

Nicollet Mall & Downtown Transit FAQs

The City hosted an Online Open House on January 21st, 2025 (22 attendees estimated) and received many questions. While several questions were answered during the event, we were not able to answer all in the allotted amount of time. All questions received, as well as other common questions we received during phase 1 engagement, are answered below.

Questions from Online Open House (1/21/2025)

Project Purpose

1. Why are you not considering keeping transit on Nicollet Mall?
 - a. The plan is for buses to move off Nicollet Mall to create a more flexible and dynamic Nicollet Mall. This vision has been identified in the following documents:
 - i. 2023 [Vibrant Downtown Storefronts Workgroup Report](#)
 - ii. 2024 [Downtown Action Plan](#)
2. Was moving buses off of Nicollet Mall ever considered before the Mayor's directive?
 - a. Nicollet Mall was designed as a transit and pedestrian Mall in the 1960's. Pedestrianization of Nicollet Mall was discussed during the recent Nicollet Mall redesign but not pursued at that time. In recent years, there has been more consistent closures and activation of Nicollet Mall as a pedestrian space (e.g. Nicollet xChange, Downtown Thursdays, Downtown Minneapolis Street Art Festival, etc.), which has led to buses being detoured to other routes during those events.

Project Goals

1. How does maintaining parking relate to the downtown vibrancy goal of this project?
 - a. There are many ways people and goods move to and through downtown. One of the project goals within increasing downtown vibrancy is to “maintain parking and delivery access to buildings on new routes”. The intent of this goal is to ensure that critical access and loading/deliveries activities can occur to ensure that businesses are able to function and continue to serve our community. In addition, many residents, workers, visitors, and others utilize parking and loading zones for short term parking and deliveries.
2. Is the project goal to improve transit or just to make it “as good” as what exists on Nicollet Mall today?
 - a. The goal is to make transit as good or better than exists on Nicollet Mall today. There are several metrics that we are using to evaluate the three options including speed and reliability of service, access to destinations and jobs, safe and comfortable waiting environment, spaces for transit stations/amenities, convenient transfers to other transit routes, etc. Full details regarding these metrics and how the different options meet project goals as of January 2025 can be found on the [Phase 2 Open House boards](#) (p.12).

Project Timeline

1. How was the timeline for this project determined?
 - a. The timeline takes into consideration several factors including the momentum for the pedestrianization of Nicollet Mall while also allowing time for community input and technical analysis on where transit could move to and what this would mean for transit riders and transit service. The City and Metro Transit began partnering on the work to identify a new transit corridor(s) in Summer 2023. The goal is to have a decision on the preferred transit corridor(s) by Spring 2025. After a decision on the preferred corridor(s) is made, this project will transition to a capital project for more detailed design. The plan is for buses to move off Nicollet Mall in 2026.

Project Funding

1. How are improvements to Nicollet Mall, Hennepin Ave, and whichever corridor(s) is selected going to be paid for?
 - a. Funding for this project will be a combination of funds from the City and Metro Transit. Exact funding sources and details will be determined based on which corridor(s) is selected and the type of improvements that are made. It is anticipated that the City will use Value Capture District funds for the investments.
2. What funding does the City have for activating Nicollet Mall?
 - a. Funding for the activation of Nicollet Mall is included in the City's 2025-2029 budget. Details are available here:
 - i. <https://stories.opengov.com/minneapolismn/ceba5a49-4ada-406b-84fc-4df4584703bc/published/XJaoxQ0Tg?currentPageId=66b2541c18a048f24a9b9234> (listed under "Community Planning and Economic Development: Nicollet Programming")
 - b. The City recognizes that activating Nicollet Mall will also take investment from various downtown stakeholders for this to be successful.

Nicollet Public Realm

1. What is the plan for Nicollet Mall after buses are moved off?
 - a. Initial details about the pedestrianization and activation of Nicollet Mall can be found in the City's [Downtown Action Plan](#), the Minneapolis Downtown Council's [Downtown by Design 2035 Plan](#), and the Minneapolis Foundation's [Downtown Next](#) report.
 - b. Planning for the pedestrianization of Nicollet Mall will be ongoing throughout 2025 and beyond. More information about this work can be found on the City's website: <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/mayor/issues-and-priorities/economic-inclusion/downtown-reimagined/>
2. Will police officers continue to be allowed to park on sidewalks on pedestrianized Nicollet?
 - a. We will bring this feedback to leadership in MPD's 1st precinct.

Hennepin Ave

1. Will changes be made to Hennepin Ave to accommodate the increase in transit routes on that street?
 - a. Beginning this year (2025), the City will be evaluating how the redesigned Hennepin Avenue is functioning in terms of safety and traffic/transit operations. As part of this evaluation, we will be exploring opportunities for transit priority treatments for Hennepin Avenue.

Bus/Street Operations

1. What improvements has the City explored to improve transit speed and reliability on Nicollet Mall?
 - a. The City and Metro Transit have explored opportunities to improve transit speed and reliability on Nicollet Mall and have implemented some improvements. These improvements include:
 - i. Eliminating mid-route change of operators on Nicollet Mall
 - ii. Adjusting schedules to avoid “bus bunching” (bus catching up with delayed bus ahead of it).
 - iii. Go-To Card promotion campaign
 - iv. Ad campaign to encourage riders to exit from the back door
 - v. Ad campaign to not chase the bus
 - b. There are several challenges to making transit faster on Nicollet Mall. These include:
 - i. The existing 10 mph speed limit.
 - ii. Street design: there is one lane in each direction which means buses cannot pass other buses that are stopped for people getting on or off the bus.
 - iii. Limitations on alternative traffic signal timing strategies such as Transit Signal Priority (TSP) due to technical compatibility with operations in the downtown environment.
2. Will Transit Signal Priority (TSP) be explored for Hennepin Ave?
 - a. Yes, the City will begin an evaluation in 2025 for safety and transit, including analyzing if TSP would help transit operations on Hennepin.
3. How will bus bunching (like exists on Nicollet Mall today) be avoided in the 3 options that are being considered?
 - a. Nicollet Mall has 1 lane of travel in each direction which means that buses cannot pass each other (they are not allowed to pass into the oncoming travel lane). All 3 options have 2 travel lanes in each direction that buses will be able to use to pass each other as needed (some general purpose traffic, some transit only).
4. Can you keep a second transit lane in options 2 and 3 to allow buses to pass each other?
 - a. Options 2 and 3 include 1 transit lane and 1 general purpose traffic lane in each direction. Buses will be able to use the general-purpose traffic lane to pass stopped buses in the bus lane.
 - b. General purpose traffic access is allowed under each of these options to ensure access for the buildings along Marquette and 2nd Avenues, or 3rd Avenue.

5. Have impacts to 12th St been discussed (for any of the three options)? Will there be any operational changes to 12th?
 - a. Yes, the City and Metro Transit have done an initial look at changes to 12th St. At this point, no changes are planned for 12th St.
6. Will bikes be able to use the bus lanes on Marquette and 2nd Ave during non-peak hours under any of these options?
 - a. Marquette and 2nd Avenues will be signed as “bus only”. Bikes may be allowed to use these lanes outside of bus lane hours which are still to be determined and will be dependent on the option selected.
 - i. Option 1: bus lanes on Marquette and 2nd Avenues would be full time bus lanes.
 - ii. Option 2: bus lanes on Marquette Avenue would be full time, bus lane hours on 2nd Avenue may be more limited. Full details are still to be determined.
 - iii. Option 3: No change anticipated to existing Marquette and 2nd Avenues operations.

Other

1. Are there options to pedestrianize other streets that would have fewer impacts on transit riders?
 - a. Nicollet Mall is unique in that there are no existing curb cuts, driveways, or vehicle access points which makes it well suited for pedestrianization in comparison to other streets downtown. Additionally, Nicollet Mall was recently redesigned to include wider sidewalks, has multiple storefront business and multiple entrances connecting buildings to the skyway system.

Additional FAQs

Nicollet Mall

1. Didn't Nicollet Mall just get redone?
 - a. Nicollet Mall was fully reconstructed and reopened in 2017.
 - b. We are not planning on reconstructing Nicollet Mall with this transit project or with the Nicollet Mall pedestrianization project.
2. When will buses move off Nicollet Mall?
 - a. Buses are anticipated to move in 2026.
3. What will happen to the bus shelters on Nicollet Mall?
 - a. The future use of the shelters will be determined in a future phase of Nicollet Mall planning and visioning.

All Transit Options

1. How will the transit only lanes be enforced?
 - a. Enforcement will operate the same as today; no changes expected.

2. Will there be assessments for this project?
 - a. This will depend on several factors including the scale and type of improvements, which varies across the three different options.

Option 1: Marquette & 2nd Ave 1-way pairs

1. Will there be any parking changes?
 - a. This option maintains off-peak parking and loading on east side of Marquette Ave and west side of 2nd Ave, removes off-peak parking and loading in transit lanes.
2. Will there be room for green space or other furnishings?
 - a. This option maintains existing space for plantings, trees, and furnishings. Additional details to be determined through the design process.
3. Why isn't a bikeway shown on this option – it's on the AAA map?
 - a. This option prioritizes space for transit operations, access to buildings via a travel lane and curbside parking over a potential bikeway along these corridors. Under this scenario, bicycle accommodations along Nicollet Avenue would be improved by the removal of buses on Nicollet Mall.

Option 2: Marquette & 2nd Ave 2-way

1. Will parking remain on both streets if this option is selected?
 - a. This option is anticipated to remove all parking and loading on Marquette Ave and significant parking and loading removal on 2nd Ave.
2. Will there be room for green space or other furnishings?
 - a. This option maintains existing space for plantings and trees on Marquette Ave.
 - b. Additional details for 2nd Ave will be determined through design process.
3. Why isn't a bikeway shown on this option – it's on the AAA map?
 - a. This option prioritizes space for transit operations, and access to buildings via a travel lane over a potential bikeway along these corridors. Under this scenario, bicycle accommodations along Nicollet Avenue would be improved by the removal of buses on Nicollet Mall.

Option 3: 3rd Ave

1. What will happen to the existing parking/loading bays?
 - a. This option is anticipated to remove most of the existing parking/loading bays. The parking bay adjacent to City Hall is likely to remain.
2. Will the bikeway only be improved if this option is selected?
 - a. No. At some point in the future improvements to the 3rd Avenue bikeway will be considered regardless of which option moves forward.
3. Why a 2-way bikeway on one side of street instead of one-way bikeways on either side?
 - a. Available space is limited and a two-way bikeway on one side of the street saves several feet of space compared to one-way bikeways on either side of the street.

4. Will there be any changes on Marquette and 2nd Avenues if this option is selected?
 - a. No. We do not anticipate any design changes to Marquette and 2nd from what exists today under this option.