



**Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory
Committee**

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June 14th, 2023

Mayor Cavalier Johnson
200 East Wells Street
Room 201
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Alderman Robert Bauman
200 East Wells Street
Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Commissioner Lafayette Crump
809 North Broadway
Floor 2
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Johnson, Alderman Bauman and Commissioner Crump:

The City of Milwaukee has received a request to vacate Cass Street between Mason Street and Wells Street in File #230046. The City should not give up this valuable right of way without ensuring that 24/7 public and outdoor access for pedestrians and bicyclists is maintained. We have also received input from residents with concerns about disrupting the important connection to the Oak Leaf Trail via Mason Street.

The City's draft Downtown Area Plan, titled "Connec+ing MKE", explicitly discourages this in Recommendation 26. Recommendation 26 is focused on creating policies that "create the most walkable Downtown in the Midwest" and it includes the following recommendation:

Discourage street and alley vacations which eliminate public space, create large blocks, and limit walkability.

Vacating Cass Street without ensuring clear access eliminates public space, creates an even larger block than already exists, and limits walkability.

In a similar manner as we face now, the right of way vacation of portions of North 32nd Street and West Wright Street was granted at the request of Master Lock in 2019. At the time, City officials stated that this would keep Master Lock in the city. Less than four years later, Master Lock is planning to close its plant, and the City has no recourse for the street grid that was disrupted for them.

It is our explicit recommendation that any right of way vacation for Cass Street be conditional on maintaining 24/7 outdoor access for all members of the public and include the ability for the City to re-acquire the right of way in the future. The City should pursue other types of agreements as needed to achieve this.

Attached you will find a letter received by PBAC from a resident of Cass Street recommending Cass Street remain open to the public for access.

Respectfully, City of Milwaukee Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee

Montavius Jones

Montavius Jones, City of Milwaukee Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee - Chair

Mitchell Henke

Mitchell Henke, City of Milwaukee Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee - Vice Chair

Dear PBAC,

As a resident of 935 N Cass St, I am writing to you to consider adopting a recommendation to include a requirement in the developer agreement for Northwestern Mutual to maintain 24/7 public, outdoor, and consistent (e.g. no dismounting needed) access for pedestrians and bicyclists in the potential Cass Street vacation.

As a resident of this street, access to the Oak Leaf Trail via Mason is an important connection. The Downtown Plan now recommends *against* street vacations, but even more so, it envisions a downtown with expanded residential capacity and a goal of encouraging those residents to move around by public transit, walking, and bike as possible. Breaking up the street grid for those modes on otherwise very comfortable, slower roads does not support this goal.

The current disruption of the street grid between Wisconsin and Mason, and Cass and Clyborn, means that I end up taking the much more uncomfortable and busy Van Buren St on the last leg of my journey home from work. As we look towards a future of a more thriving downtown, we should be supporting developments like NM's while also ensuring that the developer agreements include maintaining the street grid 24/7 for people walking and biking, rather than creating closed campus environments.