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NEWS RELEASE

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Lake Park Friends Calls on Milwaukee County to Immediately Reopen Ravine Road to Cars

Road was closed in 2014 due to issues with pedestrian bridge which has since been repaired.

Milwaukee, Wis. (August 10, 2023) – Lake Park Friends (LPF), a non-profit group dedicated to the improvement of Lake Park, called on Milwaukee County to immediately reopen the park's Ravine Road to cars.

The road was closed in 2014 due to dangers from the failing pedestrian bridge that spans the picturesque 1,000- foot parkway that leads through a ravine to Lincoln Memorial Drive.

In a letter this week to County Supervisor Sheldon Wasserman, LPF Board President Anne Hamilton referenced a recent independent engineering assessment of Ravine Road by Kapur and Associates, Inc., which concluded that there is no structural or safety reason the road should remain closed. LPF's position is that the road should have been reopened nine months ago, in November, when work on the bridge was completed.

Hamilton's letter noted a budget proposal to spend \$500,000 on planning for the future use of the road, and that estimates for re-engineering the road were as high as \$1.3 million in 2019 dollars.

"With the budget crisis Milwaukee County is facing, why spend \$500,000 or more than \$1.3 million when you could open the road now for next to nothing?" Hamilton asked.

Hamilton wrote that famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of the park, had intended vehicles to use the roadway, and that cars have used the road without incident for more than 100 years, until the bridge issue arose. Currently there are five wooded ravines and two asphalt paths, including one to Lincoln Memorial, that don't allow cars. Ravine

Road, a key element of Olmsted's design, intentionally provides a unique "pleasure driving" experience in the park, especially for people who are not ambulatory.

She noted that the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission, which approved a temporary closure of the road in 2014 for safety reasons, said in a recent letter that any continued closure to cars would require city approval. This process could take several years. In the meantime, the road should be opened to cars.

"It is understood that the temporary closure was necessary due to the safety issues presented by the deteriorated bridge," wrote HPC Senior Planner Tim Askin. "Those safety issues are no longer present and permanent closure would harm the character and purpose of Lake Park and the Milwaukee County Parkway System."

While LPF believes that historic preservation requirements should be the primary deciding factor on the future of the road, the letter cites a 2019 Change.org petition on Ravine Road which has garnered 3800 signatures in support of LPF's historic preservation position. This compares to 400 respondents in favor of closing the road to cars in a 2022 survey sent to Supervisor Wasserman's constituents.

Copies of the LPF letter to Supervisor Wasserman, the letter from Tim Askin of the MHPC, and the Kapur and Associates road assessment are attached.

Lake Park Friends is a 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to promote the preservation and enjoyment of Lake Park, to sponsor educational, recreational, and cultural events in the park, and to raise funds for the restoration and enhancement of the park in the spirit of Frederick Law Olmsted.