

Old Lee Highway Multimodal Improvements FAQ

1. Why does Old Lee Highway need improvement? What are the project goals?

Old Lee Highway is a special place within the city; there are a variety of land uses along the corridor including three schools, the city's public library, the community center and police department, a large and beloved city park (Van Dyck Park), churches, the Blenheim historic site, and multiple residential neighborhoods, along with commercial offerings anchoring both ends of the street (Fairfax Circle and Old Town).

The corridor is already multimodal in nature. However, there is tremendous opportunity to improve the look, feel, safety, and function of the entire corridor and transform it into a best-in-class multimodal street in the City of Fairfax and in the region.

The project goals for the Old Lee Highway Multimodal Improvements Project are:

- Improve safety and comfort for all roadway users
- Create continuous and consistent bicycle, pedestrian, transit and roadway facilities
- Maintain Old Lee Highway as a special place within the city and gateway into the city

2. What does the term "multimodal" mean?

Multimodal refers to the multiple ways people use to get around: car, bus, train, bike, walking, scooter.

3. What planning process has occurred to date and what were the results?

In 2015, the city received a technical assistance grant through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's [Transportation/Land Use Connection Program](#) (TLC) to develop a conceptual plan for Old Lee Highway. This planning process built off [prior planning efforts](#) for the roadway that occurred in the early 2000s. The conceptual planning process occurred over approximately six months and included extensive public involvement.

This process resulted in a [recommended concept plan](#) for Old Lee Highway that includes separated bicycle lanes, upgraded pedestrian and transit amenities, and improved landscaping and buffering.

4. What is the status of the project?

After the completion of the concept plan in 2016, the city engaged with an engineering and pedestrian/bicycle design team to develop engineering plans for the corridor that incorporates the elements from the concept plan along with best practices in multimodal transportation planning.

- 2016: Concept plan through TLC Program finalized
- 2019/2020: Preliminary (15%) plans developed based on concept plan
- **Fall 2020: Stakeholder Advisory Committee engagement on 15% engineering plan**
- Winter/Spring 2021: Broad public engagement on the 30% engineering plan

5. Why doesn't the plan include additional roadway lanes or a continuous center turn lane?

This has been an issue of much discussion over the past 20 years, and the lack of consensus on this issue has been the reason this project did not previously advance. When the city revisited this issue during

the 2015 planning for this project, the public expressed a clear desire to have more and improved multimodal facilities and to maintain the charm and feel of the roadway. Based on that input, the city council made the choice to utilize the limited right of way for improved multimodal facilities.

However, the city is evaluating design features (roundabouts, turn lanes at select locations) to facilitate improved access into and out of residential neighborhoods and driveways and other properties along Old Lee Highway.

The nature of the Old Lee Highway corridor does not support the implementation of a continuous turn lane for the following reasons:

- A continuous two-way left turn lane is not recommended in areas with a high concentration of entrances due to safety issues with conflicting turn movements.
- Continuous two-way left turn lanes are not effective in areas where spacing between entrances is less than 440 feet. These design parameters preclude a continuous turn lane treatment for the area between Van Dyck Park and St. Leo's/Daniels Run where numerous entrances exist in close proximity on both sides of the road and delays are observed due to left-turning traffic.

6. Without adding lanes, how can the project improve traffic flow on Old Lee Highway?

In order to manage traffic flow in the corridor, including left turn movements to and from side roads, roundabouts are proposed at Country Hill Drive and Ridge Avenue, and an additional roundabout is being evaluated for the Old Post Road intersection. The city is also evaluating the efficacy of left turn pockets in select locations.

The city is now conducting a traffic evaluation to study the impact of both roundabouts and left turn pockets on Old Lee Highway. This traffic evaluation will be complete in late winter 2021.

7. What are roundabouts and how can they benefit Old Lee Highway?

A roundabout is a circular, unsignalized intersection where all traffic moves counterclockwise around a central island. Traffic entering the roundabout slows down and yields to traffic already inside the roundabout.

There are numerous benefits of roundabouts. A few key benefits for OLH are listed below.

- Improved safety (reduction in conflict points – where vehicle travel paths intersect)
- Improved efficiency: easier left hand turns out of the neighborhoods. Instead of making a difficult left turn onto Old Lee Highway, drivers would make a right turn out of their street into the circle and then utilize the roundabout to turn in the opposite direction.
- Safer speeds: Roundabouts will slow traffic along Old Lee Highway at the roundabout approaches, creating opportunities for side road traffic to enter the roundabout.
- Improved sight lines for vehicles exiting side streets

8. How will the project affect emergency access to and through the corridor?

All roadway geometrics, including travel lanes, curb returns, intersections, and roundabouts will be designed to accommodate emergency vehicles including the large fire trucks used by City of Fairfax Fire

Department. The city has coordinated, and will continue to coordinate, with emergency personnel on the review of the project.

- The proposed roadway width (curb to curb) is 27 feet, which provides enough space for an emergency vehicle truck to pass between vehicles (including CUE or school buses) that have pulled to the side of the road.
- The frequency of side roads and planned pull-off areas will provide additional space for motorists to pull out of the main travel lanes of Old Lee Highway to allow emergency vehicles to pass.
- Emergency vehicles will be able to navigate the roundabouts entirely within the pavement width provided, and the roundabouts include a mountable curb area in the center island for use in the event a large vehicle needs it.
 - The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has performed extensive studies on the use of roundabouts by emergency services. Additional information is available on the [FHWA website](#).

9. What is a two-way cycle track and how does it differ from other types of bicycle facilities?

Two-way cycle tracks are physically separated from the roadway and allow bicycle movement in both directions on one side of the road. Typically, other types of bicycle facilities have one bike lane or painted “sharrow” within the curb line on each side of the roadway.

10. How was the Stakeholder Advisory Group formed and what is its purpose?

The Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) is comprised of 18 volunteers from the various stakeholder entities along the corridor (neighborhood associations, schools, church, etc). The city asked each group to select one person to represent their group.

- SAG members are charged with reviewing project elements that are under consideration and serving as liaisons to their represented community by providing information, receiving comments, and reporting back to the group on the 15% engineering plan.
- There will be broader public engagement once the plan elements are more developed (approximately 30% design stage) and the traffic evaluation is complete.

11. Will there be educational components along the trail?

Yes! There are opportunities along the corridor to incorporate educational signage about the history of Old Lee Highway, innovative stormwater management techniques, or other topics of interest to residents.

12. What is the environmental impact of the project?

The project will adhere to all local, state, and federal requirements with respect to environmental impacts. This process ensures that all environmental resources in the project area are identified and appropriate steps are taken to minimize environmental impacts.

Studies required during the environmental review include

- Threatened and endangered species

- Water quality (wetland and stream impacts)
- Cultural resources investigations
- Hazardous materials investigations.

Stormwater Management and best management practices (to reduce nutrient runoff) techniques and facilities, which were not installed when the existing roadway was built, will be provided to meet all current City of Fairfax and State of Virginia requirements for quantity and quality of water coming off of the street. Based on the current design, we do not anticipate an increase in the impervious area within the project limits.

The project will include street trees and replacement landscaping throughout the corridor. A tree survey and arborist study will be performed to identify trees for removal or protection, and only those trees that cannot be preserved will be removed for project construction.

13. Are there impacts to historic and cultural resources?

A Phase 1 Environmental study has been completed by the city to identify cultural and architectural resources throughout the project corridor.

Historic Blenheim was a resource identified to be protected with the project and the design has been adjusted accordingly to avoid impacts to the Blenheim property as much as possible. The city's Historic Resources staff is working with project designers to ensure appropriate documentation is being prepared and adequate measures are being taken to protect the property.

14. What is the project schedule? When are additional opportunities for public comment?

The tentative schedule is listed below. Opportunities for public comment are noted in red.

30% Plan Development - Complete
Stakeholder Engagement – Fall/Winter 2020
Community Meeting – Winter/Spring 2021
Public Hearing – Summer/Fall 2021
Acquire Right of Way - Winter 2021 to Winter 2022
Relocation Utilities – Spring 2022 to Winter 2023
Project Construction Begin– Spring 2024

15. How much will this project cost and how is the city paying for it?

The project estimate is \$25M. The city's contribution is \$2M and the remainder of the funding comes from regional and state funding.