

Neighborhood Questions and Staff Responses - Fall 2025

Pelham Boulevard Reconstruction

Department of Public Works, City of Saint Paul

December 2025

This document includes a series of questions project staff received from Desnoyer Park neighbors in Fall 2025. Each question from the neighborhood is shown in bold, and the project staff response is shown below it.

For more information on project engagement and feedback, please visit the project webpage at stpaul.gov/pelham.

Project contact:

Jimmy Shoemaker, Senior City Planner

Department of Public Works

jimmy.shoemaker@ci.stpaul.mn.us | 651-266-6204

What are the project priorities for Pelham Boulevard reconstruction, and how are certain design elements prioritized over others?

2026 Pelham Boulevard Reconstruction

from Mississippi River Blvd to Franklin Ave | stpaul.gov/pelham

Known goals and needs

- Replace aging street surface
- Replace underground sewer and water pipes
- Construct off-street bikeway on east side of Pelham
- Replace old sidewalk and fill in gaps where missing; along golf course, the block between Otis and MRB
- Fix intersections that are skewed: Otis, Desnoyer

Goals and needs from community

- Minimize tree impacts
- Calm traffic and reduce "cut-through" traffic
- Improve pedestrian crossings
- Remove old railroad tracks at Wabash and Pelham

Timeline

Previous planning that informs design

In 2017, the City developed the Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan, which made a plan for a 26-mile loop of bikeways connecting parks. Pelham is included in that loop.

In 2018, the City installed an "interim" separated bikeway to meet the goals of the Grand Round in the short term. People biking and driving are separated by white flexible posts. These exist today, but will be removed with the reconstruction.

The 2026 reconstruction of Pelham allows the City to fully realize the vision of the Grand Round: a street with a fully separated space between people driving and people biking, plus a new street, lighting, and sidewalks.

Stay updated

Sign up for project emails at the project webpage at stpaul.gov/pelham. This is the best way to stay informed about updates and the construction timeline and impacts.

Funding

The project will be funded in part by the new Common Cent funding. This new sales tax (approved by voters in 2023) will generate \$1 billion over the next 20 years to fund street and park improvements. The project will also be funded by property assessments to properties with frontage on Pelham Blvd. More information about assessments will be sent out late 2025.

Project Contacts: Jary Lee, jary.lee@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Jimmy Shoemaker, jimmy.shoemaker@ci.stpaul.mn.us

The [Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan \(2017\)](#) sets the vision for what the street looks like above ground, and the reconstruction of Pelham Blvd is following this vision. Aging infrastructure is the reason the reconstruction is happening now. A reconstruction provides the opportunity to upgrade other infrastructure not specifically discussed in the Grand Round Design and Implementation Plan, like underground utilities and the street itself. Reconstructions of streets happen infrequently, and it is important we address needs along the corridor – both above and below ground.

The goals and needs in the document/visual above (shared during engagement in July 2025) are consistent with the direction of the project. At any given location, some goals will take priority over others. For example, in some locations, a sidewalk may bend in a certain way that prioritizes preserving a tree. At another location, the bikeway might move closer to the street to stay clear of the roots of a tree. In other places, a tree will need to be removed to replace underground sewer, water, or private utilities. At each location, staff weigh these

tradeoffs carefully to meet the goals of the project and balance tradeoffs made at other locations along the project. After construction, the new street will include an off-street bikeway on the east side of Pelham, improved traffic safety, new sidewalk, improved lighting, pavement, and utilities.

When will assessment information be shared with the public? Which properties will be assessed?

Only properties that have frontage on Pelham will receive assessments. The city is allowed to collect a maximum of 25 percent of the project cost from assessments. The actual assessed cost could be lower. Information available to the public and official actions on assessments to Pelham properties is expected to follow the process below. These dates are subject to change – please check stpaul.gov/pelham for changes to this schedule:

- December 17, 2025: initial assessment estimates (also called “preliminary assessment roll”) was provided to the City Council at the regularly scheduled Council meeting. This information is available to the public and is attached to the agenda published on the City Council agenda webpage in advance of the meeting. At this December 17 City Council meeting, Councilmembers considered the preliminary assessment roll and set a public hearing for January 28, 2026.
- Following the December 17 City Council meeting: once the public hearing has been scheduled, the same assessment information will be sent by mail to individual properties on Pelham. This mailing will also include information about the upcoming public hearing planned for January 28, 2026.
- January 20, 2026: a public “drop-in/Q and A meeting” will be held for the neighborhood to ask questions of assessment office staff. It will be open to anyone, but focused on assessments. The meeting will be held virtually. The time of the meeting and details on how to join from a computer or phone is posted at stpaul.gov/pelham.
- January 28, 2026: City Council will hold a public hearing during the regularly scheduled Council meeting. Any member of the public is invited to speak to Councilmembers at this meeting about their assessment or about the project. The public is also welcome to email their comments, mail them, or leave a voicemail. Any comments received in person or in advance (via email, mail, or voicemail) will become part of the public record and will be reviewed by Councilmembers. After the public hearing is closed, Councilmembers will consider a Final Order Resolution. If adopted, the Final Order authorizes the project and allows staff to bid

the project. Project staff will continue design of Pelham and it will be finalized after the Final Order Resolution is adopted.

How are bike lanes being funded?

The bikeway cost will be included in the overall project cost, and the assessment to properties on Pelham will include the cost of the bikeway. The precise cost of the bikeway is not a number staff have readily at hand. That said, the cost of construction materials for the bikeway is negligible, relative to the overall cost of the project.

Are sewer line replacement costs included in the overall project costs?

Some sewer costs are included in assessments to properties, other sewer costs are not.

Are sidewalk improvements to side streets included in assessments?

Yes. Sidewalk work on side streets will be limited, but the cost will be included in the overall project cost. Like the bikeway costs, these costs will be included in the assessment to properties on Pelham.

How are tree replacement costs covered?

The trees removed from Pelham north of Doane in 2024 were ash trees, and were part of the citywide removal of ash due to the Emerald Ash Borer. The cost (and any related assessments) of replacing the removed trees is not known at this time. Because the reconstruction of Pelham was planned, the decision to replant these trees in 2024 was put on hold because any trees planted in 2024 were at risk of being removed during the 2026 reconstruction. Had the trees been planted in 2024, the 2026 Pelham reconstruction would have paid for replacement and properties would have been assessed for that work.

Do businesses get assessed like property owners?

Yes. No property is exempted from assessment except the State-owned property at the freeway. At this time, there is no work on the bridge that requires the State's cost participation. Any future work on the Pelham bridge over 94 would be paid for by the State.

What is the current proposed design of Pelham?

The design will ultimately match the vision described in the [Grand Round Design and](#)

[Implementation Plan \(2017\)](#): an off-street bikeway on the east side of Pelham, new sidewalk, improved lighting, pavement, utilities, and improved traffic and pedestrian safety. A median refuge island is planned for the intersection of Doane and Pelham.

Will any sidewalk segments be replaced during this project?

Yes, due to the amount of work happening, it's not likely existing sidewalk will meet ADA compliance once construction is finished. Replacing the entire run guarantees compliance.

Will emergency vehicles maintain access throughout the neighborhood?

City staff have shared current designs with the Saint Paul Fire Department and Emergency Services. There is no concern with emergency response with the current design, including the planned median refuge at Doane. These types of right-in-right-out medians have been built at several locations in Saint Paul (Fairview, south of Randolph, several locations along Maryland Avenue, Marshall Avenue east of Cleveland, Marshall at Dunlap). In an emergency, fire trucks are prepared to mount median refuges or briefly enter the opposite lane of traffic in order to access their destination.

Have traffic impacts to other roads been determined?

Staff from Public Works Traffic Engineering Division have been heavily involved with all decisions related to intersection changes and traffic safety. Staff do not expect the project to impact the traffic patterns in the area in a significant way. The planned median at Doane will result in some revised traffic patterns in the immediate vicinity of the intersection but these are anticipated to be minor given the low traffic volumes on Doane.

Separate from this project, staff did receive an inquiry about the St. Anthony/Beverly intersection that is currently being reviewed.

Have future improvement projects (like MNDOT 94 reconstruction, Pelham bridge reconstruction - or MetCouncil expansion of Midtown bike greenway over to St Paul) been considered for their impact on Pelham Boulevard?

Yes. Staff are closely working with MnDOT regarding future changes in the area. Currently, there is no timeline on major changes to Interstate 94 and planning does not directly impact the Pelham reconstruction. The Pelham bridge over 94 is owned by the State.

Pelham project staff have been coordinating with MnDOT staff about potential improvements to improve walking and biking comfort on the bridge. The decision when and if to make improvements on the bridge will be made by MnDOT.

Pelham project staff are also participating in the current Met Council study of the Midtown Greenway extension, which will result in concept designs that could be constructed in the future. There are no immediate plans for the Greenway extension into Saint Paul, though a future connection to Pelham would be included.

Have raised pedestrian crosswalks or other pedestrian safety measures been considered in the project area?

Yes, a raised crossing was considered at Doane, but it was determined that a median refuge island offers a better safety benefit as it provides the opportunity for a two-stage pedestrian crossing, narrows the roadway for approaching vehicles at the intersection, and reduces conflicting movements. It should be noted that raised crossings are not a typical or common treatment on roadways such as Pelham and there are limitations on where these treatments can be utilized, how they can be designed, and ultimately how effective they might be.

Where will new trees get planted in the project area?

At locations where trees are removed along Pelham during construction, trees will be replanted. North of 94, trees will be located between the bikeway and the curb/street. South of 94, the plan is to prioritize the existing trees and keep the bikeway closer to the street. Because of this, trees are unlikely to be planted between the bikeway and the curb.

Would the city consider providing a less invasive option (pipe liner and Wye or Top Hat liner connection to main line in the public right away) for east side Doane to Beverly residents?

No, TopHat repair is a proprietary product that cannot be affiliated to city operation. Pipe lining is a method the city endorses for its mainline repair but is not being considered for private sewer service connection services; it must be permitted by Saint Paul Sewers under certain criteria. Most of the time, when a service needs repair, it is beyond the point of lining due to collapse, deflection, or root intrusion. That said, a homeowner can hire their own contractor to line services if their pipe meets the condition for lining.