

# Hennepin Avenue Reconstruction Project

## Frequently Asked Questions

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## Project Background

### Why is Hennepin Avenue South being reconstructed?

Hennepin Avenue South between Lake Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Street was last reconstructed between 1957 and 1980. The existing roadway pavement is in very poor condition and at a stage when routine maintenance is no longer cost effective. Improvements to Hennepin Avenue South have been accelerated due to the [2016 Neighborhood Park and Street Infrastructure Plans ordinance](#), which provides an additional \$20 million annually for improvements to public street infrastructure for the next 20 years. A full reconstruction of the roadway is proposed in 2018.

### What is the scope of the reconstruction project?

In addition to addressing aging street infrastructure, the goals of this project include improving the overall experience for users of this corridor by enhancing the pedestrian realm, making the corridor more walkable and transit and bicycle friendly, calming traffic and creating a more livable environment for all.

The scope of the project will encompass the entire right-of-way of Hennepin Avenue South between Lake Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Street and include full removal of the existing roadway and sidewalk. The project elements include new sidewalks, ADA compliant pedestrian ramps, new pavement, new curb/gutter, and utility improvements. The project will also include street trees, curb bump-out treatments, pedestrian level street lighting, bicycle lanes, signal improvements, new signage, and new pavement markings.

## Project Layout Development and Engagement

### What is the proposed layout for Hennepin Avenue South?

Public Works is recommending a layout that focuses on pedestrians and improvements to the pedestrian realm to contribute to more livable neighborhoods and a more vibrant atmosphere where foot traffic helps businesses thrive. This layout is also expected to provide shade and green plantings in a new boulevard, enhance transit operations, calm traffic, and provide space for bicycling. In order to achieve goals of a walkable environment, parking will be removed in some areas of the corridor, which will be accommodated by existing parking supply adjacent to the corridor.

1. Between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street: 17-foot sidewalks which include a furnishing/planting area, 5-foot bicycle lanes, and 11-foot travel lanes for two-way traffic

Benefits of this design include an improved pedestrian realm that meets the needs of the high volumes of pedestrians and better supports business activity along this block. Crossing distances are drastically improved and a raised mid-block crossing is proposed. The furnishing zone will allow for streetscape enhancements and space for activation. The narrowed street section is adequate to facilitate transit operations, dedicated space for bicycling, and vehicular traffic, which has been steadily declining while pedestrian and bicycle volumes have been increasing.

2. Between 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Street: 7-foot sidewalks with 6-foot boulevards, 6-foot bicycle lanes, 10-foot travel lanes for two-way traffic, and an 8-foot parking lane on the east side of the street. Curb bump outs are proposed at intersections; crossing distances will be 12 feet narrower than existing conditions.

Benefits of this design include an improved pedestrian realm with shorter crossing distances and a new plantable boulevard. The narrowed street section is adequate to facilitate transit operations, dedicated space for bicycling, and vehicular traffic, which has been steadily declining while pedestrian and bicycle

volumes have been increasing. The on-street parking, over half of which is retained with this design, along with on-street bicycle lanes will calm vehicular traffic and improve livability in the neighborhoods.

### How was the layout developed?

Public Works developed the recommended layout for Hennepin Avenue South between January and April of 2017. The corridor has two distinct segments based on street character and [planning guidance](#):

1. Lake Street to 31<sup>st</sup> Street: “Activity Corridor”
2. 31<sup>st</sup> Street to 36<sup>th</sup> Street: “Commercial/Mixed Use Corridor”

Concurrent with public outreach, multiple layout options were developed for the two project segments and evaluated based on existing conditions, traffic and land use trends, planning guidance, the City’s [Complete Streets Policy](#).

### Who was engaged along the corridor and what feedback was received?

Public outreach was conducted between January and April of 2017 and included three open house and community meetings.

1. The first open house in January, 2017 included project background information and opportunities for the public to provide general feedback on the Hennepin Avenue South corridor. A total of 71 people signed in. There was a corresponding online public survey soliciting additional feedback on the corridor. The survey was distributed through neighborhood and community communication channels and received over 400 responses, primarily from people who identified as living near the project area.
2. Based on feedback from the first open house, the survey results, and planning guidance, Public Works developed multiple layout options and shared them with the public at a second open house in March, 2017. A total of 46 people signed in.
3. Based on feedback from the second open house, additional feedback, and technical review, the staff recommended layout was presented at a third community meeting in April, 2017. A total of 54 people signed in.

Property owners, tenants, and residents within one block of Hennepin Avenue South received notification of each of the three community meetings. Meeting notices were also distributed through other communication channels including the project website and email update list, Ward 10 City Council Office, East Calhoun Community Organization (ECCO), Calhoun Area Residents Action Group (CARAG), Uptown Association, and Lake Street Council. Meeting notices and materials are available on the [project website](#).

During the engagement process, the project and layout options were presented to the Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) and Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC). The Committees supported improving the walking experience and including dedicated bicycle lanes on the street. Both Committees supported designs consistent with the recommended layout, although the PAC specifically supported a sidewalk-level protected bikeway, instead of a street-level striped bicycle lane.

Project staff presented to the Uptown Special Service District, which includes representation from property owners between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street. Direct one-on-one meetings were held with other property owners and business owners along the corridor and staff also received ideas and feedback from the ECCO and CARAG neighborhoods.

Most stakeholders supported an improved walking experience with wider sidewalks and boulevards, especially between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street. Some people suggested considering a shared street design between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street, which would prioritize the movement of people walking and dramatically rethink how that

block functions. South of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, there was concern from some stakeholders about the loss of on-street parking needed to achieve wider sidewalks and include bicycle lanes. Some stakeholders, including the ECCO neighborhood, did not support designs with bicycle lanes on Hennepin Avenue South due to the loss of parking and high traffic volumes on the street. Other stakeholders, including the CARAG neighborhood supported maintaining some parking on both sides of Hennepin Avenue South, and a sidewalk-level protected bikeway.

## Project Design Components

### Why is the sidewalk being widened?

The sidewalks on Hennepin Avenue South are being widening to improve the pedestrian realm. The existing sidewalks are not comfortable for walking and do not meet the City's standard for sidewalk width. For most of the corridor there are no street trees and no space for a planted boulevard or furnishing zone. These deficiencies result in a walking experience with little buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic and include frequent obstacles such as light poles, signs, and fire hydrants. The sidewalks at many locations are not wide enough to comfortably accommodate larger groups of people, or even two people walking side by side. This need is especially great on the block between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street, which sees over 3,000 people walk each day.

The proposed layout includes a wider, more organized sidewalk space that includes frontage, a through space for people walking, and a furnishing zone separating the sidewalk from the moving traffic. The furnishing zone will include space for items such as street trees, potential streetscape elements, bus shelters, street lights, signs, and fire hydrants. In front of residential uses, the furnishing zone will typically include street trees and a planted boulevard. In front of commercial uses the furnishing zone will typically include street trees and a wider concrete sidewalk. Between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street, the wider sidewalk and furnishing zone can provide opportunities for activation such as sidewalk cafés.

### What will the street lighting be like?

Hennepin Avenue is located in a pedestrian priority corridor. As such, the reconstruction project will include a new lighting system that will use City standards for fixture styles, spacing of fixtures, and uniformity of light appropriate for pedestrian areas. The existing overhead wood poles on Hennepin Avenue South will be removed and replaced with a mix of lower pedestrian-scale metal pole lighting and higher-level metal pole lighting. Additional information can be found in the [Minneapolis Street Lighting Policy](#).

### Are any streetscape improvements proposed with the project?

The base project includes street trees and pedestrian-scale lighting for length of corridor. Additional streetscape elements can be coordinated with the project based on property owner interest. The Uptown Special Service District has expressed initial interest in coordinating streetscape enhancements with the 2018 reconstruction project to further support business activity and improves the walking experience between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street. South of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, the CARAG neighborhood is interested in coordinating street elements with the project, potentially including items like bike racks, pedestrian enhancements, and bus stop improvements. Public Works will continue to coordinate with the Uptown Special Service District, CARAG, and other stakeholders on those ideas and opportunities during detail design.

### Was a shared street considered for the Lake Street to 31<sup>st</sup> Street block?

During the community engagement process, Public Works received a lot of interest in the block between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street. The high levels of walking and transit, commercial uses, and annual block events inspired ideas for a shared street design. This design creates plaza-like environment with limited use of curb and gutter.

People walking, people bicycling, transit buses, and motor vehicles can share the same street space. In Minneapolis, 29<sup>th</sup> Street West between Bryant Avenue South and Lyndale Avenue South operates as a shared street.

Public Works considered how this idea could work on Hennepin Avenue South. While there are high volumes of people walking, there are also high levels of transit buses and motor vehicle traffic. Based on national guidance and a review of national and international examples, staff did not believe the current or future motor vehicle traffic volumes would be compatible with a shared street design. Diverting motor vehicle traffic off of Hennepin Avenue South was not supported due to the lack of alternative routes associated with the discontinuous street grid and one-way streets in the area.

While a fully shared street is not included in the project, the design includes a raised midblock crossing between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street. This feature creates a shared street-like environment for a portion of the block, facilitating pedestrian crossings where they are highest and encouraging people to drive slower, while still maintaining full transit and motor vehicle access.

### **Why are bicycle lanes being included?**

Between Franklin Avenue and 36<sup>th</sup> Street, Hennepin Avenue South is included in the [Minneapolis Bicycle Master Plan](#) as an on-street bikeway. Street maintenance projects, like the 2018 Hennepin Avenue South reconstruction project, provide an opportunity to implement the planned bikeway network and improve bicycle access throughout the city. During the project outreach process, some people said they currently ride a bicycle on Hennepin Avenue South. Many more people said they may ride more often on Hennepin Avenue South if there were a comfortable bikeway. Shared lanes, similar to Bryant Avenue South were considered, but are not recommended due to higher volumes of transit buses and motor vehicle traffic. Striped five to six-foot bicycle lanes are the recommended bikeway design on Hennepin Avenue South and will provide dedicated space for people to ride, separate from the travel lane.

### **Was a protected bikeway considered?**

During the community engagement process, Public Works received interest in creating a comfortable bikeway along Hennepin Avenue South, including ideas for a protected bikeway. A protected bikeway provides physical separation between the bicycle lane area and moving vehicular traffic. Retrofit designs like 36<sup>th</sup> Street West or Blaisdell Avenue South use striping and flexible delineators. Protected bikeways coordinated with reconstruction projects typically include a more permanent design and look similar to bicycle paths adjacent to parkways.

Following initial feedback, Public Works developed striped bicycle lane options and also a protected bikeway option. The protected bikeway option created a one-way bicycle path on both sides of the street at the same height as the sidewalk. The protected bikeway fit within the available right-of-way, while maintaining sidewalk, boulevard, and two travel lanes. However, the protected bikeway was not compatible with space needed at bus stops for high passenger boardings and bus shelters, and would result in bicycle traffic being routed into the street bus stop locations. The option was also not able to preserve any on-street parking along the corridor, which was not supported by many stakeholders. Additional information about the protected bikeway option can be found in the [March 9, 2017 Open House materials](#).

### **What will the bicycle lanes connect to?**

A bikeway on Hennepin Avenue South will connect to dozens of retail, dining, and entertainment destinations to ECCO, CARAG, and surrounding neighborhoods. Bicycle lanes on Hennepin Avenue South will also connect to other existing and planned bikeways in the area. On the south, Hennepin Avenue South connects to the existing 36<sup>th</sup> Street bikeway, which provides access to the Chain of Lakes trails and to the Bryant Avenue South bikeway.

There are no direct existing connections on the north end of the project, although bikeway connections are identified on the Bicycle Master Plan on 31<sup>st</sup> Street and on Hennepin Avenue South north of Lake Street. Improvements on these corridors are not currently programmed in the [City's Five-Year Capital Improvement Program](#). However, Public Works is exploring how people bicycling northbound on Hennepin Avenue South can easily access nearby bikeways in the near term, such as the Midtown Greenway and 26<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **What changes are proposed to parking?**

There are 31 existing metered parking spaces on Hennepin Avenue South between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street and approximately 201 existing unpaid parking spaces between 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Street. On average, 50-75 percent of the available parking on Hennepin Avenue South is used, although utilization varies by time of day and day of the week.

Between Lake Street and 31<sup>st</sup> Street, the design includes 17-foot sidewalks which include a furnishing/planting area, 5-foot bicycle lanes, and 11-foot travel lanes for two-way traffic. The design does not include parking on either side of Hennepin Avenue South. Options were considered that maintained some parking on this block, although those options had narrower sidewalks, no bicycle lanes, and only maintained about one-third of existing parking, or 10 spaces.

Between 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Street, the design maintains parking on the east side of Hennepin Avenue South. This design allows for 7-foot sidewalks with 6-foot boulevards, 6-foot bicycle lanes, 10-foot travel lanes for two-way traffic, and an 8-foot parking lane. Due to the limited right-of-way, parking is only able to be maintained on one side of Hennepin Avenue South for this segment. Staff evaluated options with parking on the east or west side. The recommended design maintains parking on the east side due to the ability to maintain over half existing parking on Hennepin Avenue South, the compatibility with bus stop designs on the east side, and higher number of commercial uses on the east side. The existing disability transfer zones on the east side of Hennepin Avenue in the 3100 and 3300 blocks are proposed to be maintained with this project.

### **What alternative parking options exist?**

In addition to parking on the east side of Hennepin Avenue South, there are on-street parking options on side streets and existing off-street parking options within one block of Hennepin Avenue South. Several off-street parking options exist on the north end of the corridor, including the Walker Library ramp (65 spaces), Rainbow lot (70 spaces), Mozaic Art Park ramp (434 spaces), and Calhoun Square ramp (730 spaces). Smaller surface parking lots exist south of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, serving specific properties and businesses.

## **Construction**

### **When will construction work begin and how long will it last?**

Construction is anticipated for the 2018 construction season (April-November). Construction staging and detour routes have not been determined. Public Works will be equipped to discuss construction after detailed design is completed and will be coordinating with impacted properties on the corridor the winter before construction starts. If you have specific questions or circumstances that Public Works should be aware of at this time, please contact Debra Jacobs, Project Engineer, at 612-673-2463 or [debra.jacobs@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:debra.jacobs@minneapolismn.gov).

### **Do my water/sanitary services need replacement?**

Property owners are responsible for their service connection to the mainline. Property owners who have service line in need of replacement are encouraged to coordinate with the project to save on pavement restoration costs. The City of Minneapolis does not inspect the service lines prior to reconstruction.

## How can I stay informed about the project status and construction schedule?

The [project website](#) contains project information and regular updates. To stay informed, you can subscribe to project email updates to receive notices of meetings and other project information.

## Funding and Assessments

### How is the project being paid for?

The project is funded by various sources, including Municipal State Aid funds, City general obligation bonds (net debt bonds), property assessments, and storm sewer revenue.

### Will there be property assessments?

Property assessments are calculated based on the square footage of the property owner called influence area. The influence area for the Hennepin Avenue South project generally extends a half block east and west of Hennepin Avenue South between Lake Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Street.

The assessments are determined using current Uniform Assessment Rates, which are determined by City Council at the end of year prior to construction. For general informational purposes, the proposed 2017 assessment rates for residential and non-residential properties are as follows:

- Residential: \$0.87/Square Foot
- Non Residential: \$2.60/Square Foot

A typical sized residential lot of 40 feet by 150 feet would have an assessment of approximately \$5,200. A letter that explains the assessment process and the amount calculated for the property will be sent to affected property owners early in the year of construction. A public meeting will be held to answer any questions you may have regarding assessments. A public hearing in front of the Transportation and Public Works Committee of the City of Minneapolis Council will also be held to give you the opportunity to voice questions, concerns, or support of the project. The time and location of the public meeting and public hearing will be indicated in the assessment letter.

If you choose, you can have the assessment placed on your property taxes for payment over 20 years. The property owner will be charged the interest rate for the bonds sold to cover the assessment. Additional information on assessments, including example assessment calculations, is included in the [2017 Assessment Info Packet](#).