To:** [Wolfe, James](#)  
**Cc:** [Mayor](#); [Furman, Keith](#); [Transportation Commission](#); [Petykowski, Christopher](#); [Mohelnitzky, Hannah](#); [Engineer](#); [Tom Kneubuehl](#); [Faith Fitzpatrick](#); [Herman Felstehausen](#); [Stewart Ellison](#); [Scallon, Peggy](#); [Mark Redsten](#)  
**Subject:** Lake Mendota Drive Project; Critical omissions from your analysis  
**Date:** Sunday, February 6, 2022 1:48:10 PM

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Jim,

A neighbor just forwarded the following text from a message you recently sent to her:

In the more hilly areas, especially on the eastern end, it's probably more important to have sidewalks in those areas. There are higher traffic volumes in that area, and everyone using the road will tend to pick up speed heading down hill, and, if a person using a wheel chair would want/need to use that part of Lake Mendota Dr., the sidewalk would certainly be a safer, more comfortable location for them to be. The City wants to provide good options for everyone along our roadways.

There are a few reasons for providing space between the curb and sidewalk. One main reason is to provide some snow storage space as snow is plowed off of the street and sidewalk. Without any buffer space, residents would need to essentially shovel off the whole mound of snow left after the street is plowed. We also need a little bit of space between the curb and sidewalk for general street-side objects such as mailboxes and signs, and this space also helps provide a little buffer between pedestrians and the street/vehicles.

Assuming these are your words, I am writing to express dismay with the analysis and policies they reflect. For starters, you glibly indicate that "everyone using the road will tend to pick up speed heading down hill." No. As someone who walks the steeply sloped areas of LMD once or twice every day, I observe that many drivers hit their brakes when descending the hill, especially when they see pedestrians. Yes, the road has its share of speeders, but please don't mischaracterize the actual situation.

I also take issue with your suggestion that a person using a wheel chair on the hill would be safer and more comfortable on a sidewalk. This is a red herring. How many wheel chair users did you interview to reach this conclusion? I'll bet none because in five years of daily treks along this section of LMD, I've never seen anyone in a wheel chair. Why? Most likely because the terrain is too steep for anyone in a wheel chair. (You can borrow our wheel chair if you'd like to test this hypothesis by heading east from my house.) Spending anything to build a sidewalk for wheel chair users in this hilly area would be a shameful waste of money. If the real problem is speeding automobiles—an area where you and I probably agree—then develop solutions that cause drivers to slow down. Sidewalks do not cause drivers to slow down.

Promoting space between the street and sidewalks also doesn't make sense along LMD. I'm not a civil engineer, but I do not believe there's enough space to add anything alongside most of the roadway in question without doing serious, multidimensional damage to the neighborhood. I am a PhD economist, however, and I do believe that money spent to add curbs, sidewalks, and space between them could be better spent in other ways to the benefit of all. If you are not familiar with the concept of opportunity cost, I will be pleased to explain it.

The two paragraphs above also fail to recognize other problems likely to be created if the project proceeds on its current path and timetable. (Don't forget the Law of Unintended Consequences; the biggest cause of problems is solutions.) Numerous Spring Harbor residents have provided you, our Alder, the Mayor, and other City officials with extensive comments on concerns not addressed in the few project details revealed

to us so far—problems like serious harms to the environment, climate, wildlife, water quality, Native American rights, etc. We have consistently indicated a strong desire to sit at the table as the City develops the plan. Please slow down and let us join you in designing an innovative project that reflects today's new realities and tomorrow's better possibilities. Stop following opaque procedures driven by yesterday's policies. We can do a lot better together.

Jeff Bauer