

# North Monroe Corridor Project 2018

Frequently Asked Questions

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City of Spokane

*Integrated Capital Management*

*Planning and Development Services*

*Public Utilities*

## Contents

- 1. Overview**
- 2. Right-Sizing North Monroe**
- 3. The Advisory Board**

### Frequently Asked Questions

- 4. General Questions**
- 5. The Concept**
- 6. Traffic**
- 7. Logistics and Utilities**
- 8. Public Transit**
- 9. Open During Construction**

## Overview

The City of Spokane is working on a major project to improve safety, enhance the streetscape, and reconfigure traffic on North Monroe Street, between Indiana Avenue and Kiernan Avenue. The project is slated to begin construction in 2018 and will improve pedestrian safety and access to businesses, while continuing to support daily traffic volumes.

The project has received three grants totaling \$4.6 million to improve pedestrian safety along this section of North Monroe. The proposed project calls for an enhanced pedestrian environment to include a three-lane section with a center turn lane, decorative pedestrian lighting, amenities such as benches and transit shelters, widened sidewalks, street trees, pavement reconstruction, and stormwater management features. The project also will include three to four enhanced pedestrian crossings.

In addition, the City will invest another \$2.5 million to reconstruct the pavement through the project area.

Project elements are supported by the Emerson-Garfield Neighborhood Plan, which was adopted via City Council resolution in July 2014. This planning process drew from a large pool of stakeholders including neighborhood residents, North Monroe business and property owners, and public agencies.

## Right-Sizing North Monroe

There are many facets to this project but citizens have focused most on the reconfiguration of the street to two travel lanes with the a center turn lane, down from four narrow travel lanes with a very narrow center turn lane today.

With around 16,000 vehicles per day on this section of street, North Monroe is a good candidate for this kind of conversion. A three-lane section, as proposed, has been proven to serve up to 24,000 vehicles per day without significantly impacting traffic. Studies and real world experience have shown that such changes reduce collisions and aggressive speeding, improving safety for pedestrians and motorists.

The changes also help create a better business environment. Customers are more likely to travel the speed limit through a business district with an enhanced streetscape and to use the roomier parking stalls which will be expanded as part of this project. All of this can increase visibility of street fronting businesses. Access from side streets and driveways will be improved because motorists only have to cross one travel lane. Pedestrian traffic often increases with these types of improvement, as does the use of transit, bringing more potential customers to the business area.

This project is about finding **balance**. The City is working to improve our street and utility infrastructure in an integrated and logical way that balances multiple transportation needs with business health, economic development potential, neighborhood beautification, safety, and enhanced livability. This project is part of that effort.

## The Advisory Board

The North Monroe Corridor Advisory Board was established to assist the City of Spokane with implementing improvements along North Monroe, by

- Providing information to the public;
- Creating an accessible process to engage a broad range of community stakeholders; and
- Providing their own input on the final scope of the work within the project parameters that are required by grant funding.

The North Monroe Corridor Advisory Board was authorized by Council Resolution 2016-0045 on May 16, 2016.

Member	Representing	Term
Ed Ardiss, Position 1	N. Monroe Business Owner	Duration of project scoping
Brianna Musser, Position 2	N. Monroe Business Owner. New/Emerging	Duration of project scoping
Dale Westhaver, Position 3	N. Monroe Property Owner	Duration of project scoping
EJ Iannelli, Position 4	Emerson/Garfield Neighborhood	Duration of project scoping
Megan Kennedy, Position 5	Neighborhood Resident	Duration of project scoping
Mike Trautman, Position 6	North Hill Neighborhood	Duration of project scoping
Chris Bornhoft, Position 7	At Large (Mayor Selection)	Duration of project scoping
Mike Wallace, Position 8	West Central Rep.	Duration of project scoping
Jill Leonetti, Position 9	Business Owner/Riverside	Duration of project scoping
Candace Mumm	City Council District 3	Duration of project scoping
Karen Stratton	City Council District 3	Duration of project scoping

## General Questions

### **Q: Why N. Monroe?**

A: Citizens, in partnership with the City, have identified N. Monroe for right-sizing and utility upgrades for several reasons, including:

1. *Shopper and Resident Safety:* Five collisions involving pedestrians in the past five years resulted in either serious injuries or fatalities. In addition, there have been 23 angle collisions, four fixed object collisions (cars hitting buildings, poles, etc.), and three sideswipes on this section of roadway.
2. *Efficient Service:* North Monroe handles about 16,000 cars per day and is below the threshold of 24,000 cars per day that can be managed by a three-lane configuration. The space reclaimed by right-sizing the street can be repurposed for greater public benefits, including standard traffic lane widths, wider parking, and wider sidewalks.
3. The North Monroe Corridor is already a vital commercial center for Emerson-Garfield residents. Updating the street infrastructure to align with the neighborhood plan is a step toward fulfilling development strategies of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
4. This project will result in a full rebuild of the road surface and upgraded underground infrastructure. These elements have been combined into one project to limit disruption to businesses, transportation, and other uses of the corridor.

### **Q: How has the City engaged the public in scoping this project?**

A: This project is a key part of the Emerson-Garfield Neighborhood Plan, which was developed by residents and the neighborhood council in coordination with the City. The final plan is based on input gathered through open public meetings and forums and outreach to businesses. The neighborhood vision was to make its main commercial corridor (Monroe Street) safe while enhancing economic viability. After securing funding to implement the right-sizing, the City appointed an Advisory Board to help further develop the scope of this project to match area needs and challenges.

### **Q: Is the design for the project finished?**

A: In the City's world, "design" refers to the actual engineering work done on the project. The design work has not yet begun. Prior to the design stage the project scope, which includes the selection of various project elements, must be finalized. The Advisory Board has been assembled to assist in the final scoping and to determine where to place project elements (e.g. streetscape furniture, lighting and landscaping) in a way that will facilitate a favorable economic impact while delivering the safety components of the project and generally enhancing the area.

Once the scope is fine-tuned and the most fitting landscaping and furnishing options have been selected, the project will move into the design phase.

**Q: How long will construction take? What will the construction process look like?**

A: The construction timeframe cannot be estimated without a great deal of information that is only made available through the engineering design process. Estimates at this stage would be unreliable. The construction phase may be conducted in a number of ways, which will be vetted and discussed with the North Monroe property owners and businesses as the design comes together. The choice of construction process will be selected in coordination with the business and property owners once design has progressed sufficiently.

**Q: How can my voice be heard?**

A: Attend an Advisory Board meeting or contact Assistant Planner Boris Borisov at [bborisov@spokanecity.org](mailto:bborisov@spokanecity.org) or 625-6156

Additionally, please visit the project webpage for the latest information:  
<https://my.spokanecity.org/projects/north-monroe-corridor-project-2018/>

## The Concept

### **Q: What are the benefits of moving from five to three lanes?**

A: There are several benefits to converting this section of North Monroe to a three-lane section, including:

1. *Safety*: Eliminating two lanes of traffic reduces the number of possible conflicts between drivers, pedestrians, and other street users. Multiple travel lanes in one direction allow blind spots that shield other motorists or pedestrians from each other. Crossing three lanes of traffic is far safer than crossing five, as these blind spots are eliminated. Entering and exiting traffic will be safer for the same reasons. The 5-lane section that exists today has been shoe-horned into a tight space. A typical five-lane section requires 100 feet of right-of-way; Monroe currently has 77 feet. Consequently, parking and travel lane widths are all at minimums. By utilizing the existing right-of-way to accommodate the wider lanes of a 3-lane section, better space for parking, as well as more open travel space for vehicles, should reduce occurrences of side-swipe collisions. Enhanced lighting and streetscape amenities are also elements proven to reduce crime, including property crime.
2. *Economic Vitality*: Economic vitality can be discussed in a number of ways, but some of the basic measures of a vibrant economy include property value, shopping frequency, and an inviting aesthetic. This project is meant to improve the aesthetic directly by improving the parking and pedestrian zones. These changes, along with shorter crossing distances, will create a corridor that not only invites motorists to stop in at one shop, but also to cross over to a neighboring shop across the street. Increased attention to improving a specific “focus areas” that cater to pedestrian-level shopping is a proven method of improving the economic health of an area. With improved curb appeal resulting from the updated aesthetics will come improved property values and greater demand for vacant and under-utilized properties.
3. *Quality-of-Life*: The improved safety, enhanced economic vitality, and upgraded pedestrian environment on the North Monroe Corridor will have direct impacts on the quality-of-life in the Emerson-Garfield Neighborhood and the City as a whole. The North Monroe Corridor project has the potential to enhance the City’s livability and economic competitiveness, which means more jobs, improved housing stock, and enhanced community.

### **Q: Why can’t the road have all the pedestrian elements implemented while remaining 5 lanes?**

A: The width of the right-of-way of North Monroe is too small to support 5 lanes, parking, and adequate pedestrian facilities. A 5-lane road section that matches the City’s Comprehensive Plan



goals needs a minimum of 100 feet of right-of-way, but Monroe's width is only 77 feet. Additionally, the five-lane section can't provide the additional safety for pedestrian crossings.

**Q: Monroe seems adequate to me. Why spend our tax dollars on this?**

A: Monroe Street presently functions to move vehicles through the corridor. The tight space often results in motorists staggering themselves in the lanes, rather than travelling side by side, reducing the capacity of the street. Of course, through-put traffic is not the only function of this, or any, City street. Elements of the street are missing that are vital for a commercial center for the Emerson-Garfield neighborhood, for a Center and Corridor, and for sufficient pedestrian access. This project is seeking to balance these different, and sometimes conflicting, priorities to continue serving through traffic while also providing a comfortable and attractive destination for visitors and shoppers. This project is an opportunity to set Monroe Street up for future years by implementing a streetscape that will sustain current businesses and allow for future growth and development. The pavement conditions on Monroe are deteriorating and even before this safety project was funded, Monroe would require a major construction project to repave the street in the near future. This is an opportunity to improve the street surface and improve safety, pedestrian zones, and business attractiveness.

**Q: Where can I learn more about road diets?**

A: The right-sizing of roads to improve safety, economic viability, and quality-of-life has been implemented across the United States. Below are some sources that provide additional information:

**Road Diet Informational Guide**

Federal Highway Administration Safety Program

Nov 2014

[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road\\_diets/info\\_guide/](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/info_guide/)

**Case Studies**

[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road\\_diets/case\\_studies/roaddiet\\_cs.pdf](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/case_studies/roaddiet_cs.pdf)

**Washington State Complete Streets Act: *Legislation, Documents and Additional Resources***

Washington State Department of Transportation

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/PracticalDesign/completestreets.htm>

## Traffic

Answers to questions in this section are based off traffic modeling conducted by the City of Spokane as part of this project. The model is based on 2011 data as this is the most complete data set available when comparing multiple corridors to each other. This helps to ensure an apples-to-apples comparison. In addition, the analysis focused on traffic headed northbound during the evening peak commuting hour which is typically from 5 to 6pm, since this is the most critical time for traffic flow.

**Q: Monroe is an important north/south arterial. Won't a 3-lane Monroe significantly delay travel time?**

A: Traffic modelling shows that during peak travel hours on Monroe Street, the average additional travel time would be about 10 seconds as a result of the changed lane configuration. Of course, this is an average number based on modelling and may be different than the real experience of traveling by car among other commuters. However, the anticipated delay is consistent with professional experience and opinion regarding the impacts of a lane reduction.

**Q: Will the Level of Service (LOS) be affected by the right-sizing?**

A: Level of Service is an accounting of the number of seconds vehicles are stopped and waiting at a given intersection. This “delay” time is reported for all directions a motorist could be travelling through the intersection, and is graded A through F based on preset ranges. The additional delay of 10 seconds added to the corridor for one direction of travel creates no appreciable impact on the Level of Service grade for North Monroe Street.

**Q: How will traffic shift once N. Monroe is right-sized?**

A: During the evening peak travel hour only, the traffic model calculates a 15% shift in traffic volume to other corridors from Monroe. This is equal to roughly 235 vehicles. Generally, these vehicles divert from origins beyond the extent of this section of Monroe Street, which is a reasonable expectation. During off-peak hours, there is no appreciable reduction in traffic volumes on North Monroe.

**Q: Where will the traffic shift go?**

A: Based on modeling, of the 235 vehicles expected to shift during the evening peak hour, about 95 cars will go to Division, 55 to Maple/Ash, 55 to Post, and 30 to local routes. These are theoretical values, based on origins and destinations in the regional traffic model. Generally, these vehicles divert from origins beyond the extent of this section of Monroe Street, which is a reasonable expectation. During off-peak hours, there is no appreciable reduction in traffic volumes.

**Q: Won't this loss of peak hour traffic hurt the businesses on N. Monroe?**

A: Other similar projects from across the United States suggest that, as a whole, the business climate and fiscal health of North Monroe Street should improve. In general, increased pedestrian activity, improved parking areas in neighborhood commercial centers, and increased visibility from slower traffic tend to increase retail activity. Communities have found that the vehicles that shift to other corridors don't have plans to stop but to travel through to destinations beyond the area.

**Q: With a single lane in each direction, will emergency vehicle response be affected?**

A: Emergency vehicle response will not be heavily impacted by the proposed changes. Initial input from police and fire personnel has been positive regarding their ability to continue services on a 3-lane version of Monroe Street. First responders use real-time traffic data to decide how to best reach an emergency and will continue to do so. Input from emergency responders is ongoing and crucial to the scoping and design processes.

## Logistics

**Q: How will right-sizing N. Monroe impact commercial deliveries to business on the corridor?**

A: Deliveries to businesses generally should not be interrupted by changing to a 3-lane section. Parking and/or drop-off zones will be built into the new street. Delivery trucks should not be unloaded from travel lanes, and other alternatives such as side streets, alleys, and parking lots will still be accessible with the new street layout.

**Q: How will right-sizing N. Monroe impact snow removal?**

A: Snow will continue to be plowed to the side of the street. One difference to be noted is that wider sidewalks will allow space for a clear walking path as well as snow storage.

**Q: Will right-sizing N. Monroe impact Garbage Pick-up?**

A: No. Garbage pick-up occurs in the side streets, alleys or parking lots.

**Q: What are the design anticipations with utilities? Will we put more utilities underground?**

A: There will be some water main replacement to update an old pipe. There may also be opportunities to place some of the overhead wires underground. The feasibility of doing this will be determined during the design phase. Also, businesses may decide to upgrade their water and sewer service connections during this construction.

**Q: Will construction hurt the businesses on Monroe? What is being done to assist them during the right-sizing?**

A: Street construction is always impactful for business and property owners located along a project. The City recognizes this, and that's why planning for this project, which isn't scheduled until 2018 is happening now. Additionally, a number of things will be initiated to help businesses through construction:

- The City will work with the business and property owners along Monroe to help select construction phasing and scheduling that will help to address business needs. Not everyone will agree on the best approach, but we will work to find a path forward that makes the most sense for most people, while still meeting the needs of effective construction. The City will also consider things like contractor incentives for early completion and so on. And engineers will work with the individual property owners to find out their specific needs for access, deliveries, etc., so crews can work to accommodate those.
- The City will keep the lines of communication open so that issues that arise during construction can be dealt with swiftly. The City will have weekly construction meetings in

the corridor, and direct liaisons to the contractor will get problems handled between meetings. Quick response to problems as they arise is the best way to handle problems as construction proceeds.

- During construction, the City will work to encourage citizens to continue to visit the businesses with the construction zone. The City can set up signage that directs people to their favorite businesses along the corridor from parallel streets, like Post. The City also will use a variety of City communications tools, including our web site, social media sites, CityCable 5, etc. We would ask businesses to reinforce these messages with their customer base as well. People are willing to support their local businesses if they get the information they need to navigate the area and encouragement to do so.
- The City can also make recommendations to business and property owners on professionals who would be able to help member update their business plans with construction in mind.

## Public Transit

**Q: Can bus service be removed from the corridor?**

A: Removal of bus service is not being considered. Public Transit has been an important transportation option on Monroe Street since the installation of a cable car line in the 1890s. Today, the corridor is serviced by Spokane Transit Authority's (STA) Route 24. This route is the 3<sup>rd</sup> busiest in the STA network, with 649 weekly trips and an average of 2,200 boarding per weekday. There are currently 4 STA stops in the Monroe Corridor, connecting 3,747 homes to downtown and the 5-Mile Park-and-Ride.

**Q: With a single lane in each direction, there will be no way to drive around the bus. Will this make it slower to drive through the corridor?**

A: During the PM peak traffic hour on the corridor, the bus is stopped for an average combined total of 25 seconds for all stops. The bus traverses the corridor every 15 minutes. So 4 times per hour, vehicles following the bus can expect their commute to take an additional 25 seconds or so.

**Q: Would a turnout at the bus stops where the bus leaves the travel lane for boarding/alighting, help make it faster to traverse the corridor?**

A: Potentially such a system could maintain current travel times for vehicles, but there are trades-offs with this type of system. The space for pull-outs displaces several parking stalls for vehicles which are vital to support business and retail activity. Busses often encounter difficulty merging back into traffic, and there is an inherent potential for collisions during that merge.

**Q: Don't wheelchair ramp deployments and bike rack usage slow down the bus? Will this not further increase the time it takes for a bus to get through the corridor?**

A: There is not an appreciable delay expected for these events. Wheelchair ramp deployment occurs about once every 90 trips (7 times a week) on this corridor. In 2015, 1% of these 7 weekly deployments occurred during a peak traffic hour. As for bike rack usage, Route 24 loaded 15 bikes per week in October 2015 (the newest data). While it takes 20 seconds to rack a bike, it can occur while other passengers are boarding or alighting, so the impact is minimal.

**Q: I've heard there are plans to consolidate the stop pairs at Fredrick and Dalton to a single STA stop. Will this decrease usage?**

A: STA does plan to consolidate those stops. The acceptable spacing between bus stops is ¼ mile, or roughly 4 blocks in Spokane. With the Fredrick/Dalton stop pairs consolidated, this standard would still be met, and usage should remain constant.

**Q: What does the future of Public Transit on the Corridor look like?**

A: STA will be implementing elements of their High Performance Transit (HPT) model in conjunction with the completion of the Corridor Project. This will include level boarding, bus stop shelters, and other improvements to increase efficiency of boarding and enhance the customer's experience