

## Indian Lake, Jan. 24, 2024 Park Commission Meeting

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First, I am someone who has been skiing, hiking, and finding solace at Indian Lake park for 30-40 years. The plan to put a road into the woods unnecessarily destroys the land and does not honor existing uses. It takes away what I need and what hundreds of other people need.

### Three most important questions regarding the Indian Lake proposal:

1. The **most important issue** is: Does the proposal **preserve the land**? -- no

Paving and eliminating part of the woods does not preserve the land.

2. Does the plan help **climate change**? -- no

The proposal makes climate change worse by encouraging more driving and more pollution. All the people driving to the new parking lot, including those finding it full, are driving an extra mile (~1/2 mile each way). Further, the added pollution helps deteriorate people's health especially because the new roads and lots are on top of or near trails.

3. Does the proposal **preserve existing 30-40 year uses**? -- no

It's normal for plans to preserve long established uses. However, people who have gone to Indian Lake for 30-40 years are being moved aside or eliminated, especially for cross country skiers. This is not just an issue of sharing because trails are being lost or compromised and a peaceful area is being driven into.

### Regarding accessibility:

What is the **definition of accessibility**? There is the issue of accessibility for **disabled or limited abled** people **versus** the term 'accessibility' that refers to allowing anyone and everyone to drive in.

Further, a middle definition includes **people who can only walk a short ways**. Those people will no longer be able to get away from cars, noise, and pollution without walking farther than they currently do. That is, now, it is a short walk (200 yards?) into the old cabin area. However, that area would be paved and full of cars and people, so people have to walk further to 'get away'.

For example, if a limited ability walker gets a parking spot in the new lot and they want to 'get away', they'd have to walk farther than they do now because of all the people congregated there (such congregation doesn't occur in the existing parking lot as people go off in different directions) and because of the new openness with fewer trees. Or, if a person finds the new lot full and parks in the existing lot, they'd also have to walk farther to 'get away' because they'd have to get past the new road and bridge going west or walk into the cabin area alongside the new road and then have to go beyond it in the effort to get away from cars.

So, for those people **who want to walk, but not walk very far, they would be forced to walk farther from their car to 'get away'** compared to walking now starting from the existing parking lot. How does

this factor into the park's plan for accessibility?

Also, people not able to walk to the sledding hill should probably not be taking young children sledding due to the possibility of young children needing help on the hill. It is currently easier to walk in to the sledding area than it is to negotiate the sledding hill.

The park plan does **reverse discrimination**. It turns a large area of the woods over to people driving and takes the area away from those who have been using the park for 30-40 years. And, I don't believe the people driving actually want that area compromised.

That is, the park plan destroys the experience for the Boy Scouts seeking to get away (a Boy Scout leader said he liked the current situation) as well as for the current population of sledders who want more isolation, and also for hikers and skiers.

The plan makes the park less accessible limited walker people, basically only accommodating an extremely small minority of people. This doesn't make sense.

### **Solutions for disabled accessibility: I care about people who need help.**

For those unable to walk into some area of the park, there are solutions, such as allowing driving in on the existing gravel road, allowing use of wheelchairs or new mobility machines (which would be much less expensive than building a road and bridge) on the existing mostly flat gravel road. If necessary to end up at the cabin versus below, then a gradual path can be put in from the existing gravel road. There could also be special disability days in which others would help.

### **As per Park questions at the top of today's Agenda:**

*Who benefits?* No one benefits from the loss of natural land that is encroached by roads.

*Who is burdened?* The burdened are the hundreds of existing users who are losing their place of nature, quiet, clean air, and woods. Also, the cross country skiers are losing their existing trail system with unknown consequences. The burdened have to drive farther to find another location/park or just give up and lose something they now have. Given the increasing need for people to get away from cars, current and future generations are burdened.

*Who does not have a voice at the table?* Most of the hundreds of current users who do not know about this plan or how to navigate the input process do not have a voice. People of the future will be hugely grateful if the woods and current areas are preserved.

*How mitigate unintended consequences?* This park plan does not address unintended consequences. For examples, there will be too many people in the same area if a second shelter is built; the plan does not address that the old hut will immediately be too small, as well as the vault toilet, for increased users; the plan does not address increased noise and air pollution of a new road, especially as to the proximity of the road to trails and people trying to breathe, and the increased traffic from people finding the interior lot full and driving out again; the plan does not address how current users will be displaced and what

their experience would be, which would be more negative; the plan doesn't address how much of the woods may be lost due to cutting whether for building roads, cutting new trails, or changing the landscape; it doesn't address how loss of woods affects people's sense of privacy and visual experiences; etc. Notably, the plan does not address what happens to the ski trail system. It's very much still up in the air.

### **Extremely negative issues not addressed in the plan:**

There is no recognition of the huge losses brought about by this plan, as directly above.

Alternate solutions for accessibility that have been presented have been dismissed too readily.

There is the loss of peace and the 'getting away' appeal of the old hut area if a parking lot is built next to it. The plan completely destroys what is 'neat' about the old cabin and area.

As above, lack of addressing the issue of the old cabin being way too small for the large amount of people accommodated in new adjacent parking lots.

'Hiding' a new shelter by the lake with a row of trees isn't very feasible. And, the roads won't be hidden, not the road to the new shelter, nor the road or bridge into the woods.

If there is a second shelter built, two large groups are too many people at once for this park.

The importance of intact woods versus open oak savanna is not being addressed. Intact woods are in jeopardy especially for the trail system and more especially for the ski trail system. Also, intact woods are necessary to mitigate heat and other negatives of climate change.

The cross country ski trail system will be negatively affected with many uncertainties, including: a road built on top of a ski trail, a possibly re-located trail next to the road having pollution and negative visual effects, possible loss of the ridge trail, the steep up and down trail on the north is not fully shown on the map (apparently never was), unknown new south trail, the need to cross pavement once or more which doesn't work well (and skiers do multiple loops), trying to ski under a bridge, etc. I do not believe that the ski trail system can be re-located successfully with the park's plan for new roads due to the need for ski trails to be in the woods for snow retention and the limited woods area. By 'successful' I'm including not breathing exhaust and not seeing and hearing cars. I also bemoan the loss of trees to cut new trails.

### **Summary**

There is almost complete disregard of current users of the park in this plan, disregard of those who value the old cabin area for peace and 'getting away', disregard for those who hike in the woods area, and disregard for the existing cross country ski trails, for which users pay a fee.

The Madison Nordic Ski Club is opposed to new roads into the ski trail system.

The urban-like design of roads and a bridge in what has been a nature/natural park is extremely anti-environmental and inappropriate.

The plan lacks better solutions to issues it raises itself, ignoring better suggestions that have been made (e.g., additional sledding near the existing parking lot for those who can't walk the short ways; allow more accessibility, if needed, using the existing gravel road; use a different location for educational activities; bike trail is not needed and is itself very damaging but could be a compromise; etc.).

Developing the cabin area for 'accessibility' makes the park literally less accessible for limited distance walkers (as above) in addition to destroying the experience for all other users. For every issue noted by the park plan, other solutions have been made that have been discounted but should be reconsidered.