

West Martin Luther King Jr./State Street Corridor Enhancement Project

We've received a number of inquiries about the scope of the West Martin Luther King Jr. / State Street Corridor enhancement project that recently started on the West End. In an attempt to answer as many questions as possible, we've compiled the following FAQs:

Why are you doing this project?

There are many residents in the West Hill area who have been underserved by a lack of non-motorized vehicle access between their neighborhood and amenities in other locations. Locals and visitors seeking to enjoy the neighboring parks and trails, youth walking to LACS, and those seeking vehicle-free access between the West End and Downtown areas will benefit from this project. Congestion will increase during construction but will calm when the project is complete, as many of the contributing factors to the traffic pattern (barricades and lane shifts) are temporary measures for work zone safety and efficiency.

Construction is weather dependent, and the season to carry out large projects in Ithaca is limited. As a result, it is imperative that the City carry out many projects at once, which can result in a difficult commute for several months out of the year. We recognize this is an inconvenience and appreciate your patience as we work to best accommodate the various needs of our community and to increase accessibility for all City of Ithaca residents and visitors.

What does the project include?

- **Constructing a traffic signal at the intersection of Hector Street, Floral Avenue and West MLK Jr./State Street**

While some delays will result for people driving inbound on Hector Street, the signal will better allocate the right of way for people driving and biking through the intersection. Overall delays are moderate. Though traffic signals are traffic control devices and do not necessarily improve safety, they do tend to reduce the number of right angle crashes at a location. The signal will better accommodate westbound left turn for people driving or biking, northbound left turns for people walking or biking, and crossing the foot of Hector Street for pedestrians.

Temporary all-way stop signs have been installed at this location during the construction period until the traffic signal is operational. This is in large part because the sidewalk on the south side of the bridge is closed for construction, and all pedestrians are forced to use the sidewalk on the northside of the bridge. The crosswalk at the foot of Hector Street is very difficult to cross without stopping traffic. The all-way stops also better accommodate the northbound left turn and westbound left turn that the signal will ultimately control more efficiently based on vehicular traffic demand.

- **Widening of the sidewalk on the south side of West MLK Jr./State Street**

Many people walk along the south side of the bridge on their way to or from Elm Street and Floral Avenue. An eight-foot-wide sidewalk offset from moving traffic will be a more comfortable place to walk than the current arrangement of a five-foot sidewalk immediately adjacent to the curb. This adjustment will also meet the current standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- Constructing a mid-block signaled pedestrian crossing across West MLK Jr./ State Street**
Observed pedestrian patterns show a need for a safe pedestrian crosswalk on West Martin Luther King Jr./ State Street at the east end of the bridge. The closest signalized pedestrian crosswalk is presently at Taughannock Blvd, approximately 1,000 feet away from Floral Avenue. A raised center island will feature plantings and create a more defined gateway to Ithaca's urban core. As this pedestrian signal will be on-demand, it will only affect traffic when there is a need to cross the street.
- Re-configuration of curbsides and adjustments of intersections at Seneca, Brindley, West MLK Jr./ State St., Pete's driveway**

This intersection is awkward at best and has a history of crashes. Realignment of the Brindley Street intersection will better clarify the intersection, and the Trombley Tire driveway will be relocated from West MLK Jr./ State Street onto Brindley Street. When the new Brindley Street bridge is complete next year, the existing Brindley Street will become a dead-end street, providing access to Trombley Tire, Ithaca Pet & Grain and the Ithaca Signworks building. The result will be better sightlines and designated intersections for access to West MLK Jr./ State Street, easing traffic flow. The new Brindley Street bridge will relocate traffic from an awkward, unsignalized intersection to the signalized intersection at Taughannock Blvd.

- Establishing clearly defined bicycle lanes on West MLK Jr./ State Street**
Adding safe bicycle lanes will benefit present bicycle commuters and will attract additional bicycle riders and commuters, contributing to the overall environmental health and well-being of the city. The bicycle lanes will also further buffer pedestrians from vehicle traffic. Bike lanes help reduce conflict points between people driving and people biking.
- Change in vehicle lane traffic from two eastbound lanes to one across the bridge**
The elimination of one eastbound lane is necessary to accommodate the space required for the addition of bicycle lanes and a wider pedestrian walkway. Extensive traffic studies determined that the overall impact of this change on vehicle traffic will be minimal. Offering safer passage for a mix of people walking, biking and driving is the overall goal. This project supports a number of the goals of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Milling and paving of the street**
This work is more in line with routine maintenance but makes sense as part of this larger project. A new pavement surface will extend the life of the street and will allow the new pavement markings to be more visible.

Why would you remove a lane of vehicular traffic to accommodate bicycles?

Bicycling is a secondary mode of transportation that the city supports and continues to plan for. It improves the health of the rider and the health of the City. Improving bicycle and pedestrian safety remains a priority for the City.

When will this project be complete?

Work on this project will continue through the month of October.

Was public input sought before this project was approved?

To ensure that residents and businesses had ample opportunities for input, a variety of public outreach was made in the planning of this project including:

- **A business focus group**
Held on December 10, 2015 at the Dock. Flyers were distributed by hand by the Council representatives for this area.
- **A public questionnaire**
The questionnaire was posted on the I-West neighborhood listserv. Printed copies were also hand distributed by Council members to the following places: Pete's Convenience Store, four bus shelters (Greyhound, Chestnut Hill, LACS, West Village), Tompkins Trust Company, Alternatives Federal Credit Union, Greenstar, Ecovillage, West Village and Chestnut Hill, I-West email list, and LACS. 100 electronic responses and 14 written responses were taken into consideration.
- **A public open house style meeting**
Held on April 12, 2017 in City Hall, this meeting was announced by press release. The Ithaca Voice and The Ithaca Times provided press coverage, which was publicly available and posted on the I-West listserv.
- **Public comment**
Residents were heard at meetings of the Board of Public Works and Common Council, and public comment was accepted by email through the end of April 2017. Twenty-five written comments were received and included in the May 22, 2017 Board of Public Works agenda.

Where can I find more information about this project?

Input collected from the public as well as a copy of the Public Questionnaire that was used to collect input during planning can be found here: http://www.cityofithaca.org/DocumentCenter/View/5972/6-W-MLK-DRAFT-Appendix-E_public?bidId=

The Draft Design report for the project can be found here:

<http://www.cityofithaca.org/DocumentCenter/View/5974/1-W-MLK-DRAFT-Design-Report?bidId=>

For additional questions please contact City of Ithaca Director of Engineering Tim Logue: tlogue@cityofithaca.org or (607) 274- 6535

How can I stay informed about construction projects and meetings happening in the City?

You can subscribe to receive construction notices and other important information from the City and County through the Swift911 Notification System. Sign up via the portal link on the City's website

<http://www.cityofithaca.org/617/Emergency-Notification> or by texting “Swift911” to “99538”. To register with a landline, you can call the Tompkins County Department of Emergency Response at (607) 266-2630.

The City website is also a great resource for information. In addition to our homepage featuring City News, there is a “Current City Projects” page that features information about the various construction projects around the City. The website’s “Notify Me” system is another means for connecting to City news that allows you to personalize the type of information you’d like to receive. Subscribing to “News Flash” is a good option to stay informed on current topics. You can also sign up to receive agendas for specific meetings. All posted meetings are open to the public, and most include public comment periods.