

Griggs Street Bikeway FAQ

Why are we building this bike boulevard on Griggs Street?

This project is born of previous planning process developed with the community that designated Griggs Street as a future bicycle facility. One of these plans was the Bike Walk Central Corridor Action Plan, adopted in May 2010 by the Saint Paul City Council after an extensive community engagement effort. This plan calls out as a priority project providing a combination of bike lanes and bike boulevard treatments from Summit Avenue to Minnehaha Avenue.

How was the neighborhood notified about this project?

The City used a variety of communications techniques, both new and old, to notify the community about the Griggs Street Bikeway. Official communications included: resident mailings for those living one block on either side of Griggs Street (September 14, November 10), Councilmember Carter's Office, Councilmember Stark's Office, Lex Ham (September 28, December 2, January 10); Union Park (October 1, November 1, December 1, January 4, January 9/10); Hamline Midway (September 29, October 11, October 21, November 23 [two on this date]); Pioneer Press (November 23); the Highland Villager (December 7, December 21, January 11); City Facebook, and Bicycling Saint Paul e-Newsletter (September 30, November 4, December 2, January 6). In addition, various local groups have sent out notice of these meetings, including Transit for Livable Communities, Bike Walk Twin Cities, and St. Paul Smart Trips.

How were residents able to provide input about the Griggs Street Bikeway?

There were three public meetings in October 2011, with companion options for online feedback. The design proposal developed through these public meetings was reviewed and approved by the Saint Paul Transportation Committee and Planning Commission. City staff then worked to refine the design proposal and shared that final design at a public meeting in January, prior to the City Council meetings on the project.

How does the cost for this project compare to the cost for other road projects?

The cost of this project is \$520,000. The \$420,000 construction cost is funded through a \$400,000 Federal grant and \$20,000 of assessments (for street lighting between St. Anthony and University of properties located there). Engineering and inspection costs will be paid for using \$100,000 of City funds. While \$420,000 sounds like a lot of money for project costs, it is actually relatively inexpensive for a road project. To reconstruct that same street without any traffic calming elements, the cost is approximately \$130K - \$230K for a short block (330 feet) and \$260K - \$460K for a long block (660 feet). From a maintenance standpoint, for a basic residential street, the cost of maintenance alone is a bit over \$4000 for a long block and \$2000 for a short block.

Could we use this money for something else?

Unfortunately, these dollars cannot be used to pay for public schools or more police officers. The project is funded primarily through a Federal Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot project grant.

That grant is born out of the Federal Transportation Bill and funded by the Federal gas tax. Since the funding is dedicated to the grant program, this means the money will have to be used on a bike walk project in the metro area. If we don't use this money in Saint Paul on this project, another neighboring community will get the dollars to use for a bike walk project there.

Are there assessments for this project?

Most residents of Griggs will not have assessments for this project. However, if you own property between St. Anthony and University, you will be assessed \$7.87 per assessable foot for the streetlights that will be added there in accordance with city policy. The assessments fund about 30% of cost of the streetlights. The rest will be funded by the Federal Non-Motorized Transportation Program funds.

Will this project be expensive to maintain?

The only maintenance cost above and beyond that for a typical street will be \$450 per year for the maintenance of the plantings on each neighborhood traffic circle and the cost to maintain the sharrow pavement markings, the pedestrian warning flashes, and dynamic speed display signs. This cost will be rolled into the city's general pool for right-of-way maintenance which is applied citywide. The City of Saint Paul has a \$40 million budget for maintenance of the right-of-way. The additional maintenance for the proposed design represents a .0168% increase in that budget.

Why might a neighborhood traffic circle be better than a stop sign?

Neighborhood traffic circles are traffic calming devices whereas stop signs are traffic control devices. When stop sign use is "warranted" according to MUTCD standards, they can be very effective in assigning right-of-way at the intersection. Stop signs may be "warranted" in locations with specific hazards, e.g., sight line issue, or where a lower volume street intersects a higher volume street. When stop signs are used in situations where they aren't "warranted," crash rates can actually increase. Stop signs have other draw backs, including increased speeds midblock after following a stop sign, increased noise pollution and increased air pollution from acceleration/deceleration of vehicles. With stop signs diverting traffic to other streets may not necessarily result and often there is low compliance with stop sign which creates a false sense of security. Simply "turning" stop signs, so that intersecting streets have to stop at Griggs without installing any traffic calming isn't an ideal solution because speeds may increase as drivers recognize it is a street without stops signs to get north-south.

Neighborhood traffic circles, on the other hand, are traffic calming devices located in the center of an intersection of two, low-volume local residential streets. A neighborhood traffic circle is similar to a roundabout only to the extent that all traffic travels in a counter clockwise direction. However, neighborhood traffic circles are much smaller than roundabouts like those seen in some Twin Cities suburbs or in Europe and are scaled appropriately for neighborhood streets. These neighborhood streets will not need to be widened or reconstructed to accommodate the neighborhood traffic circles. When traffic circles are installed other intersection control devices, i.e. stop signs, are removed. They also serve a traffic calming function, rather than an intersection control function. We currently have nine neighborhood traffic circles in Saint Paul, located at

Macalester & Stanford, Wheeler & Wellesley, Albert & Portland, Laurel & Saint Albans, Finn & Lincoln, Albert & Charles, Fry & Shields, Shields & Wheeler, and Wilder & Igleart.

Neighborhood traffic circles calm traffic by physically slowing traffic and sustaining these lower speeds through the intersection. Neighborhood traffic circles positively affect the type and severity of accidents at an intersection, eliminate non-compliance issues related to stop signs, improve through-movement for all users, and provide space for enhancements such as gardens and other landscaping. Installing a neighborhood traffic circle in the middle of a four legged intersection decreases the number of possible conflict points at the intersection. Vehicle-to-vehicle conflict points are decreased by 75% from 32 for a typical four legged intersection to 8 for an intersection with a neighborhood traffic circle. Pedestrian conflict points are decreased by 67% from 24 for a typical four legged intersection to 8 for an intersection with a neighborhood traffic circle.

Every traffic calming element or form of traffic control has advantages and disadvantages. These have to be factored into the decision making process as part of the project development. For the Griggs project, the main goals are to implement a bike boulevard type corridor which gives some advantages to bicyclists, improves safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, calms traffic, and does not substantially change the motor vehicle traffic patterns in the neighborhood. The Traffic Division Professional Engineer staff recommends neighborhood traffic circles be installed at locations as proposed to achieve the goals of the project.

Do vehicles come into more conflict with pedestrians because of their path of travel at intersections with neighborhood traffic circles?

No, in fact, the potential for conflict between vehicles and pedestrians decreases by 67%. For example, a vehicle making the southbound to eastbound movement would not encroach upon the pedestrian zone of the west leg or the south leg of the intersection. Similar to making a southbound to eastbound movement at a typical intersection, a vehicle would cross the pedestrian zones of the north leg and the east leg. The diameter of the neighborhood traffic circle is such that all movements are contained within the intersection, not the pedestrian zones.

Are school bus stops and emergency vehicles compatible with neighborhood traffic circles?

Yes, large vehicles like school buses and emergency vehicles (e.g., hook and ladder fire trucks) are compatible with neighborhood traffic circles. These vehicles are able to maneuver around these neighborhood traffic circles without creating safety hazards or a reduction in response time. This type of maneuvering does require more deliberate driving than a traditional intersection without traffic controls (e.g., stop signs) or traffic calming (e.g., neighborhood traffic circles).

The Saint Paul Public School's Operations Manager for Transportation communicated this statement to City staff: "I do not have any opposition to neighborhood traffic circles as they have been implemented thus far in St. Paul. I am very familiar with the existing neighborhood traffic circles such as those at Iglehart and Wilder and Macalester and Palace. Those circles have not caused any difficulties to our buses, so as long as any new neighborhood traffic circles conform with that basic style and design I do not see any issues." Neighborhood traffic circles do not

create safety issues when making stops at intersections with neighborhood traffic circles, in fact, buses will pick up in the middle of street to pick up students, rather than at the curb as they do now. These spacing will reduce the possibility of busses sliding into waiting children on wintry days.

In Saint Paul we have constructed nine similar neighborhood traffic circles at various residential street intersections across the city. While no reported issues have occurred at these locations, we will continue to coordinate with the Saint Paul Public School District and Saint Paul Fire Department on any issues or concerns if they do arise in this case.

Will neighborhood traffic circles be an eye sore?

Not at all. Residents typically see neighborhood traffic circles as a neighborhood enhancement because they allow for plantings. The neighborhood traffic circles for this project will be maintained by the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Will the design elements for the Griggs Street Bikeway be compatible with snow plowing?

Yes, selected designs would be compatible with snow plowing. The Department of Public Works, which has been staffing this project, is the same department responsible for snowplowing. This means we work very closely with our partners in that division to ensure our projects don't compromise their ability to do their jobs. In this spirit, we have conducted tests with our snowplowing division to ensure our designs allow for sufficient maneuvering for effective snow plowing. These tests have led us to use 22 foot diameter neighborhood traffic circles, rather than a smaller size. Snow plowing is more challenging with neighborhood traffic circles, but the division head for Street Maintenance has assured our engineers that his staff can handle sufficiently plowing around neighborhood traffic circles. The snow plow drivers maneuver their vehicles up and down the intersection of one of the streets crossed by a neighborhood traffic circle and then up and down the other street. A snow plow supervisor with a plow mounted on a pick up truck would do any clean up that plows missed. Snow will not pile at the neighborhood traffic circles because the snow plows send snow toward curbs, not the centerline of the street. This procedure is similar to that for medians. If a given winter has a large volume of snow, like the winter of 2010-2011, snow removal could take place as needed. Generally, we're always working to improve our snow plowing efforts across the city.

What is the City doing about cyclists who disobey traffic laws?

The City recognizes it is a serious problem to have road users who chronically disobey the rules of the road. To address this issue, the City is working with regional partners on five different education and enforcement campaigns to get out the word about the rights and responsibilities of road users, especially those who bike and walk.

How long is the cycling season in the Saint Paul?

It may surprise you to hear people ride their bicycle in Saint Paul year-round! In fact, the non-profit Bike Walk Twin cities has conducted bicycle counts that indicate that a full 20% of bicyclists in the Twin Cities continue to bike throughout the winter, despite our frigid and snowy weather.

Will this project result in parking loss?

The project would not result in parking loss on Griggs Street, however two parking spaces would be lost on Selby Avenue due to installation of bumpouts.

Will this project include storm water management?

While the project will be disturbing less than 1 acre and as such would not require storm water management, the neighborhood traffic circle and bumpout elements reduce amount of impervious pavement, which will help with storm water management.

If I live near a location with an audible pedestrian signal, will I be bothered by the sound?

Neighboring residents should not be bothered by the Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS). APS are required under the draft Federal Access Board rules, which will be eventually adopted, and are strongly encouraged under current Federal Access Board Rules. They are considered "new normal" and are actively being installed throughout the City and State. In Saint Paul, we've been actively pursuing APS installation for over 25 years. Installing an APS under the Griggs Bikeway Project presents an opportunity to use Federal dollars to meet this requirement. If we do not use Federal dollars, we will need City dollars to upgrade this signal in the future. MnDOT has developed guidelines for volume setting of the push buttons based on the type of environment they are installed in. Specifically there is a recommended volume setting for residential areas. The volume settings are intended to be heard at a distance of 6 to 12 ft from the buttons. If you are standing at 15-20 ft from the button you should not hear the locator tone. The buttons are programmed to increase the volume based on increased ambient noise. This means that if a loud truck drives past they will emit a louder tone until the ambient noise levels return to normal. The City actively monitors and adjusts the volume for the APS push buttons. We try to maintain a volume balance at intersections such that the buttons are heard by individuals that rely on the sound and the volume does not disrupt residents that live in the area. The City will work with residents to the extent possible to achieve a reasonable/unobtrusive noise level, as we have done at Como & Carter APS. As it relates to the distances from existing signal poles to the nearest houses, the distance from the signal pole on the southwest quadrant to the house on the southwest quadrant is approximately 38 feet. The distance from the signal pole on the southeast quadrant to the house on the southeast quadrant is approximately 44 feet. Note that the volume of the tone for APS device should be audible 6 to 12 feet from the push button. Also, the sound should not be greater than approximately 5 dB over ambient levels. For reference, a typical conversation is approximately 60 dB. The sound levels of the device are specified in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design and guidance is provided by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). An example of recently installed APS devices is at the Jefferson/ Fairview intersection. The ambient volume of the area may be slightly higher at that location than would be experienced at the Marshall/Griggs location due to higher traffic volumes on Fairview. That means that the volume of the device may be slightly louder than what

would be implemented at Marshall/Griggs intersection. However, the installation would be similar enough so that those who wanted to would be able to see and hear one in operation in a location similar to the Marshall/Griggs location. To date, we have received no complaints from residents at the Fairview/Jefferson intersection in regard to volume of the APS.

Would the bicycle detection at the traffic signals cause the audible pedestrian signal to sound when a bike goes by?

No, the two are independent. The purpose of the bicycle detection would be for a bicyclist in the road to trigger the traffic signal just as a motor vehicle does today. City staff are currently determining exactly which type of bicycle detection we would use for this project, but regardless that detection is a separate feature from the audible pedestrian signal and will affect the signal no more than an automobile traveling on the road will.