

Lawrence Avenue Streetscape, Western Avenue to Chicago River
Virtual Public Meeting #2
September 29, 2020
Questions and Answers

The questions below were submitted via the Zoom public meeting registration page, to the project website, and during the public meeting via the Zoom Q&A function. All comments have been recorded as part of the meeting record. Similar questions have been grouped together or summarized into one question for ease of response and readability. The public meeting presentation materials are posted on the project website at: <HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/LawrenceStreetscape>

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Streetscape Details

- Q1. The bridge is in need of a paint job. Broken lighting, derelict condition. It's a beautiful bridge. Is this something that will be covered in the plan?**
- A1. The bridge is outside of the project limits and scope. The bridge paint is currently rated in good condition.
- Q2. How will this impact the ability for cars to turn left onto Lawrence from Washtenaw Ave?**
- A2. There will be no impacts to the ability of vehicles to turn left onto Lawrence from Washtenaw.
- Q3. Lawrence Ave is in terrible shape. Will it be repaved? Can it be at least patched?**
- A3. Lawrence Ave between Western Ave and east of the Chicago River bridge will be resurfaced as a part of this project.
- Q4. Traffic from Lawrence diverting to side streets already a problem for residents. Was this considered in design? Given the traffic snarls the streetscape east of Western has caused, what will be done to prevent it and side-street overflow?**
- A4. The travel lane configuration on Lawrence will remain the same. The project east of Lawrence turned a 4-lane road into a 3-lane road. This project is not taking away any through traffic lanes.
- Q5. I noticed there is no parking on either side of the street in your mockup. Are you intending on eliminating parking on Lawrence?**
- A5. No. On-street parking will remain on Lawrence Ave.
- Q6. When might this approach go west of the river?**
- A6. There are no current plans west of the Chicago River on Lawrence Ave. Some streetscape elements such as decorative streetlights and community identifiers were installed back in 2006.

Bicycle and Walkability

- Q7. Every day with pleasant weather (especially weekends) there are many bikers that cross Lawrence from Francisco to Virginia or vice versa. It is a dangerous crossing, but by far the most straight forward for a route along the river and towards/from the Rockwell L stop. It seems like one of those places where a bike or ped crash with a vehicle is bound to happen. Will any bike-specific protection be included at this point of the street?**
- A7. A pedestrian and bicycle refuge island will be installed at Francisco.
- Q8. Will bike lanes be painted?**
- A8. Yes, the bike lanes will be painted with retroreflective paint.
- Q9. It would great if CDOT could re-evaluate how to make the Lawrence and Claremont intersection safer for pedestrians as an add on.**

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A9. This location is outside of the project limits and will be evaluated separately.

Q10. How are walkers protected at intersections w/o a stoplight?

A10. Bump-outs will be installed along the corridor which will increase the visibility of pedestrians to drivers as well as decrease the distance and time needed to cross the streets. High Visibility signage will also be added to increase the visibility of the crosswalks. Bump-outs create a traffic calming effect for drivers because it narrows the road, making drivers slow down. Traffic signals are not effective at traffic calming and can make a street less safe if they are installed at inappropriate locations such as if they are installed too close to other signals.

Q11. Why not have protected bike lanes?

A11. There is not enough space within the right-of-way to accommodate protected bike lanes.

Q12. What ideas have been discussed for the current unsafe crosswalks (Ex. at Washtenaw and Talman intersections)?

A12. Bump-outs will be installed at both Washtenaw and Talman which will increase the visibility of pedestrians to drivers as well as decrease the distance and time needed to cross the streets. High Visibility signage will also be added to increase the visibility of the crosswalks.

Q13. Why no crosswalk at Virginia and Lawrence?

A13. It is not recommended to install a crosswalk across Lawrence Ave at Virginia Ave for several reasons. The crosswalk would be too close to the signalized intersection at California. Eastbound traffic waiting at the red light can queue up past Virginia Ave and force pedestrians to walk between stopped cars. Their visibility will be compromised from both westbound traffic and eastbound left turners. The crosswalk at Virginia Ave would also conflict with the beginning of the left turn lane for the California Ave intersection. Vehicles are changing lanes here and the addition of a crossing would make the situation more confusing and put pedestrians at risk. Pedestrians will be able to utilize the proposed crossing and pedestrian refuge island at Francisco which is very close to Virginia. The island ensures pedestrian visibility and safety. Additionally, the signalized intersection at California is also close and provides a safe crossing.

Q14. Will zoning be adjusted to match pedestrian orientation of the improvements?

A14. This is outside the scope of this project.

Q15. Are the curb cuts for the employment office being retained?

A15. Yes.

Landscaping

Q16. Will there be green materials used in the project or use of natural materials to mitigate issues like floodwater?

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- A16. Green infrastructure is not part of the project scope as the clay soils do not support the necessary infiltration rates. Several hundred square feet of planter beds that will accept sidewalk stormwater runoff will be installed. Additionally, over 80 new trees will be planted. New Smart LED lighting will be installed.
- Q17. The plantings on the eastern portion of the streetscape were great in theory -- native plants, storm drains -- but super poor in execution and maintenance. Loads of plants died, they never seem to have been watered, and weeds and trash took over many of the planting areas. What's the plan for this new stretch?**
- A17. Infiltration planters were installed east of Western Ave. Infiltration planters will not be installed within these project limits. There will be several hundred square feet of planter beds installed at select side streets with drought tolerant plant material. Above ground planter pots will be installed along Lawrence Ave and will be maintained by SSA #21.
- Q18. Why center arm rest on benches?**
- A18. The center arm rest is to discourage people from laying down on the bench.
- Q19. You mentioned the frequency of trash bins, does that also include public recycling bins?**
- A19. Recycle bins will not be installed as a part of this project.
- Q20. Could a bump out be included on the SE corner of Campbell and Lawrence, and/or in front of the Post Office? There is a lot of pedestrian traffic to and from the Post Office.**
- A20. A bump-out cannot be installed at this location due to its close proximity to the bus stops.

Traffic Calming

- Q21. I can imagine the new improvements will be perceived by drivers who often pass through the corridor as something that will slow their trip and more will seek alternate routes through local street routes. Drivers already do this by using Virginia Ave to Leland Ave. Can any improvements in this project discourage drivers from using this route for faster travel times? And can these improvements be coordinated with permanent shared-street improvements on Leland/Virginia?**
- Q21. Given the impact to Lawrence traffic do you know if Leland is expected to stay as a shared street?**
- A21. Traffic Calming for Leland and Virginia are outside the limits of this streetscape project. Traffic Calming is proposed on Leland from Rockwell to Western through the Leland Greenway project. These improvements include bicycle friendly speed humps and contra-flow bike lanes. The Leland Shared Street was installed to allow for more space for people to walk, bike, and roll during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Q22. Currently there is no pedestrian crossing at N Virginia and W Lawrence. Route going along Virginia, across Lawrence, into River Park is natural and well-travelled by cyclists and pedestrians. Can we get a pedestrian crossing there like the one near Manor and Lawrence?

A22. A pedestrian refuge island will be installed as part of this project.

Infrastructure

Q23. Does this plan include updating the failing drainage that is causing so much flooding in the street and in basements along Lawrence Ave?

A23. Drainage issues will be addressed with new storm sewer infrastructure and grading. Two overflow pipes will be installed to help accommodate drainage issues on Lawrence.

Q24. What sort of stormwater management design aspects are proposed? Could permeable pavers with underdrains be included?

A24. The Lawrence Ave corridor has clayey soils which are not ideal for stormwater infiltration. Underdrains and permeable pavements were not added as a part of this project because they require high long-term maintenance costs. Several hundred square feet of planter beds that will accept sidewalk stormwater runoff will be installed. Additionally, over 80 new trees will be planted

Q25. Why not get rid of that right turn lane from Lawrence to California?

A25. A traffic analysis was conducted at this intersection to determine the need of a right turn lane. The results showed that enough vehicles were making this turn to warrant keeping the right turn lane.

Q26. Why are there no additional bike facilities to create safer conditions for crossing Western?

A26. The intersection of Lawrence Ave and Western Ave is very constricted. There is not enough room to add separated bicycle facilities due to the amount of traffic and transit at this intersection. The Leland Greenway just south of Lawrence Ave will provide dedicated bicycle space for a more comfortable crossing of Western Ave.

Q27. Could Talman be two way for 1/2 north to consolidate entrance to the HarvesTime and eliminate the sidewalk curb cut all together (like at Wilson and California)?

A27. Making Talman Ave a partial two-way street just north of Lawrence Ave was investigated as part of this project. There is not enough room to accommodate two-way traffic, truck delivery, loading operations, and delivery truck turnings movements, while allowing enough space for pedestrians to comfortably and safely access the store and cross the streets.

Q28. Will transit signal priority be included in signal upgrades?

A28. Transit Signal Priority will not be a part of the signal upgrades for this project.

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Q29. Removing a turn lane at HarvesTime heading east on Lawrence is a mistake-traffic backs up there now even as some drivers swing into the bike lane (and I bike it daily) to by-pass

A29. There is currently no left turn lane at Lawrence and Talman. Adding a left turn lane at Talman will not create a safer condition for pedestrians crossing Lawrence Ave. Adding a turn lane would require pedestrians to cross one more lane of traffic along with the potential for a car waiting to turn left to block the view of other drivers from pedestrians wanting to cross. The proposed bump outs at Talman will prohibit vehicles from driving down the bike lane and parking lane.

Construction

Q30. A spring/summer 2021 construction start date was mentioned. Understanding there is not a contractor yet, is there an expectation on how long construction will take?

A30. Construction is expected to take two construction seasons. Construction seasons are generally between April and November.

Q31. What are the project funding sources?

A31. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) from the Western Avenue North TIF, City of Chicago General Obligation Bond funds, and Cook County funds.

Reversal of Francisco

Q32. What, if any, changes will be made to improve safety at Francisco and Ainslie (cars typically roll through or do not stop at all) and reduce the extensive traffic flow coming from Argyle to Ainslie to California?

A32. Corner bump-outs will be installed on both the north and south approaches of Francisco Ave and Ainslie St. The bump-outs will narrow the street and intersection, lowering the turning speed of vehicles and shortening the crossing distances for pedestrians. Speed humps will also be installed along Ainslie St between Francisco Ave and California Ave to slow traffic.

Q33. Have you considered the impact on traffic going down Ainslie if you reverse the direction of Francisco? It is already a nightmare, with drivers frustrated with the surrounding one-way streets screeching around the corner of Francisco and Ainslie and hurtling toward California. This is going to make it so much worse, as every driver will have NO other choice than to use Ainslie to get to Lawrence.

A33. The reversal will encourage drivers to seek alternate routes if they wish to turn right (west) onto Lawrence Ave, such as continuing west down Argyle St to Kedzie Ave. Currently, 92% of traffic continuing southbound on Francisco Ave turns right (west) onto Lawrence Ave. The distance and travel times are equivalent or faster for drivers traveling to Lawrence Ave via Argyle St verses Francisco Ave. Speed humps will be installed along Ainslie St between Francisco Ave and California Ave to slow traffic.

Q34. Traffic heading south on California during normal rush hour can back up all the way to Ainslie. The intersection doesn't seem wide enough for a right and left turn lane along with the lane heading north. The intersection markings are non-existent and a right turn onto California from

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the east are difficult currently. What is specifically being done at this intersection? Traffic will definitely increase without the cut thru on Francisco being eliminated.

A34. This location is outside of the project limits.

Q35. Was there any thought of moving the bike lanes on Francisco on to the MWRD property which has ample space?

A35. Building an off-street bike path was considered but would have to be pursued as a separate project due to funding and land acquisition needs.