

New Nicollet Avenue: Frequently Asked Questions

Engagement and recommended concept development

1. How was public feedback used in determining the recommended design?

The project team attended or hosted 62 events and received 17,650 survey responses on the project between August 2022 and March 2024. Comments received at events and input from the three online surveys were used to shape the project goals, identify uses and priorities for the street and public spaces, and informed which street concepts to analyze further.

2. How did the city engage underrepresented populations on the New Nicollet Redevelopment project?

The project team partnered with several community-based organizations, including Whittier Alliance, Lyndale Neighborhood Association, Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization, Phillips West, Lake Street Council and FRAYEO, which is a group that works with Somali youth. To reach groups that are often underrepresented in community engagement, the project team worked with these partners to host pop-up events at strategic locations, conduct outreach in the neighborhoods surrounding the site, and promote engagement opportunities with several key groups. The focus communities were:

- Disability communities
- Black and African American residents
- Hispanic and Latino residents and business owners
- Indigenous and Native American residents
- Vietnamese residents and business owners
- East African business owners and residents
- Central and West Phillips neighborhoods

To understand who was participating in online surveys and attending engagement events, the project team collected voluntary demographic information. In Phase II, Part II participants at events organized with the community partners were more racially and ethnically diverse (39% white, 31% African American or Black, and 15% Latino or Hispanic and 15% other) than participants who took the online survey (80% white, 5% African American or Black, 5% Hispanic or Latino and 10% other). Participants at events organized with the community partners were also more diverse in age than those who took the online survey (e.g., 16% were under age 20 vs 1% under age 20 for the online survey). More information on events that were hosted or attended and on demographic and location-based information on who attended events and who took the online survey are available in our engagement summary: [New Nicollet Redevelopment - Phase 2 Executive Summary](#).

3. The online survey showed a preference for Concept 4. Why isn't the City using this to determine the recommendation?

The intent of Phase II, Part II of public engagement was to solicit input on which of the four concept options (Concepts 1, 2, 3, and 4) were most preferred by neighborhood residents, business owners, visitors and other stakeholders. This input was used to identify which of the concepts to evaluate further and was not intended to choose a “winner” through engagement feedback alone. Evaluating the concept options using city policies, project goals, and technical analysis is a key part of the process of developing a recommended concept that best supports the project goals.

Additionally, while the online survey showed a slight preference for Concept 4 (average score of 2.87 stars, while Concept 1 had an average score of 2.83 stars), scores from the in-person engagement events in the community nearest the site showed a slight preference for Concept 1 (average score of 3.80 stars, while Concept 4 had an average score of 3.62 stars).

Based on this feedback, the project team identified Concept 1 and Concept 4 as the concepts to further evaluate using the project goals, city policies and technical analysis.

Trees, Greening, Streetscape and Boulevards

4. The proposed street concept has wide green spaces. Why is so much space allocated for green space?

In Phase II, Part I of community engagement and project development, participants identified trees, boulevards and green space as the top priority for the street design. In addition to providing green spaces in alignment with community desires, most of the green space included in the concept layout is intended to capture and clean stormwater runoff which is a requirement of the City's stormwater management ordinance as part of street reconstruction projects. Providing green space and treating stormwater is a community priority for this corridor, is needed to meet stormwater treatment requirements, and has many benefits: these Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) areas will help to reduce localized flooding, reduce the volume and rate of water entering storm sewers, and remove pollutants to protect the water quality of local lakes, wetlands, streams and the Mississippi River.

More information on how the city incorporates GSI and the benefits of this infrastructure is available here: <https://sdg.minneapolismn.gov/design-guidance/boulevards-and-furnishings/green-stormwater-infrastructure>

Pedestrian Facilities

5. How does the proposed design improve comfort and safety for people walking?

Sidewalks on the New Nicollet Ave will be 15 feet wide for most of the corridor to provide ample space for people walking and rolling, as well as providing space for future potential corridor amenities such as sidewalk cafes, furnishing zones and street lighting. This is a similar sidewalk width as other sections of the Nicollet Ave corridor, including the Eat Street area.

By reopening Nicollet Ave to general purpose traffic, transit vehicles, emergency vehicles and freight vehicles, crossing distances on Nicollet Ave at Cecil Newman Lane/29th St and Cecil Newman at 1st Ave can be shortened for people crossing Nicollet Ave, Cecil Newman Lane and 29th St. A new crossing on Nicollet Ave will include a [rectangular rapid flashing beacon \(RRFB\)](#) and a median/pedestrian refuge island. The intersection of Nicollet Ave at Cecil Newman Lane/29th St will be reconfigured for shorter crossing distances and a traffic signal will be added.

6. Why does Concept 4 not perform as well as Concept 1 on the project goal to “Provide room for wide sidewalks and comfortable, safe crossings”?

Concept 4 (opening Nicollet Ave only to transit and emergency vehicles) requires general purpose traffic and freight vehicles to continue to circulate around the site to reach destinations on Nicollet Ave. This requires two lanes of traffic to be maintained on Cecil Newman Lane and 29th St and for these intersections to accommodate larger truck turning movements, requiring that longer crossings with higher volumes of turning vehicles to be maintained for pedestrians at Cecil Newman Lane at 1st Ave, Nicollet Ave at Cecil Newman Lane and 29th St, and at 29th St at Blaisdell Ave compared with Concept 1 (opening Nicollet Ave to all types of vehicles).

Concept 1 allows for an improved realignment of the existing, offset intersection of Nicollet Avenue, West 29th Street and Cecil Newman Lane to a more traditional intersection design that will include a new traffic signal to improve safety and mobility for people walking, rolling, taking transit and driving. Concept 1 also allows Cecil Newman Lane to be rebuilt as a one-lane roadway to continue to facilitate local access needs while allowing space to address stormwater treatment needs and improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Allowing people driving to use Nicollet Ave will reduce potential turning movement conflicts and facilitate safer and more comfortable connections to Nicollet Ave from the new ramp on 1st Ave to the Midtown Greenway for people walking on the City’s [Pedestrian Priority Network \(PPN\)](#).

Bicycle Facilities

7. Why are no bicycle facilities proposed on the New Nicollet Ave?

Nicollet Ave to the north and south of the site are not on the city's Transportation Action Plan [All Ages and Abilities bikeway network \(AAA\)](#). There are currently no plans to provide bicycle facilities on the corridor. Currently, there is a ramp to the Midtown Greenway from Nicollet Ave. The existing ramp is not ADA compliant, creates a pinch point on the trail between Nicollet Ave and Blaisdell Ave, and requires users to bike on 29th St or Cecil Newman Lane to reach the entrance from the AAA bikeway facilities on Blaisdell Ave and 1st Ave on either side of the site.

As part of the New Nicollet Ave project, the project proposes to move the existing Midtown Greenway ramp from Nicollet Ave to connect to 1st Ave. The [1st Ave Reconstruction project](#) will be building a new two-way protected bikeway on 1st Ave starting in 2024. The new ramp location to 1st Ave will allow users to connect directly to the new two-way protected bikeway on 1st Ave, provide an ADA-compliant ramp and widen the trail to remove the pinch point on the Midtown Greenway trail.

8. How does the proposed design improve comfort, safety and connectivity for people biking?

The proposed design for New Nicollet Ave includes an improved connection to the Midtown Greenway from 1st Ave, an improved bikeway on Cecil Newman Lane with a new signalized intersection at Nicollet Ave and Cecil Newman Lane/29th St to connect from Blaisdell Ave to 1st Ave and vice versa, and a new proposed bicycle and pedestrian route through the site that will provide more connections to the development and more connection options to get from the bikeway on Blaisdell Ave to the bikeway on 1st Ave and vice versa. There is a dense network of [All Ages and Abilities bikeway network routes](#) adjacent to the site and additional bikeway improvements planned for 1st Ave and 31st St.

Additionally, reopening Nicollet Ave to all types of vehicles minimizes the volume and sizes of vehicles turning across the new two-way protected bikeway on 1st Ave to reach Cecil Newman Lane. Today, the bikeway on 1st Ave is a northbound one-way on the east side of the street; with the [1st Ave Reconstruction project](#), the bikeway will shift to the west side of the street and be converted from a one-way to a two-way bikeway. Vehicles turning onto Cecil Newman Lane from 1st Ave to travel around the site will have to cross the bikeway, which they don't do today.

Concept 1 allows for a safer design with shortened crossings and minimizes the number and sizes of vehicles that turn left onto Cecil Newman Lane across the planned two-way bikeway on 1st Ave. With the Midtown Greenway ramp shifting to 1st Ave and the new two-way protected bikeway on 1st Ave, higher volumes of people walking and biking are anticipated to use 1st Ave

creating more of an urgency to mitigate potential safety conflicts at 1st Ave and Cecil Newman Lane through the New Nicollet Ave project.

9. Why does Concept 4 not perform as well as Concept 1 on the project goal to “Provide connections to the Midtown Greenway and bikeway network with comfortable, safe crossings”?

Concept 4 requires general purpose traffic and freight vehicles to use 1st Ave, Cecil Newman Lane, Nicollet Ave, 29th St and Blaisdell Ave to circulate around the site. This means that larger intersections must be provided at each of those street intersections to allow for large vehicles turning around the site to access destinations on Nicollet Ave. This creates longer crossing distances for people biking and higher-volume conflict points with turning vehicles and trucks along the All Ages and Abilities bikeway network.

Concept 1 allows for an improved realignment of the existing, offset intersection of Nicollet Avenue, West 29th Street and Cecil Newman Lane to a more traditional intersection design that will include a new traffic signal to improve safety and mobility for people walking, rolling, taking transit and driving. Concept 1 also allows Cecil Newman Lane to be rebuilt as a one-lane roadway to continue to facilitate local access needs while allowing space to address stormwater treatment needs and provide a protected two-way bikeway. Allowing people driving to use Nicollet Ave will reduce potential turning movement conflicts at Cecil Newman Lane and 1st Ave, and facilitate safer and more comfortable connections to the Midtown Greenway for people biking on the City’s [All Ages and Abilities Network \(AAA\)](#).

10. When will the Nicollet Ave ramp to the Midtown Greenway move to 1st Ave? Will that happen with the 1st Ave project (2024) or with the Nicollet Ave project?

The Midtown Greenway access ramp from Nicollet Ave will remain until the New Nicollet Ave project starts construction, which is anticipated to begin in 2025. At that point, the Nicollet Ave ramp will be removed and a new ramp to 1st Ave will be constructed.

There will be some Midtown Greenway closures and detours as part of the 1st Ave Reconstruction project in 2024 to rebuild the 1st Ave bridge. More information on the detours and schedule will be available on the 1st Ave Reconstruction project website: <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/projects/1st-ave-lake-st/>.

Transit facilities

11. How does the proposed design support fast and reliable transit?

Reopening Nicollet Ave allows transit service to stay on Nicollet Ave rather than needing to divert to 1st Ave and Blaisdell Ave, creating a simpler and more direct service. Eliminating the multiple turns required today will improve transit speed and reliability. In addition, the proposed northbound transit lane on Nicollet Ave will further improve transit speed and reliability.

12. Why does Concept 4 not perform as well as Concept 1 on the “Support transit speed and reliability” metric?

Traffic and transit speed and reliability analysis completed as part of evaluating Concepts 1 and 4 indicated that Concept 4 is anticipated to add 3 to 10 minutes to the time it takes for northbound transit vehicles to access the New Nicollet Ave when compared with Concept 1. Though traffic and transit vehicles travel around the site today, there are several changes that are expected to lead to additional traffic within and near the site that would result in transit speed and reliability issues:

- Traffic volumes on Lake St have increased 10-15% since the new exit ramp from 35W was constructed.
- Two of the existing travel lanes on Lake St will be converted to transit only lanes to provide transit advantages for the METRO B Line Bus Rapid Transit Line, which will improve speed and reliability for the existing Route 21 along Lake St. This will reduce capacity on Lake St for general purpose and freight vehicles using Lake St and 1st Ave to travel around the site. These capacity changes are expected to create long queues that add delay for all types of vehicles including transit vehicles operating on Nicollet Ave.
- New development in the area is expected to add additional demand to access the area, increasing trips to/from and in the project area, including the New Nicollet Redevelopment at the former Kmart site and the 3030 Nicollet Ave site, which will rebuild the Wells Fargo branch and add 110 units of family housing at 31st St and Nicollet Ave.

The traffic and transit speed and reliability analysis used traffic volumes collected in 2023 and assumed 1/3rd of new trips to the New Nicollet Redevelopment would be by vehicle, and the remaining 2/3rds would be by walking, biking or taking transit. Additionally, the analysis assumed vehicle trips in the area would decrease annually in alignment with City mode shift goals.

13. Was a transit lane south of the site considered to address issues with Concept 4?

Yes, the project team evaluated converting existing street space into a northbound transit lane with Concept 4. Even when assuming that general vehicle trips in the area would decrease annually from traffic volumes collected in 2023, this block still had operational issues for northbound transit vehicles with a potential transit lane due to high vehicle volumes and long queue lengths for northbound general purpose vehicles turning right or left at Lake St that can extend south of 31st St. Additionally, there are three existing parking lot driveway entrances along this block; access needs to these driveways need to be accommodated.

In addition to these existing uses, more vehicle trips are anticipated to be added to this block as a result of the 3030 Nicollet redevelopment, which includes 110 family-oriented housing units, rebuilding the Wells Fargo branch, adding streetside businesses, and safety improvements at the intersection of 31st St and Nicollet Ave.

14. Will the Route 18 move to Nicollet Ave?

Yes, the City and Metro Transit anticipate that the Route 18 will move to the New Nicollet Ave. The existing northbound stop at 1st Ave and Lake St and the existing southbound stop at Blaisdell Ave and Lake St will be relocated to Nicollet Ave and Lake St.

15. Will the Route 18 be updated to BRT service?

[Metro Transit's Network Next plan](#) (2021) identified the Nicollet (Route 18) corridor as a bus rapid transit (BRT) expansion priority, though it was not among the next three lines to be programmed for implementation (F, G and H Lines). In 2025, Metro Transit will update the arterial BRT plan and identify the next programmed arterial BRT lines to be implemented between 2030 and 2035. The Nicollet (Route 18) corridor will be among several considered.

Metro Transit worked closely with the City to ensure the New Nicollet Ave could accommodate and support future Nicollet BRT service and enhanced passenger waiting facilities.

Vehicle facilities

16. What traffic calming strategies are included with the proposed design?

The proposed design for New Nicollet Ave has a lane of traffic in each direction, a mid-block crossing with a median, alternating green spaces with curbside uses such as parking and a realigned intersection at Nicollet Ave and Cecil Newman Ln/29th St that includes a bumpouts and a new traffic signal. These traffic calming elements provide key safety improvements:

- Medians create shorter crossing distances for people walking and rolling and help slow down vehicle speeds
- Bumpouts reduce the crossing distance for people walking and rolling and improves sight lines between people driving and people crossing the street

17. Why is Nicollet Ave designated as a truck route?

The City's [truck route network](#) seeks to accommodate freight movement and facilities to support the local and regional economy while mitigating negative impacts to safety, congestion and the environment. Many restaurants and businesses along Nicollet Ave, including Eat Street, and the Lake St commercial corridor, rely on trucks of various sizes to make deliveries and pick up goods. Nicollet Ave to the north and south of the site is on the truck network. The recommended New Nicollet Ave design proposes to connect the Nicollet Ave truck route through the site to minimize truck turning movements and conflict points with people walking, biking and driving while continuing to serve business needs on Nicollet Ave.

18. How will the proposed design affect emergency vehicles?

Staff from the Minneapolis Fire Department reviewed the proposed design and were supportive of the design as proposed. Additional coordination with the Fire Department will continue through detailed design and engineering to ensure the design of the street and access points to the development meet their access needs.

Parking

19. What is PROWAG-compliant parking?

The U.S. Access Board published the [Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines \(PROWAG\)](#) final rule in 2023. These guidelines included new design guidelines for providing and designing accessible on-street parking. In compliance with these new proposed rules, the recommended New Nicollet Ave design includes two ADA on-street parking or loading spots. These spots will be designed as sidewalk-grade parking bays with a mountable curb, so that people using these spots can access the spot to deploy a wheelchair ramp from their vehicle and access the sidewalk without needing to use the street to access the nearest sidewalk curb ramp.

20. Can the design include more on-street parking or loading zones?

The project team balanced multiple needs and priorities to identify how much on-street parking could be provided with the proposed design. Based on community feedback and stormwater regulations, the proposed design first prioritized the space needed to provide a mid-block crossing, a transit stop, and large green spaces that can treat the required amount of stormwater per the City's Chapter 54 Stormwater Ordinance. Space for greening was not only the top community priority but is also required by the City's stormwater management ordinance as part of the street reconstruction project.

Additional topics

21. How will traffic on Eat Street be impacted? Won't there be additional vehicles on Nicollet Ave north of the site if the street reopens to all types of vehicles?

New traffic counts were collected in 2023 to understand how many drivers are currently using Nicollet Ave. The 2023 counts showed that there are similar volumes of vehicles on Nicollet Ave south of the site and north of the site with the existing condition:

- 6,630 vehicles daily north of 28th St
- 6,120 vehicles daily south of Lake St

Additionally, the project team looked at origin-destination data that was aggregated from devices such as smartphones, GPS and connected vehicles to understand where people who are driving in the area are starting and ending their trips. The data showed:

- Many of the people who are driving through the area are accessing destinations outside of the area such as downtown or south Minneapolis are using 35W, 1st Ave or Blaisdell Ave. Both 1st Ave and Blaisdell Ave are one-way streets, which tend to operate more efficiently for people driving than two-way commercial corridors such as Nicollet Ave.
- Many of the people driving on Nicollet Ave today are driving on Nicollet Ave to access destinations along Eat Street, Nicollet Ave, and in the adjacent neighborhoods, especially Whittier.

Unlike many other commercial corridors such as Hennepin Ave, Lyndale Ave and Lake St, Nicollet Ave does not provide direct access to the highway, and it does not provide direct access into downtown (turns into Nicollet Mall).

22. What will the City do to address traffic safety issues that exist on Nicollet Ave on either side of the site, especially if these are exacerbated by the New Nicollet Ave project?

Nicollet Ave to the north and south of the former Kmart site is identified as one of the City's High Injury Streets (HIS), of which there are 112 miles of HIS in Minneapolis (9% of streets) where 66% of severe and fatal crashes occur.

Minneapolis [Vision Zero](#) has now implemented quick-build traffic safety improvements along Nicollet Ave from Grant St to 46th St. Quick-build traffic safety improvements utilize low-cost measures, such as plastic delineators or "bollards". Improvements are designed to address immediate needs and allow for testing and experimentation without significant financial investment.

There are several upcoming projects that will address traffic safety issues on Nicollet Ave:

- [Safe Streets for All](#): The City of Minneapolis received a \$20 million federal grant to install systematic proven safety countermeasures between 2026-2029. Nicollet Ave from Grant St to

46th (not including the New Nicollet Ave) is included in this work. Examples of improvements covered by the grant include pedestrian safety islands, medians, high visibility marked crosswalks, rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) and intersection lighting improvements.

- [35th and 36th St Reconstruction](#) (Blaisdell Ave to Chicago Ave): The City received grant funding to reconstruct 35th and 36th St in 2027, which includes the intersections with Nicollet Ave.
- The City has also applied for two other grants to fund improvements on Nicollet Ave:
 - [Nicollet Ave Pedestrian Improvements project](#): If funded, this would include safety improvements for pedestrians at 16 intersections along Nicollet Ave between 14th St and 45th St.
 - [34th St Neighborhood Greenway](#): If funded, this would implement safety and traffic calming improvements along 35th St between Hennepin Ave and Hiawatha Ave.

23. How does the proposed design support the city's climate change goals to reduce carbon emissions?

Minneapolis has set a goal of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by the year 2050. Emissions from on-road transportation account for approximately 24% of greenhouse gas emissions in Minneapolis. Even with the adoption of electric cars, Minneapolis will need to reduce automobile passenger miles by 38%. To meet this goal, several things need to happen: options for walking, biking and taking transit must improve and miles traveled in single occupancy and high carbon vehicles must be reduced. During the engagement process for the Transportation Action Plan, community members emphasized the importance of fast and reliable transit as a key way to support mode shift.

Concept 4 creates less safe conditions for people walking and biking on the City's Pedestrian Priority and All Ages and Abilities bikeway networks, adds additional delay for people using transit, and requires slightly longer trips for people driving, a net increase in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) compared with Concept 1, to reach destinations on the site and on Nicollet Ave.

The proposed design provides safer connections for people walking and biking, faster and more reliable transit trips, and shorter trips for people driving.

24. Can automatic gates or bollards be added on New Nicollet Ave to ensure that only buses and emergency vehicles can enter?

While the technology exists to do this, Metro Transit recommended against these design elements for New Nicollet Ave, sharing that these design elements can function unreliably in similar contexts such that they would negatively impact overall transit speed and reliability. Metro Transit uses automatic gates at many locations in the region to restrict access to only transit and emergency vehicles for safety and security. While serving their primary purpose,

Metro Transit has found that automatic gates that are regularly activated can easily malfunction or break, creating additional delay for crossing transit vehicles.

25. Can unique paving materials and asphalt art be added on the corridor to beautify the street and reduce urban heat?

The project team is exploring materials to use for the street, parking areas and sidewalks. Additionally, the New Nicollet Ave project was selected by the Minneapolis Public Arts Commission for [public art funding](#). The project team is working with an artist team to integrate public art into the street design.