Statement made by Brook Soltvedt on January 4, 2018, at a press conference announcing the City of Madison’s civil rights complaint against the Wisconsin DOT for moving the west Madison DMV offices to a location with poor transit accessibility.

Good afternoon. My name is Brook Soltvedt. I am the president of the League of Women Voters of Dane County.

Last August, when I learned that the DMV would be closing its west-side offices and moving to Excelsior Drive, my first thought was, “How will people on the west side of Madison who need an ID for voting get to a location outside the beltline?” Using Madison Metro’s online trip planner, I compared travel from several addresses to the current DMV offices at Hill Farms and to the new Excelsior Drive location. Bus trips to the new location took much longer, and nearly always involved significant amounts of walking.

The League raised its concerns with the City Clerk, the Mayor, and the City Council, and we appreciate that the City has taken this threat to the civil rights of Madisonians seriously by filing this complaint.

Why is this DMV move of such concern to the League?

When Wisconsin enacted its stringent voter ID law, it limited the type of id that most citizens can use for voting to a Wisconsin driver license or ID card. Both require at least one visit to the DMV. Those who lack the documentation to get a WI driver license or ID card can enter the ID petition process—which requires at least one visit to the DMV. For most residents, Wisconsin’s voter ID law ties the ability to vote to the requirement that a citizen visit the DMV. Who is most likely to lack one of these voter IDs? People who don’t drive: the poor, the elderly, the disabled, racial minorities, and students. So, when the Department of Transportation moves the DMV in the second most populous county in the state to a location that will add a significant burden to the transit-dependent citizen’s ability to obtain a voter ID, the League cries FOUL!

A study from the UW–Madison Center for Elections Research showed that about 17,000 registered voters in Dane and Milwaukee Counties were deterred from voting in the November 2016 election because of the voter ID law. Low-income and African-American voters were disproportionately affected.

In a year when Wisconsin voters will see four statewide elections, beginning with the February 20th primary for Supreme Court Justice, the League of Women Voters of Dane County looks forward to timely action from the US Department of Transportation on behalf of transit-dependent Madisonians who need to visit the DMV to get an ID for voting.

In the meantime, any Wisconsin resident who needs help getting an ID for voting can call the Dane County Voter ID Coalition’s hotline at 608.285.2141.

Thank you.