

# Final Design and Community Feedback Responses

2023 Fairview Avenue Mill and Overlay & Pedestrian Improvements Project

Department of Public Works

June 30, 2023

## Introduction

This document includes the following information:

- Description of the improvements that will be constructed on Fairview Ave in summer to fall 2023
- Responses to the feedback received by the City of Saint Paul through emails, Feedback Form responses, phone calls, and in-person engagement

## Timeline

In summer to fall 2023, the City of Saint Paul will be making changes to Fairview Avenue between Randolph Avenue and Edgcumbe Road. The changes are described below. The concrete work at corners and at intersections will likely occur first, and the resurfacing will occur towards late summer/early fall.

## Summary of improvements planned

The street will be resurfaced (with a process often called “mill and overlay”) to create a smoother surface for people driving and biking. Crews will grind up the top two inches of old surface pavement, and repave Fairview with new, fresh bituminous (or asphalt). Following the resurfacing, new pavement markings will be added to the street. The existing striped shoulder will be widened to bike lanes, and the motor vehicle travel lanes will be narrowed to encourage slower speeds.

Curb ramps between the sidewalk and street will be reconstructed at all corners and added to alley crossings where they are missing. The new ramps will meet federal requirements consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), providing better access to all.

Pedestrian crossing treatments will be constructed at intersections described below to improve pedestrian safety by narrowing crossing distances, improving visibility, and slowing traffic.

During all phases of construction, traffic will be able to access destinations, though some short-term closures and detours may be in place.

The list below describes the impacts to traffic circulation for each of the planned pedestrian crossing treatments. A graphic at the end of this document can be referenced.

- At the Gate 4 entrance to St. Catherine University, a median will be constructed. Turns into and out of St. Kate's will not be impacted by the median. One residence on the east side of Fairview will be unable to turn left into their driveway. Right turns into that driveway will not be impacted.
- At the west leg of Bayard Avenue, bumpouts (or curb extensions) will be constructed into Fairview on the east side (at the alley), as well as into Fairview on both west side corners. Vehicle and bicycle access will not be impacted by the bumpouts at Bayard.
- At Eleanor Avenue, bumpouts will be constructed into Fairview at all four corners. The bumpouts will not impact vehicle or bicycle access. A median will be constructed across Eleanor on Fairview. The median will prohibit east-west vehicle movements across Fairview, and all left turns. Right turns between Fairview and Eleanor will not be impacted. Northbound and southbound Fairview through movements will not be impacted.
- At Highland Parkway, bumpouts will be constructed into Fairview on the northeast and northwest corners. Bumpouts into Highland Parkway will be constructed on the northeast and southwest corners. The curb geometry of the southeast corner will be adjusted to be consistent with typical city designs. The changes at Highland Parkway will not impact vehicle or bicycle access.
- At Bohland Avenue, a median will be constructed partially across Bohland on Fairview. The median will prohibit east-west vehicle movements across Fairview, left turns from Bohland, and southbound Fairview to eastbound Bohland left turns, but will allow northbound Fairview to westbound Bohland left turns. This change in initial designs was made to address higher volumes on Bohland potentially rerouting to Beechwood, which is narrower than typical.
- At Saunders Avenue, a median will be constructed across Saunders on Fairview. The median will prohibit east-west vehicle movements across Fairview, and all left turns. Right turns between Fairview and Saunders will not be impacted. Northbound and southbound Fairview through movements will not be impacted.

## Feedback received and responses from City staff

Between the end of April 2023 and early June 2023, City of Saint Paul staff received feedback on the proposed changes to Fairview Avenue from the community through email, phone calls, and 207 responses to an online Feedback Form.

Across all the feedback received, there were consistent themes, concerns, and questions. This section of the document groups the feedback into generalized and paraphrased questions, and provides responses from city staff.

### *Has the design changed as a result of the community feedback?*

The original design shared with the community showed full medians at Eleanor, Bohland, and Saunders. Since receiving feedback, the median design has changed at the Bohland intersection to allow northbound left turns. A similar design exists at Snelling Avenue and Dayton Avenue. This change was made because traffic volumes are higher on Bohland than other neighborhood streets and the most intuitive alternative route for some of the rerouted traffic is Beechwood Avenue, which is narrower than most streets in Saint Paul. Other left turns at Bohland will not be allowed, nor will east-west Bohland through movements. Medians at Saunders and Eleanor have not been modified from their original design because these streets do not share the conditions described above on Bohland.

### *Why was the community made aware of this project so late?*

Staff acknowledge a project with these impacts should have been brought to the community earlier. Staff are always trying to improve our engagement processes year to year and apologize for the less-than-desired notice and engagement as part of this project. We commit to doing better on future projects.

### *How were these locations chosen for medians and bumpouts?*

Whenever the city performs construction on a street, it provides an efficient opportunity to make changes. In this case, the street was planned for a resurfacing because of the pavement condition. When a resurfacing is planned, the City is committed to bringing the street segment up to current ADA standards. This typically requires reconstructing curbs at all corners, so the design of the replacement curb is considered to improve pedestrian crossings. First, staff looked at the available space on the street – some streets are too narrow to include pedestrian improvements. However, Fairview is quite wide at many locations, and medians and bumpouts can be accommodated throughout the project area. The specific locations for medians and bumpouts were chosen:

- in coordination with the planned medians on Snelling Avenue in 2024. No two neighborhood streets will have medians at both Fairview and Snelling

- to evenly space improvements along the project to encourage slower driving speeds and crossing opportunities throughout
- because of the locations of schools in the area: Highland Catholic, Horace Mann, and Highland Elementary

*How will drivers be rerouted as a result of the medians at Eleanor, Bohland, and Saunders? Won't the traffic increase on other streets as a result of the turn restrictions?*

Yes, drivers will modify their routes because of the median turn restrictions. However, new routes will vary depending on origin and destination. Traffic volumes on the neighborhood cross streets are low and only left turn and some through movements at the medians would potentially reroute to other streets. The resulting volumes from rerouted trips are anticipated to be well within the expected range for a low volume, local, residential street. As noted above, the design at Bohland has changed to allow Fairview northbound left turns to Bohland.

*Sidewalk is missing in some areas along the project area. And in the south area, the sidewalk is against the curb with no boulevard space. Will these concerns be addressed with the project?*

This project will not be filling in sidewalk where missing. Resurfacing projects like this generally include work between curbs and at corners, so there is less efficiency savings in adding sidewalk infill to a resurfacing project. In addition, there are sensitive challenges to adding sidewalks in this corridor. To make space for sidewalks, trees and personal property in the right of way along the west side of Fairview would need to be removed. Sidewalk can be considered as part of larger future projects or as a stand-alone project.

Adding boulevards to Fairview south of Highland Parkway is much more expensive than the project budgeted. It is most efficiently done with a full reconstruction of the street. The City of Saint Paul recently applied for an \$8 million federal grant to reconstruct 0.5 mile of Fairview south of Ford Parkway, which would include adding boulevards and new sidewalks. That application was not successful. The City will continue looking for funding sources to address the pedestrian needs along Fairview.

*Members of the community believe the planned medians at Eleanor, Bohland, and Saunders will impact neighbors ease of access to and from their homes.*

Staff at the City of Saint Paul consider and weigh many competing needs. Drivers will still be able to access their destinations with the medians, though they will be required to modify their routes a short distance to do so. Providing safe, comfortable pedestrian crossings is one step toward increasing walking mode share long term, which addresses multiple City goals including those related to climate and health. Given the impacts to

drivers, the benefit to safety for people crossing Fairview is a higher priority than the convenience of drivers.

*Members of the community believe there is no safety concern for people walking across Fairview. Are there documented crashes involving people walking? How many people walk across Fairview?*

There are no documented crashes in the last ten years involving people walking in the project area. Although crash data is an important input to consider when considering improvements, it is not the only input. The lack of documented crashes does not mean there is no safety concern. The city has heard from neighbors and Saint Paul Public Schools in the past about the concern for crossing Fairview safely. Additionally, the city does not have data on the number of people who cross Fairview along the project. Pedestrian counts are important to consider, but the lack of people walking across Fairview is not an indication that people do not *want* to cross Fairview.

Streets like Fairview that are wide and carry more traffic at higher speeds) are uncomfortable to cross and are at higher risk for crashes. The city does not wait for pedestrian crashes to occur before improving streets. For efficiency, the city makes improvements to safety when there is an opportunity to do so (in this case, the planned resurfacing project).

*What are the safety benefits of medians and bumpouts? Why not install painted crosswalks or flashing pedestrian crossing lights (rectangular rapid flashing beacons, or RRFBs) like those on Cretin Avenue and Cleveland Avenue at Jefferson?*

Physical changes to the street like medians and bumpouts are more effective at improving visibility and reducing vehicle speeds than signs, RRFBs, and painted crosswalks. When there is compatible construction work, there is efficiency in considering physical changes like medians and bumpouts at the same time.

There is more information about medians, bumpouts, and RRFBs at:

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/medians-and-pedestrian-refuge-islands-urban-and-suburban-areas>

<https://highways.dot.gov/safety/speed-management/traffic-calming-eprimer/module-3-part-2#3.16>

[https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/RRFB\\_508.pdf](https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/RRFB_508.pdf)

*How will the proposed medians and bumpouts impact people biking?*

The bumpouts and medians proposed will not extend into or interfere with the striped bike space on Fairview. Bike space will be generally improved throughout the corridor, including buffered bike lanes on some blocks. For the approximately 100' length of the median at Saunders and Eleanor, and the 60' median at Bohland, the space for bikes and motor vehicles will be narrower, but both will still meet design standards. A street designed to slow driver speeds benefits people biking.

*With the planned medians, how will emergency vehicles access homes in the area?*

Public Works collaborates with Saint Paul Fire Department and other emergency services when designing streets. Saint Paul Fire will still be able to access streets and homes. Emergency services regularly take into consideration the street network, road construction, temporary closures, traffic, and other factors when determining their response routes. Similar street designs in other neighborhoods have not resulted in impacts to emergency services.

*Will alley access be impacted by the planned medians and bumpouts?*

No, alley access will be unchanged as a result of the project.

*How will school buses, delivery vehicles, and garbage trucks manage the bumpouts and medians?*

These vehicles will be subject to the same impacts from the medians as private vehicles. The city coordinated with Saint Paul Public Schools to confirm their school bus routes would not be impacted by the medians. Bumpouts in Saint Paul are designed to accommodate turning school buses.

*How will the medians and bumpouts be cleared of snow?*

Owners of corner properties where bumpouts are proposed will be required to clear snow from the bumpout. This is city policy. The pedestrian space through the medians will be cleared by city maintenance staff. If snow becomes piled so high on medians that it becomes a safety concern, maintenance staff will haul away the snow.

*How are the improvements paid for?*

A *portion* of the cost of the resurfacing (mill and overlay) will be assessed to abutting properties with frontage on Fairview. The assessment rate has yet to be determined. The planned pedestrian safety improvements will not be assessed to properties, and instead paid for by other city street project funds.

# Final Design

Fairview Avenue Mill and Overlay & Pedestrian Improvements Project  
City of Saint Paul Department of Public Works  
June 30, 2023



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