

Testimony to City of Madison Transportation Commission
by Jeffrey C. Bauer, Ph.D.; April 13, 2022; Item #70626

My TC testimony last month examined this project from a general economic perspective, addressing how limited resources were being wasted and why the project must be delayed to allow comprehensive planning with active neighborhood involvement. Today's comments reflect my background in weather research and medical economics, which includes 8 years teaching health statistics at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine.

The City's insistence on sidewalks for LMD doesn't make sense from the perspectives of economics or health statistics. In a conventional cost-of-lives-saved model, fifty-plus years of actual LMD data suggest that the long-term risk of a pedestrian being killed by a car on LMD is close to zero, yielding a close to zero return-on-investment in sidewalks. Conversely, data from nearby Well 14 indicate that we who drink its water have a relatively high risk of dying prematurely from heart disease, yielding a correspondingly high ROI for investments in water quality. Clusters of deadly cancers in the neighborhood can also be associated with water from the well—yet the project before you tonight commits hundreds of thousands of dollars to sidewalks and very little on water quality. To make matters worse, new sidewalks will increase salinity in the well.

The City's effort to characterize sidewalk salt as a minimal problem is ridiculous to residents of Spring Harbor. The only action that makes sense tonight is voting to delay the project and design a shared-use road that prioritizes *clean* water management, respects the parkway's character and historical safety, and protects its rich historical heritage, natural beauty, and value as a destination for recreation.

In the process, the City must update its policies on equity because the concept is evolving. Equal access to public services is an enduring foundation of social justice, but it is increasingly eclipsed by attention to the relationships between climate and social welfare. In public policy circles, global warming is emerging as the most dangerous threat to human health. Data show that disadvantaged populations suffer disproportionately from droughts, floods, polluted water, dirty air, dangerous storms, natural disasters, and deforestation. Using minimal tree loss to defend the current LMD geometry is a misleading argument. The project should be redesigned instead to increase the number of trees because of trees' pivotal role in cleaning up air and water.

Accessibility is an equity goal that helps a few people with mobility problems, including me, but the City can enhance the health of thousands by ensuring a shared-use parkway that reduces water pollution and promotes physical activity. The United Nations and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change both declared last month that governments must lead the way *starting now* by stopping all new activities that add harm to the environment and climate. The City's LMD project would be a great place for Madison to become a creative leader in this movement. Like our Mayor did last week, start demanding environmental actions that make Madison a healthier place for everyone. Please vote to delay and reformulate this project accordingly.