

# FAQ - Spokane Falls Boulevard Rebuild Planning Study

A preliminary [community survey](#) for the Spokane Falls Blvd. Rebuild Planning Study was open from August 5 to September 13, 2024. There were several common question themes asked by the community as comments in the survey. Themes and common questions included:



## ***How is the Spokane Falls Blvd. planning study project being funded?***

We are currently in the planning and design phases of this project. This is funded through a [Surface Transportation Block Grant](#) (STBG), which is a federal grant offered as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law enacted in 2021. No local funds (i.e., money generated through local taxes and fees) are being used for this planning project.

There will be multiple funding sources for the construction phase of the project. The cost of the necessary utility replacement portion of the project will be paid with utility rate revenues as part of the responsibility to maintain public utilities. The street rebuild portion of the project will require a separate funding source, which has not been identified during this phase. Various sources will be pursued by the City.

## ***Why is the Spokane Falls Blvd. rebuild planning study necessary?***

This project is driven by street and utility replacement needs. Even though the pavement structure looks ok from the surface, the street structural section is beyond its useful life and is failing in places, requiring it to be replaced. In addition, there are some original utilities (water, sewer) dating back to the late 1890s that are within the roadway. With the pavement section being rebuilt, we also need to take the opportunity to replace and upsize some of these facilities so that the City can continue to provide reliable water and wastewater services both now and in the future.

## ***Why don't you spend the funds addressing other issues faced by the City?***

Because this project is in large part grant and utility rate funded, there are strict guidelines in how these funds can be used. For STBG funds, the grant dollars may only be spent on the project that was applied for. For the utility work, utility rate funds can only be used on utility projects; utility funds cannot be used for other City initiatives and programs, such as public safety concerns or for individuals experiencing homelessness. Utility rate funds must go back into reinvestment needs for the utility system. Sewer and water rates will be a large source of funding for the project due to utility replacement needs.

## ***Can you install a pedestrian "scramble" type intersection?***

A pedestrian scramble, or exclusive pedestrian interval intersection, is a type of traffic signal movement that stops all vehicular traffic, thereby allowing pedestrians to cross an intersection in every direction at the same time. Operationally, the traffic signals would need to be programmed to provide a scramble phase with every traffic signal cycle. Benefits of a pedestrian scramble include increasing pedestrian visibility and reducing conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. Drawbacks include an overall increase in signal cycle length, which could increase congestion and emissions on Spokane Falls Blvd and make it more difficult to downsize the street width.



While this feature would be well received during large events or high pedestrian use, it cannot be “turned on” for special events. Cities that have implemented pedestrian scrambles find they are most appropriate with very high pedestrian volumes. One case study in Beverly Hills recommended 1000 pedestrians per hour. A second trigger for installation would be where it’s difficult for vehicles to clear the intersection due to pedestrians constantly using the crosswalk. The City can continue to evaluate whether a pedestrian scramble would be appropriate with the different design alternatives, but it’s likely that the current signal phasing will provide the most efficient operation for pedestrians, cyclists, transit and private vehicle use.

### ***Why are you exploring converting a portion of Spokane Falls Boulevard back to a 2-way street?***

Did you know Spokane Falls was a 2-way street for many decades prior to Expo 74? Traffic planners in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century believed prioritizing vehicular traffic by implementing 1-way streets would improve mobility within the downtown core with the idea that more cars will lead to more people, consequently providing more economic and entertainment activity. Traffic planning philosophies have evolved in the past 40 years, and it is now generally believed that [2-way streets are better for providing easier local access and improved circulation](#). This in turn is better for local businesses that depend heavily on visibility to passerby traffic. In addition, 2-way streets enhance the pedestrian experience by providing natural traffic calming impacts due to narrower lane widths and less travel lanes in a single direction.

With respect to this project, the question around converting to a 2-way street between Washington and Division was raised to explore whether we could improve accessibility to businesses and facilities along the eastern segment of Spokane Falls Boulevard, such as the Spokane Convention Center and First Interstate Center for the Arts. Based on the results of the community survey, there is a mixed reaction to this potential traffic reconfiguration. As such, the alternative concepts in development will include a couple of alternatives with the 2-way traffic reconfiguration included, with the rest keeping the corridor as a one-way street.

### ***I had technical challenges completing the survey; can I still provide feedback?***

We did receive a handful of comments regarding survey functionality, particularly with the second question where users were asked to rank the priority outcomes from most to least important. If you experienced issues with the survey, and would like to share your feedback directly, please email [kdavis@spokanecity.org](mailto:kdavis@spokanecity.org).

