

excerpt from staff report on University Boulevard PHP draft

Four Corners Street Network

The Four Corners community presents unique transportation challenges for multimodal access and safety. Planning staff initially evaluated a complete re-design of Four Corners to create a network of Town Center streets, but after pushback from the community regarding the details of this proposal, they moved this new network into a long-term vision. In the near term, the Planning Board draft Plan recommends a two-phase redesign of the transportation facilities through the existing University Boulevard couplet between Lorain Ave and Lexington Drive.

Near-Term Vision

The Committee evaluated three options for the Four Corners Street Network, which can be summarized as follows:

- a) Planning Board-recommended two-phased approach: Phase 1 repurposes one travel lane for use as a dedicated transit lane and makes minor pedestrian improvements. Phase 2 widens the right of way of University Boulevard to make more substantial improvements for those walking, biking, and rolling by widening sidewalks, sidepaths, and buffers.
- b) Councilmember Mink's proposal (© pages 59-60): Narrower travel lanes and minor sidewalk improvements to like those proposed in Planning Board Phase 1, but with no lane repurposing, right of way increase, or bus lanes. No Phase 2.
- c) Public Hearing Draft: Repurpose one travel lane to provide wide, low-stress facilities for those walking, biking, and rolling. No additional right of way needed. No Phase 2.

Council staff compiled these options and the existing conditions of Four Corners into the following table (as well as in cross sections on © pages 57-58) for ease of comparison. The measurements here are not exact and will be determined by the implementing agency but are meant to illustrate the differences between each option. The textual recommendations in the Plan will reflect what the Council decides and will specify widths for pedestrian/bike facilities but will not specify exact ROW dimensions or other more technical elements.

Existing								
UB direction	From	To	Total ROW*	Traffic lanes	Traffic lane width	Bus lanes	Sidewalk width	Sidewalk buffer
Eastbound	Lorain	Colesville	74'	5	11'-12'	0	6'	0'-5'
Westbound	Lorain	Colesville	64'	4	10.5-12'	0	5'-10'**	0'-5'
Eastbound	Colesville	Lexington	63'	4	11'-12'	0	5'	5'
Westbound	Colesville	Lexington	85'	6	11'-12'	0	5'	4'-5'
Option A: Planning Board - Phase 1								
UB direction	From	To	Total ROW*	Traffic lanes	Traffic lane width	Bus lanes	Sidewalk width	Sidewalk buffer
Eastbound	Lorain	Colesville	74'	4	10'	1	5'-10'	2'-5'
Westbound	Lorain	Colesville	64'	3	10'	1	5'-7'	5'-6'
Eastbound	Colesville	Lexington	75'	3	10'	1	8'-10'	8'
Westbound	Colesville	Lexington	85'	5	10'	1	4'-8'	6'
Option A: Planning Board - Phase 2								
UB direction	From	To	Total ROW*	Traffic lanes	Traffic lane width	Bus lanes	Sidewalk width	Sidewalk buffer
Eastbound	Lorain	Colesville	81'	4	10'	1	8'-10'	6'
Westbound	Lorain	Colesville	69'	3	10'	1	8'	6'
Eastbound	Colesville	Lexington	75'	3	10'	1	8/10'	8'
Westbound	Colesville	Lexington	89'	5	10'	1	8'	6'
Option B: Councilmember Mink's proposal								
UB direction	From	To	Total ROW*	Traffic lanes	Traffic lane width	Bus lanes	Sidewalk width	Sidewalk buffer
Eastbound	Lorain	Colesville	74'	5	10'-11'	0	5'-10'	2'-5'
Westbound	Lorain	Colesville	64'	4	10'-11'	0	5'-7'	5'-6'
Eastbound	Colesville	Lexington	75'	4	10'-11'	0	8'-10'	8'
Westbound	Colesville	Lexington	85'	6	10'-11'	0	4'-8'	6'
Option C: Public Hearing Draft								
UB direction	From	To	Total ROW*	Traffic lanes	Traffic lane width	Bus lanes	Sidewalk width	Sidewalk buffer
Eastbound	Lorain	Colesville	74'	4	10'-11'	0	11'-16'***	8'
Westbound	Lorain	Colesville	64'	3	10'-11'	0	8'-10'	7'-8'
Eastbound	Colesville	Lexington	74'	3	10'-11'	0	11'-16'***	8'
Westbound	Colesville	Lexington	85'	5	10'-11'	0	8'-10'	7'-8'

* Total ROW varies along the extents described - exact ROW needs determined by implementing agency.

** Hyphens delineate side of the street. 5'-10' means 5' on one side of the street and 10' on the other.

*** 16 foot is breezeway on the south side of Eastbound University Blvd, some of which is currently on Blair property.

The Committee recommends (3-0) approval of Option C, the Public Hearing Draft.

With this recommendation, the Committee requested a modified illustrative version of Councilmember Mink's proposal that widens the proposed 2' sidewalk buffer on the block face between Lorain and Colesville so the Council may evaluate it against the Committee recommendation.

In a memo to the Council (© pages 40-54), Planning staff developed such an alignment that increases the 2' buffer to 6' by reducing the adjacent sidewalk from 10' to 6'. This would address some concerns raised in Committee regarding tree planting and pedestrian safety for which the 2' buffer would have been inadequate outright but falls short of *Complete Streets Design Guide* provisions regarding preferred soil volume and buffer width.

Planning's memo advocates against this alternative and for the Committee's recommendation of the Public Hearing Draft, citing the 8-foot minimum sidewalk width for Town Center Boulevards (which University Boulevard is through Four Corners), the 10-foot sidepath recommended in the Plan outside of University Boulevard, the 16-foot bikeway recommended in the *Bicycle Master Plan*, and the safety benefits of shortening crossing distances relative to the modest impacts on vehicle travel time.

During the November 10 worksession, MCDOT expressed a preference for retaining the current number of lanes for buses, either via dedicated lanes in the Planning Board draft or via travel lanes in Councilmember Mink's alternative. However, while MCDOT's (and State Highway Administration's) implementation of any changes to University Boulevard will be informed by Plan recommendations, it will also conduct more in-depth traffic analysis and will need to adhere to *Complete Streets Design Guide* provisions. This may require acquiring additional right of way to meet sidewalk and buffer standards, even if the Council's approved alternative does not explicitly call for it.

The Committee also recommends (3-0) the following safety measures for Four Corners and added one additional recommendation, as listed below:

- Implement protected crossings at the intersection of Lorain Avenue and University Boulevard.
- Minimize crossing distances—and hence exposure to conflicting vehicle movements—for people who are walking, biking, and rolling by reducing inside vehicle travel lanes to 10 feet wide and reducing the number of through-vehicle travel lanes on University Boulevard from three per direction to two per direction.
- Reduce the curb radii at all intersecting streets to the minimum consistent with the Complete Streets Design Guide. Prioritize the safety of people walking, biking, and rolling over the speed and convenience of turning vehicles and following vehicles that might need to reduce their speed.
- Evaluate options to improve transit performance through Four Corners. These options may include transit signal priority or relocating bus stops.

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