

FIRST AVENUE SOUTH

Public Engagement Summary: August 2022 City of Minneapolis





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1ST AVENUE S Reconstruction



Introduction

The City of Minneapolis is reconstructing First Ave. S. between Lake St. and Grant St. This project aims to improve safety and mobility for all people and modes of travel, install an All Ages and Abilities bikeway as a part of the Whittier-Lyndale Bikeway Project, meet green stormwater requirements, add plantings and trees, and accommodate property access for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Initial planning and engagement for the First Ave. S. project corridor is underway and construction is anticipated to begin in 2024. Upgrades for the project corridor include new sidewalks, ADA pedestrian ramps, bicycle accommodations, new pavement, curb and gutter replacement and utility improvements.

From May through August 2022, the City conducted phase two of community engagement. The engagement team collected community feedback on people's experience traveling on/along the corridor. Stakeholders were asked how they currently use the project corridor, what they see improved or changed on First Ave. S and preference for native plantings versus sod. This community feedback will help develop an initial design for the First Ave. S. reconstruction project. The following are key findings from the feedback collected during this engagement phase.

Key Findings

Key Hindings	
Pedestrian Improvements	Many people want pedestrian crossings throughout the corridor for safer crossing.
	Many people noted the current high speeds by which vehicles travel down the corridor and would like to see a reduction of vehicle speed to help with pedestrian safety.
	Along with ADA upgrades, many people from Blind Inc. liked the use of curbs, boulevards and tactile strips to demark sidewalks from roads and bikeways.
Bicycle Improvements	Many people are concerned about vehicles using the bike lanes for temporary parking and deliveries and suggest a protective bike lane along First Ave. S.
	Many people expressed interest in a permanent two-way bike path on First Ave. S. noting it would be safer and easier to use for all ages, including children.
Safety concerns	Many people noted safety concerns including high speed traffic, blind spots for pedestrians and drivers, and cars driving the wrong directions on First Ave. S. Many people suggested clearer signage and lower speeds posted for the corridor. Several residents and business owners expressed concern with delivery and emergency vehicles blocking the roadway and/or bike path, causing back-ups.
Roadway Improvements	Due to the narrow roadway, many people were concerned about parallel parking, hitting other vehicles or bicyclists and emergency and delivery truck access.
	People from all modes of travel were happy to hear about pavement replacement for a smoother, safer ride.
GSI	Most people preferred native plants to sod for green stormwater infrastructure.



Engagement Activities

First Ave. S is a highly diverse corridor with a mix of culture, race, ethnicity, ability, and socio-economic status. The corridor has a mix of housing, small and large businesses, and industrial/commercial spaces. A public meeting, an online survey, and an online interactive map were available for the public to provide comments and feedback on the project. Project staff also conducted street interviews with residents, business/property owners and people traveling along the corridor. Additionally, Blind Inc., an organization for the blind located on First Ave. S., joined project staff for a site visit on Hennepin Ave. and Fourth St. to give recommendations on how the City can improve current practices for the upcoming reconstruction of First Ave South.

Survey

From May to August, an online and physical copy of the survey was made available for the community. The survey asked about how people use the existing corridor, their experiences of walking, biking, using transit and driving on/along the corridor, and what they want to see improved. The survey was promoted on the project website, online interactive map, through email and at the in-person public meeting. A total of 37 people completed the survey. A table quantifying survey responses can be found in Appendix A. The following summarizes key highlights gathered from the online survey.

Key Highlights

- Of the 37 survey respondents,
 - \circ 14 people live within one block of the project corridor
 - o 15 people live near the corridor (Stevens Square, Loring Park, or Whittier)
 - o 8 people travel through or visit the corridor
- Of the 37 survey respondents,
 - \circ 34 walk
 - o 22 bike
 - o 27 drive a personal vehicle
 - o 16 rideshare or use transit



Most of the survey respondents want to see improved pedestrian crossings, improved bike options, and green infrastructure. The chart shows which improvements survey participants want along First Ave. S.



Online Interactive Map

An online interactive map was available for people to provide comments and identify issues, concerns or questions on the project corridor. The interactive map was promoted on the project website, email and at the virtual public meeting. Between May to August, nine new comments were submitted. Comments were categorized as:

Like Concern Concern	Auto Traffic Idea or Concern
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Comment High	lights
Grant St. to Franklin Ave.	 Pedestrian Improvements Visibility of approaching NB traffic is currently impeded by parking. Concern about trees being included with green space; likely to block visibility Bikeway Improvements Difficulty navigating First Ave. S. and Grant St. due to timing of traffic lights. Suggests improving sequencing of lights with cyclists in mind. Intersection at First Ave. S. and E. 19th St. is stressful with cars turning fast. Suggests raising intersection or bikeway/crosswalks. Concern about narrow bike path. Suggests making bike path at least 10 feet and reducing boulevard space. Recommends placing green space between sidewalk and bike path to prevent pedestrians from using bike path. Concern at 14th St. and First Ave. with constantly seeing cars pass into the bike lane. Would like to see more of a concrete or metal bollard barrier.
Franklin Ave. to 26th	 Concern about emergency vehicle access on First Ave. S. and Franklin Ave. near Crown Medical Center. NB traffic can quickly back up to Franklin Ave. causing drivers to pull into bike lane and speed north. Bikeway Improvements Suggests posted sign for bikes to remind cyclists to use auto lane to turn left.
St. 26th St. to Lake St.	Otherwise, recommends keeping lane painting to let cars know to share space or indicate a turn box. Bikeway Improvements Biking in the winter, people use First Ave. S. to get from the Greenway to 26th
	 Biking in the winter, people use First Ave. S. to get from the Greenway to 26th St. but come up the new Greenway Access at Lake and 35W. Suggests the MnDOT's new Greenway access to connect to this bikeway. A woonerf alley to the Greenway is suggested.
	 Roadway Improvements Many cars use the bike lane to drive South on 1st Ave. Frequent speeding by cars going North. Speed bumps suggested.



Street Interviews

In addition to online and interactive surveys, project staff conducted street interviews with residents, businesses and property owners and people traveling through the corridor. Over the course of three weeks, the team interviewed 57 people and over a dozen business/property owners.

During interviews, project staff asked people how they travel along First Ave. S., any changes or improvements they would like to see made, and their preference for sod or native plants for green stormwater infrastructure.

Summary

Overall, safety was a priority among residents, especially among pedestrians. Blind spots, speeding cars, cars turning the wrong direction on First Ave. S. and cars



Figure 1: A pedestrian crosses at Franklin and First Ave. S.

cutting into the bike lane were all mentioned and observed as safety concerns. The lack of parking was also a common issue that was mentioned by residents and business/property owners. Regarding preference for green space, there was a strong inclination for native plants among residents and property owners. In addition to visual appeal, once people were more informed about the function of the green stormwater infrastructure, they were receptive to the idea of native plants. However, when it came to the maintenance of native plants and the purpose and benefits of green stormwater infrastructure, the team found that more education is needed. Of the residents interviewed, most used public transit and/or walking as the most common mode of travel.

The following are key themes that emerged during the street engagement with highlighted comments. See Appendix B for a full list of comments.

Themes

Safety is a priority

- A resident who drives, walks and uses public transit commented about blind spots as a safety concern as well as potholes. They would like to be able to cross streets safely.
- Several people expressed that First Ave. S. is dangerous for pedestrians, and one person shared that she felt 25th St. and First Ave. S. should have a crosswalk notifier because pedestrians can't see oncoming traffic easily and it is hazardous to cross.
- Several residents and business owners mentioned concerns about cars turning the wrong direction on First Ave. S. at Franklin and have witnessed many accidents. They recommended additional, clear signage.

Slower speeds, less congestion desired

• Residents shared concerns that cars travel at very high speeds in the area.



- Many people have seen accidents along the intersections of First Ave. S. (specifically 22nd St. and Franklin) due to people driving too fast.
- A resident who primarily walks along the corridor was concerned about the blind spot on 19th St. and First Ave. S. and the high speed of passing cars at 40 mph.

Narrow lanes cause issues

- A resident who just moved to the Stevens Square notices cars can barely get through with parking on both sides and a bike lane and said turning is an issue.
- A resident said the streets are too narrow for parking and prefers a two-way street.
- A business owner on Franklin who drives expressed concern with the narrow lanes and "getting clipped" or being worried about accidently hitting a bicyclist. After learning about the concept ideas, they thought the additional green space/barrier would help.

Emergency vehicles block traffic

- Several business/property owners expressed concern about emergency vehicles north of Franklin blocking one-lane street, causing confusion and back-ups.
- Several residents in this area also expressed concern about emergency vehicles blocking traffic and driving and/or parking in the bike lane.

Mixed reactions to a permanent two-lane bikeway

- Several people acknowledged a permanent two-way bikeway would be great.
- A multi-modal user advised that re-pavement would be nice since he cycles regularly.
- Several people expressed concern about making the bike lane permanent. The concerns involved plowing and that biking is significantly reduced in the winter so it seems like overkill to make the bike lanes permanent when the biking season is only half of the year.



Figure 2: A bicyclist waits for the light to turn green

Lack of parking is still a concern

- A MCAD student who walks, bikes, and drives in the area shared that she's concerned about the few public parking options available to students. She also shared that this is the main concern among many other MCAD students.
- One resident shared that he's concerned about the number of times residents get fined and would like to see an expansion of free parking along First Ave. S.
- Someone shared they felt that residents already don't have enough parking options.

Parking in bike lanes is an issue



- A few residents shared that cars park on the bike lanes, especially when dropping off other people.
- Several residents who live near Franklin and First Ave. S. agreed, commenting that emergency and delivery vehicles often park in the bike lane or block traffic in the one-driving lane, creating congestion and at times accidents.
- While engaging, a car drove down the bike lane (in the opposite direction of the one way) and sat in neutral for several minutes outside of a property, blocking the bike lane.

A strong preference for native plants

- People mentioned native plantings as creating a "more community feel" and having green space for dogs would be nice.
- One man shared that he felt that sod looks better and neater but native plants would likely be easier for homeowners to maintain.
- A resident shared concerns about the upkeep of plants and having to water them often.

Property and Business Owner Engagement

Feedback from property and business owners varied, but overall, they liked the concept drawings. Businesses near First Ave. S. and Franklin expressed concerns about emergency vehicles not being able to get through, confusion about current state parking, and all people interviewed said they have seen multiple accidents due to high speeds and due to cars driving the wrong way on First Ave. S.

Multiple people thought additional, clear signage would be helpful as well as slower speeds. One person suggested a shoulder for emergency vehicles to park, so they don't block the street. Further north at Steven's Square, a property manager said her primary concern is safety and they are in need for street lighting. She is also concerned about a lack of parking for residents, especially in winter when the bike lane isn't being fully utilized. See Appendix B for full list of comments.



Figure 3: A business on the corner of 26th St. and First Ave. S.

Blind Inc. Site Visit

In partnership with Blind Inc., an organization that offers trainings and skills to help blind people, a site visit occurred on May 27 to highlight the combination of APS, bikeway, and tactile edge treatments on the Hennepin and Fourth Street projects downtown and to hear recommendations for the upcoming reconstruction of First Ave S.



Comment Highlights

- Overall, participants preferred a curb or boulevard space over a tactile strip.
- For preference of type of tactile strip, preference was for the tactile strips used on the corner of Hennepin Ave. and Fourth Street. and noted the tactile strip acts like a curb/warning. On Hennepin and Fourth, tactile strip is more defined and easier to detect (than on Marquette). Participants noted that definition between bike and pedestrian lane on crosswalk would be nice to have.
- Participants overwhelmingly said to keep the intersection signals and brail signage that is being used currently on Nicollet and Fourth St. One person noted Braille signs are great but prefer crosswalk buttons to vibrate upon pushing and holding.



See Appendix C for a full list of comments.

City advisory committee meetings

Figure 4: Sr. Transportation Planner Katie White leads a Blind Inc. group for a site visit on 4th Street

Project staff presented to the Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory and Bicycle Advisory Committees in May.

Community organization meetings

Project staff presented to the Loring Park Neighborhood Association, Nicollet Safety Committee, Stevens Square Neighborhood Development Committee, and the Whittier Alliance Neighborhood Association meetings.

Comment Highlights

- Green space: why not all 9.5' along corridor?
 - Noted the ROW width and trade-off in space for use
- Why change parking location from west to east?
 - Noted shift at Franklin intersection and intersection bump out treatments allow for shifting easily
- Suggested adding signage for bikeway more than paint to identify as two-way
- Participant in favor of native plants in green space easier to mow than keep native plants. Also noted that some native plantings are more work than mowing.
- Question about the success of the west floating bay parking
 - Noted challenges in winter and final built will have greenspace for snow storage
- Suggestion that trees in green space are trees that don't drop stuff on to bikeway
- Question about coordination with Nicollet project/ Kmart site
 - Noted coordination



Public Meeting

A public meeting was held on May 25, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. at Whittier Elementary School. The purpose of the meeting was to present project information and concept typicals, to gather experiences and issues, and to answer questions and allow residents to meet project staff. The public meeting was promoted on yard signs throughout the corridor, postcard mail, at neighborhood organization meetings, and the project website. Five people attended the meeting. The following are comment highlights and questions gathered from the meeting.

Comment Highlights

- One person liked the concept improvements and felt it would be safer and easier for students to use and access. Given these changes, they thought more students would ride their bikes to school because of protected lanes.
- With this design, the bikeway feels more integrated these connections are helpful.
- Concerned about lack of parking.

Pop-Up Community Engagement Events

Three pop-up events were held in July and August 2022, with the purpose of surveying attendees about their travel habits along the project corridor, their desired improvements and to promote project awareness. Most people who shared their responses live or traveled frequently in the project corridor.

The Colonial Market and Restaurant

This pop-up event took place at the Colonial Market and Restaurant on July 23. Approximately 60 people interacted with staff. These interactions included taking a handout and participating in the survey by placing stickers on the board.

Comment Highlights

- Many people either drove personal vehicles or walked along the corridor.
- Most of the concerns were about pedestrian safety along First Avenue and accessing the store.
- Drivers of vehicles were most concerned with traffic flow.
- Green infrastructure was more important to pedestrians than drivers.
- Taller native plants were preferred for their shade abilities, while short grass was preferred for aesthetics.



Figure 5: Pop-up event at the Colonial Market

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Stevens Square

A community picnic with family-friendly activities, food, and project information in Stevens Square Park occurred on July 30. At least 40 people attended this event. To promote the event, flyers were distributed to apartment buildings in the Stevens Square neighborhood and businesses near the corridor. The event information was also shared electronically with nearby residential property managers and the Stevens Square Neighborhood Association.

Comment Highlights

Overall, there was a positive response to the concept drawings and project plan. Below are key highlights.

Parking

Steven's Square Park Members of the Stevens Square Safety team

- identified parking as a priority and commented about the lack of parking spaces.
- One person shared they had to sell their car because they had no place to park •

Access

- People shared that delivery trucks often block parking spaces and were concern about delivery truck access.
- Another member of the Stevens Square Safety team mentioned a boarding house nearby and difficulty for emergency vehicles who frequently are called to get through the single traffic lane.
- People noted a group home nearby and the need for access for frequent medical calls and Metro Mobility riders.

Safety

- Other people who don't own a car mentioned parking is not a concern and noted concerns about community safety and increased crime.
- One person shared that a school board member recently left due to safety concerns in the project area.

National Night Out

Project staff canvassed National Night Out events on August 2, sharing project information. Staff also attended Loring Park's National Night Out event at the Women's club. Twenty people stopped at the table to engage with staff and project information.

Comment Highlights

First Avenue S. is difficult to drive as it is, and even worse to walk/bike.



Figure 7: National Night Out event at Loring Park's Women's Club

Figure 6: Staff interacting with Stevens Square residents at



• Excited to see improvements in the future.

Canvassing

In addition to tabling at the Woman's Club parking lot, handouts with project information were distributed to five different block parties in Uptown near Loring Park. Staff interacted with over 30 residents and left many more flyers at these neighborhood gatherings. Block party locations were Mueller Park, the 2600 and 2700 blocks of Bryant Street, the 2700 block of Garfield Street, and the 2800 block of Harriet Street.



Appendices

Appendix A: Key Survey Highlights Quantified

Key Survey Highlights *Note: Survey responses are not exclusive. Respondents were asked to rank their modes of travel. Responses were counted regardless of ranking. For example, 34 respondents who indicated they walk/roll may have also indicated they bike, drive and/or use transit.

Total survey respondents: 37. Total number of people who live within the project corridor: 29						
	Modes of transit					
People who walk	People who bike		People	who drive		People who use rideshare/transit
34	22	22		27		16
	Desired Improvements					
Improved traffic flow	Improved pedestrian crossings	Would like green infrastructure		Improved b options	ike	Wider Sidewalks
14	26	15		18		12
	Transportation Preferences					
People who prefer to walk	People who prefer to bike		People who prefer transit/rideshare/carpool		People who prefer personal vehicle	
30	22			16		20

Appendix B: Street Interview Comments

Category	Comment	
Residents and travelers of the corridor		
Safety	 One person advised for more patrolmen, more signs – "one-way" signage specifically 	
	 A resident shared education for children could be improved, cited gun violence and emphasis on reading 	
	 A newer resident to the area mentioned their biggest issue is with the Midtown Greenway – and said it's sketchy/threatening - long strip/no exit. 	
	• A couple who primarily drives said, the concept design/project is a bad idea	
	since the street is very dangerous; bike lane is too big, Firetrucks obstruct	
	bike lane/incoming traffic, Parking is a major issue - cannot open car to get	
	groceries, etc.; cars speed (40+ MPH), people drive the wrong way, pegs are	
	unsightly; mentions 80% of the area rent but no one has off-street parking	



	 One resident (renter) shared that while he's lived in the area for a year and a half, he is ready to move away because it's unsafe and that there were shootings at night a couple of blocks south of 24th street. A resident living at Mint Properties notices so many accidents; glad it's one-way because a two way would be dangerous. Noticed trees block view/visibility of people traveling in/out of Blind, Inc. Advises current conditions are unsafe; suggests speed signs needed - drop speed limit to 20 MPH; has spoken to police in the area who advised him to contact the City. Also mentioned deep pothole down 22nd St that took 8 months to fix. Made it clear to keep one-way traffic flow; also likes the bike lane. Would like more streetlights. One pedestrian shared that she is a school bus driver in the area and when she is near Franklin, she often has to yell out of the bus for cars to stop for students crossing.
Congestion	 A resident expressed she was concerned about a bike lane because the First Ave. S. near Franklin feels too congested.
Parking	 Another resident who walks, bikes and uses public transit said enough parking would be beneficial since it's in demand A resident who primarily drives commented that parking is a priority; potholes need maintenance
Design	 A person who lives in the apartment nearby said they in favor of concept design A resident on 1st Ave. S. said she liked the concept drawings and was happy to hear pavement improvement would be part of the project because there are so many large potholes and it's a safety issue. Several residents and business owners mentioned potholes and were happy to hear the road conditions would be improved.
Bikeway	 A resident who primarily drives said they would like to see bike lanes, propublic transit A resident and transit user in the area shared that she's glad that there's an increase in the number of bike lanes. A bicyclist who uses the corridor often said they were glad to hear the bikeway is going to be permanent. However, they were concerned about the area by the convention center because they notice cars going in the wrong direction and it's a safety concern.
Native Plants	 The concern surrounding which plants would be planted was raised, as people are concerned with blocking the view of bikers if the plants are too tall.



	 Many people expressed that they prefer native plants but raised the concern that salt on the roadways in the winter is very damaging to plants, native or non-native alike.
Green space	• One resident shared that she would like to see more trees. She shared that at certain intersections such as 26th street and Franklin, it gets quite warm (the concrete gets very warm for pedestrians), and trees can help with that.
	Business & Property Owner Comments
Financial	 One business owner expressed concern about how business owners will be supported during construction and if there would be full street closures.
Design	 A staff member at Pet Doctors off Franklin and First Ave. S. liked the concept design drawings and said it would help with snow removal. The manager at CVS liked the concept drawings. The biggest issue she sees is cars turning wrong way on 1st Ave. and it gets congested just being one-way. She would like more bike racks for bike parking in the area – especially for commuters and customers.
Parking	 The property manager at Steven's Community Apartments said parking is an issue (especially in the winter). Bike lane in the summer is great but parking is a bigger priority. She noted that when the 2-way bikeway happened there was no communication/notice given. A nurse at the Crown Medical center said in front of their building – people are confused about parking. Where do people park if parking is taken away? The manager at Clausen's autobody says parking isn't an issue for his business – but thinks it is for residents.
Safety	 Driving lane: too tight. With a large truck, too narrow, worried about clipping other cars. After looking at concept, the green space would help. With the current conditions north of Franklin: not good – cars get smacked or cars are confused with parking on the left. The property manager at Steven's Community Apartments said her Primary need/concern is street lighting for safety. She has been asking the city for 6+ years and has lost tenants lately due to safety concerns and primary need is to get renters. A nurse at the Crown Medical center is concerned about emergency vehicles not being able to get by. She said it's scary to drive down 1st Ave. – people coming out from the side – a slower speed is needed. The manager at Clausen's autobody expressed concerns with one lane because Emergency vehicles pull up and block the street and cars get stuck. His idea is to include a shoulder for emergency vehicles. He has also observed numerous crashes at intersection – because it's confusing,



	dangerous. His suggestion is for clear signage – where to park/not to park and actually enforce it.
Bikeway	 A person who works at the building on Franklin and First Ave. South said people existing the garage and driveway on First Ave. don't realize there's a two-way bike lane and doesn't always look left – dangerous. They suggested clearer signage. The manager at Clausen's autobody often witnesses trucks driving in the bike lane – he wants to get rid of bike lane.
Green	• A staff member at Pet Doctors off Franklin and First Ave. S. preferred native
stormwater	plantings for green space.
infrastructure	

Appendix C: Comments from Blind Inc. Site Visit

Sidewalk	Gap in linear tactile at bus stop shows something is there.
	Break in tactile edge is noticeable but necessarily indicative of a bus stop. Bus shelter
	or pole would be a helpful signal.
Curb	Curb or boulevard space is better than tactile strip – tactile strip acts like a
	curb/warning
	Separation distance along with the tactile edge at curb can create perception of a
	corner or crossing zone.
	Low-vision cue against right curb to align for street crossing. Fan curbs or bikeways
	are hard to detect for alignment or unknowingly aligning in bikeway.
	Angled or skewed crossings are difficult – aligning at curb then using crow of road to
	adjust. Potential issue with skewed APS – some use that to align directionality
Intersection	Tactile edge with different texture to separate/signal edge of walkway/crosswalk at
	intersections may be helpful.
	On Hennepin and Fourth, tactile strip is more defined and easier to detect (than on
	Marquette). Definition between bike and pedestrian lane on crosswalk would be nice
	to have.
	Please keep intersection signage – very helpful. Promote equal access so everyone
	can identify street names.
Bike Lane	Walking alongside tactile is helpful (not on top). Bike lane is assumed to be closer to
	street. Bumps versus elongated linear strip is not easily perceptible with cane
	movement. Audible difference with cast tactile is beneficial. Excess space between
	tactile and bikeway is not necessary
	Protected bikeways protect bikes from cars not pedestrians from bikes
	Suggestion to remove truncated domes in bikeway
	Consider texture of concrete surface in bikeway to help distinguish; can feel
	difference in textures
	Preference for tactile edge to follow bikeway
	I territor territor educe en elección biter terre en energible in belefed
	Having tactile edge as close to bike lane as possible is helpful.



	Many people didn't know where bike lane was on Marquette on 4 th due to
	ineffective tactile edge.
Other	Painted tactile feels the same; less audible feedback compared to cast tactile
	People mention subtle tactile edge might not work for someone with neuropathy
	Braille signs are great, prefer crosswalk button to vibrate upon pushing and holding
	More obvious/textured tactile edges are helpful
	Loud crosswalk button can be excessive
	12 in tactile edge is helpful; allows accommodations for more people with varying
	abilities in the community (people with neuropathy, unfamiliar with cane, etc.)
	Universal design considerations are vital. Designs that are functional and accessible for all is needed.
	Trash cans at Hennepin and 4 th obstructed the walkway from the crosswalk to the bus stop (west of bike lane).
	Someone liked tactile edge on 4 th (library driveway) due to different texture than the crosswalks; easy to differentiate. However, others could be confused and think it's
	for Waypoint purposes.