

Quarterly Newsletter

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Why John Nolen Drive, now?

A message from Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway

For Madisonians, John Nolen Drive is the gateway to our downtown. For visitors, it's the first impression of our incredible city. Approximately 48,000 vehicles use John Nolen Drive every day, and 4,500 people use the lakeshore path. Whether it's walking, riding, driving, scooting, biking, running, or rolling, John Nolen Drive gets a lot of use. That's why this major thoroughfare, after years of public engagement, is slated for a major upgrade that will make all types of transit safer.

This will include:

- New widened path with separated biking and walking sections
- New bridges dedicated to peds/bikes to keep them away from traffic
- Extensive tree planting plan and innovative stormwater management
- New intersections, including widened & simpler ped/bike crossings
- New path along Brittingham Park for expanded neighborhood connectivity
- New shoreline revetment stone to improve flood resilience
- New storm sewer to minimize flooding in Broom St area.



Because John Nolen Drive is so important to Madison residents and visitors, this project is also working in close coordination with [Madison Lakeway](#), whose first phase will create a linear parkway along the Lake Monona shore.

Construction is scheduled to begin fall 2025, with completion Summer 2027.



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Visit the City of Madison Engineering page to learn more about the [John Nolen Drive Reconstruction Project](#).

John Nolen Drive Reconstruction — Project Features

City Engineering

The John Nolen Drive project is a full reconstruction of the causeway between E Lakeside Street and S Broom Street, and includes the following improvements:

- Reconstruction of six bridges along the causeway, with 3 new separated bridges for the bike and pedestrian facilities, including stepped-down blocks along the Lake Monona-side of the bridges for improved shoreline access.
- Lane configuration and cross section changes to urbanize the roadway, narrow vehicle travel lanes for traffic calming, and create additional space for the Lake Monona shoreline improvements.
- Expansion of the Capital City Trail corridor to create separated biking, walking, and jogging facilities, as well as add path-specific lighting.
- Shoreline reconstruction along Lake Monona, including new rock revetment for stabilization during all seasons and changing weather patterns.
- Improved tree canopy along the causeway with a significant investment in new tree plantings with improved below ground growing conditions. Prioritizing large canopy trees between the roadway and path to calm vehicle traffic, improve separation between modes, and provide shading to the various pathways.
- Improvements to the North Shore Drive and S Broom Street intersections that will substantially improve the bike-pedestrian crossing experience with shortened crossing distances, larger queuing space, and optimized signal timing. The North Shore Drive intersection will include a new crossing across North Shore Drive for improved access to Brittingham Park. The S Broom Street intersection will be substantially simplified with more direct crossings and single, widened median island.
- New shared-use path along Brittingham Park from S Broom Street to the Southwest Path with a connector path to S Bassett Street, greatly improving multi-modal options navigating through this downtown corridor.
- Coordination and setup for future Lake Monona Waterfront improvements identified by [Madison LakeWay](#)

Proposed North Shore Dr & John Nolen Dr Intersection:

- Add new crossing across North Shore Drive
- Larger median refuge islands
- Raised crossing within slip lane of North Shore Drive right-turn onto John Nolen Drive, with truck apron on outside radius to tighten turning movement and calm traffic
- Large queuing space added on the Capital City Trail side of the crossing



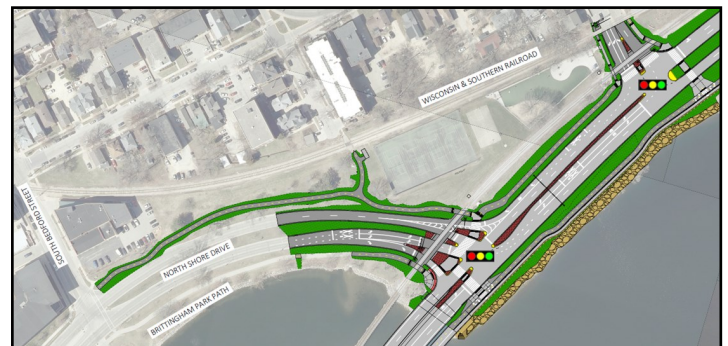
Proposed S Broom St & John Nolen Dr Intersection

- Conventional T-Intersection with single median island at crossings
- John Nolen to Broom right-turn slip lane removed
- Large queuing space added on the Capital City Trail side of the crossing



Proposed path through Brittingham Park from North Shore Dr to S Bedford St:

- Path connection to S Bassett Street
- Separate City project (completed Spring 2025) connects this new path to the Southwest Path with a raised crossing across S Bedford Street



Public Involvement and the John Nolen Drive Project

City Engineering

The John Nolen Drive reconstruction project has included an extensive public engagement process, starting back in the Fall of 2021. There have been three public informational meetings held on this project over the past 4 years. While these meetings have informed the community on this exciting project, they have also been a vehicle for the project team to receive a plethora of public feedback on the various proposed designs, public feedback that has helped to shape the future design and layout of the causeway. All three public meetings were held virtually over Zoom and recordings of the presentations and all the presented materials are available on the City Engineering project page for John Nolen Drive.

Beyond the larger virtual public informational meetings, the project team organized multiple small group meetings with various community members, businesses and civic leaders to ensure representation from a diverse group of constituencies. A summary report of the various focus group sessions is available on the Engineering project page.

A fourth public informational meeting will be hosted in September

ahead of construction starting in October 2025. This public meeting will be hosted virtually (and will again be recorded and posted to the Engineering project page) and will focus on construction impacts throughout the ~2-year construction process. At this meeting, the awarded Contractor and the City's project team will go through step by step how each phase of construction will impact all modes of travel along and through the John Nolen Drive causeway. This meeting will also provide an opportunity for the public to directly ask questions. More information on this upcoming meeting will be posted to the Engineering project page.

Funding

In order to make a project of this scale and scope happen, funding had to be drawn from a variety of places. With a total estimated cost of roughly \$45 million, around a quarter of that is being funded through local City means, the remaining three-quarters is being funded from Federal sources, including a variety of funding programs (Local Bridge Program, Bridge Investment Program, Transportation Alternatives Program, and Surface Transportation Block Grant).

Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel Updates

City Traffic Engineering

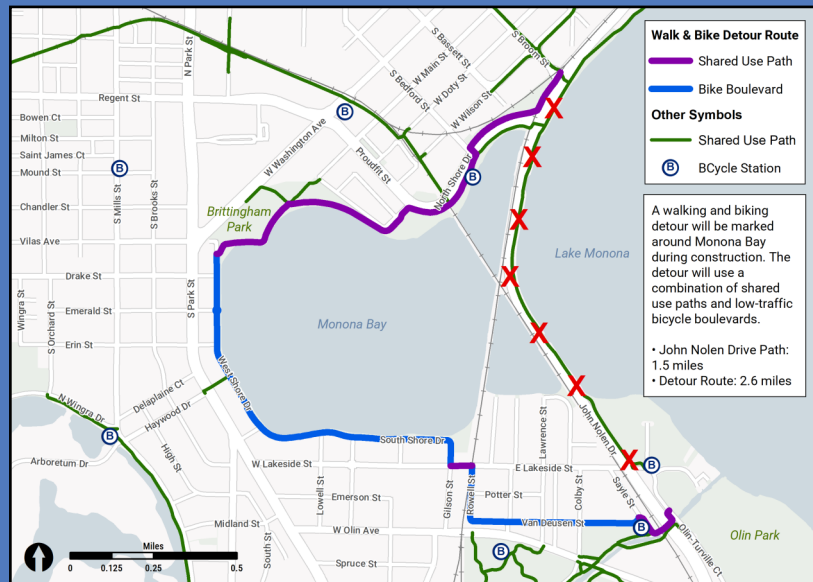
The John Nolen Drive reconstruction will require closing the shared use path along the street – one of Madison’s most popular paths. The path will be closed for one year from approximately July 2026 to June 2027.

During the closure, a detailed detour route around Monona Bay will be posted for people walking, using mobility devices and biking. The City is undertaking a number of improvements to the route around Monona Bay prior to the detour going into effect, including:

- Wayfinding signs will be installed to guide people around the bay and to nearby destinations
- Van Deusen Street and Rowell Street have been marked and signed as Bike Boulevards
- A short two-way cycletrack was built on West Lakeside Street to connect Rowell Street to Gilson Street
- A BCycle station was installed where the Wingra Creek Bike Path meets Sayle Street

Additionally, a new path was installed along North Shore Drive between the Southwest Path and South Bedford Street; this path will be extended to South Broom Street prior to the John Nolen Drive Path closure. This path will provide a critical connection for people walking and biking while the John Nolen Drive and North Shore Drive intersection is reconstructed.

When complete, the new path along John Nolen Drive will provide separate spaces for people on foot and faster users biking, skating, and scooting. The new path will also include wider bridges, increased space from the street in many places, improved lighting, and spaces for people to stop and enjoy the beautiful views across Lake Monona.



Travel Tips During Construction

Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization

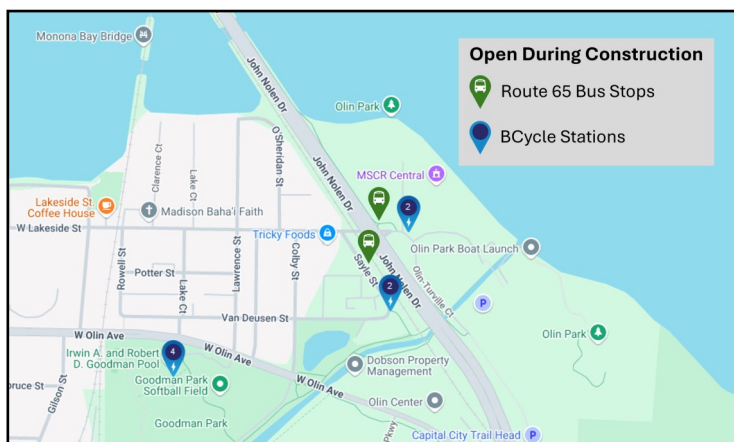
To reduce congestion and improve the travel experience for everyone using John Nolen Drive, the City encourages drivers to explore options other than driving alone, including carpooling, bicycling, riding Metro Transit, telework, and flex scheduling. Shifting just one or two drive-alone trips each week would help ease congestion and improve the experience for everyone traveling in the corridor.

See below for tips on alternatives to driving alone and visit the [Round-Trip](#) program to access resources for commuters in Dane County.

Biking/Walking/Rolling:

A 2.6 mile walking and biking detour will be marked around Monona Bay during construction. The detour will use a combination of shared use paths and low-traffic bicycle boulevards. See “Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel Updates” above for information about recent improvements along the detour route.

- Use the [Low-Stress Bike Route Finder](#) to plan a connecting route that fits your comfort level.
- [BCycle](#) stations near John Nolen Drive will remain open during construction.



Metro Transit:

- [Route 65](#), provides weekday, peak-hour service from Research Park Drive in Fitchburg, through downtown to the UW Hospital.
- [Route B](#) offers weekday and weekend service from Caddis Bend in Fitchburg, through downtown, to Knutson Drive on Madison’s north side. Route B offers frequent service (every 15 minutes) Monday-Saturday.

Payment is a breeze with contactless on-board payment via credit card or mobile wallets. These options, along with Metro’s Fast Fare card, include automatic transfers and fare capping for frequent riders. [Learn about Metro Transit payment options.](#)

Review Metro Transit [routes and schedules](#) to see what else could work for you.

Carpooling:

- Find carpool partners through [RoundTrip](#), a free commute options program for Dane County commuters.
- If coming from the southeast, use the [Dutch Mill Park & Ride](#) to carpool into downtown.

Telework & Flex Schedules:

Use the [TeleWORKS Toolkit](#) from the Greater Madison MPO to support a workplace conversation about how telework and flex scheduling can help you avoid peak-hour traffic congestion.

Emergency Ride Home Program for Car-Free Commuters:

If you walk, bike, carpool, or ride the bus to work, join the free [Emergency Ride Home \(ERH\)](#) program to access Union Cab ride vouchers when the unexpected occurs. ERH is a safety net that provides peace of mind for car-free commuters in Dane County.

Rough Project Schedule and Potential

Traffic Impacts

City Engineering

The reconstruction of John Nolen Drive is anticipated to start in Fall 2025 and finish in Summer 2027. The project will include substantial traffic impacts throughout the duration of construction, which will impact vehicular, bicycle/pedestrian, boat traffic, and railroad traffic. For vehicle traffic specifically, one lane of traffic in each direction will be maintained at all times. In addition, the City Parks-led Madison LakeWay improvements will be occurring following the completion of the John Nolen Drive reconstruction, the exact timeline and traffic impacts of the Madison LakeWay work are not yet known. Below is an overview of what will occur at each construction stage and the associated traffic impacts to all modes of travel.

Stage 1 (October 2025 – November 2025):

Construction Items:

- Traffic Crossovers
- Temporary Items for Construction

Traffic Impacts:

- One Vehicle Lane in Each Direction Open along the Causeway
- All Intersections Open
- Capital City Trail along Causeway Open

Stage 2 (November 2025 – July 2026):

Construction Items:

- Southbound Causeway Roadway & Bridges
- North Shore Dr & Broom St Intersections (including Railroad Crossings)

- New Path along Brittingham Park (north-side of John Nolen Dr & North Shore Dr)

Traffic Impacts:

- One Vehicle Lane in Each Direction Open along the Causeway
- North Shore Dr & Broom St Intersections will be Closed for specified durations (with turn-lane restrictions throughout stage)
- Intersection closures will occur one at time.
- Sidewalk closures at intersections to last an estimated ~10 Days
- Roadway closures at intersections to last an estimated ~50-60 Days
- Capital City Trail along Causeway Open

Stage 3 (July 2026 – June 2027):

Construction Items:

- Northbound Causeway Roadway & Bridges
- Capital City Trail along Causeway
- Shoreline Revetment along Causeway
- Madison LakeWay Improvements (separate project)

Traffic Impacts:

- One Vehicle Lane in Each Direction Open along the Causeway
- North Shore Dr & Broom St Intersections remain Open (with turn-lane restrictions)
- Capital City Trail along Causeway Closed during Entire Stage
- Detour route along Monona Bay

Stage 4 (June 2027 – July 2027):

Construction Items:

- Medians
- Final Asphalt Surface
- Madison LakeWay Improvements (separate project)
- will continue beyond July 2027

Traffic Impacts:

- One Vehicle Lane in Each Direction Open along the Causeway
- North Shore Dr & Broom St Intersections remain Open
- Capital City Trail along Causeway TBD – dependent on Madison LakeWay Improvements
- Detour route along Monona Bay (if needed)

Vision Zero is a data driven strategy intended to eliminate traffic deaths and severe injuries on all roadways, bikeways and sidewalks by 2035.

The City of Madison Vision Zero initiative strives to improve safety for all roadway users throughout the city and improve the identified high injury intersections, all in an effort to prevent avoidable fatal crashes.

Safety starts with all of us.

We can't control human error, but we can help create more forgiving infrastructure and change systems to prevent crashes from being serious and fatal.

www.cityofmadison.com/VisionZero



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