



Public Meeting Newsletter

Happ Road Corridor Study

January 2018

Dear Citizen:

At the Public Meeting held on November 9, 2017 for the proposed improvement of Happ Road from Winnetka Road to Willow Road, a number of questions and comments were received by the Study Team. This newsletter provides up-to-date information on the project and answers the questions raised. To view materials from the Public Meeting and additional information regarding the project, please visit the project website: www.HappRoad.com

The Happ Road Corridor Study is a joint initiative of the Village of Northfield and the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways. The proposed improvements are being designed to improve safety for motorists and pedestrians and to enhance the aesthetics of the corridor. Planned work consists of roadway and intersection reconstruction, drainage improvements, traffic signal modification, and pedestrian and bicycle safety features.

Federally funded projects, like this one, are typically undertaken in three distinct phases. Preliminary engineering and environmental studies, known as Phase I, involves coordinating with the public, developing preliminary improvement plans and drainage studies, identifying environmental concerns, and determining right-of-way requirements. The Village, County, and the Happ Road Steering Committee continue to move towards the completion of the Phase I for Happ Road. We are working to incorporate comments received from the public at the first Public Meeting and to refine the engineering studies and right-of-way requirements. A second Public Meeting for this project is planned for late Winter or early Spring 2018 to present the Study Team's proposed roadway design. After completion of Phase I, which is anticipated in Spring or Summer 2018, the contract plan preparation and land acquisition (Phase II) can commence. Phase III represents the actual construction of the improvements, contingent upon funding availability.

The Study Team received 16 written comments from the Public Meeting. An additional three comments, submitted via the website, and one comment, submitted by voicemail, are also included in the Public Meeting record. This newsletter has been prepared to address these concerns as well as provide an overview of other topics. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Steve Lynch, P.E., Deputy Project Manager, at (312) 201-7951 or slynch@patrickco.com.

Why are we considering widening Happ Road from 2 lanes to 3 lanes?

The 3-lane cross section is being proposed to allow space for left turns into driveways and side streets, as well as deliveries along the corridor. This will help reduce delays and improve safety by minimizing the potential for rear-end collisions. A 3-lane cross section can be achieved by increasing the width of the proposed 2-lane pavement by 2 feet, constructing curb and gutter along the roadway in place of the existing roadway shoulders, and narrowing the lanes. The proposed 3-lane cross section has a total pavement width of 32-feet (11'-10'-11') while the current 2-lane configuration with shoulders is 30-feet (3'-12'-12'-3').

Why is the travel lane width being reduced from 12-feet to 11-feet?

Lane width reduction has been shown to help with traffic safety by controlling vehicle speeds and also making pedestrian crossings shorter. The current 12-foot travel lane width is generally used for roadways with high speeds, whereas 11-feet is the recommended width by the Illinois Department of Transportation for urban streets with characteristics similar to Happ Road.



The Village of
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Are roundabouts too confusing for drivers?

No. In multiple studies across the United States, it has been shown that all crash types have decreased when a modern roundabout is installed. In a typical four-way intersection configuration, there are 32 points of conflict. In a roundabout, that is reduced to 8 points of conflict. Roundabouts have also been shown to have a very low incidence of crashes overall, and a reduced incidence of injury crashes compared to all other types of intersections. In addition, they increase safety for pedestrians by providing refuges that allow pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time. The roundabouts reduce the vehicle speeds, increasing the driver's time to identify crossing pedestrians. Studies consistently show that roundabouts move traffic safely through intersections under slower speeds, with fewer conflict points, and make decisions easier for drivers and pedestrians. There can be a learning curve following new installations, but with roundabouts becoming more and more common, drivers are quickly becoming accustomed to how they function.

Is there enough distance between the roundabout and Willow Road?

Yes. The distance between the proposed roundabout and the signalized intersection at Willow Road has been carefully evaluated. IDOT, Cook County, the Project Engineer, and a specialized roundabout consultant have all studied the location based on peak-hour traffic simulations through the design year 2040. One of the benefits of a roundabout is its ability to control traffic volume. Additionally, dedicated turning and through lanes leading into Willow Road will also help facilitate traffic flow safely.

Will the installation of a roundabout decrease public parking spaces in that area?

Yes. A roundabout at Orchard Lane requires a larger footprint and it will impact some parking spaces. To address this, the Village and County are studying where additional public parking spaces can be provided on the east side of town and how some parking spaces could be reconfigured to minimize the impact.

Will relocating utilities be costly?

Relocating underground utilities is often a necessity during roadway project construction. Common utilities are power lines, gas lines, sewer and waste drainage, water main, cable, telephone, fiber optics, etc. As part of our study, we are evaluating ways in which we can improve Happ Road in a manner that is cost-efficient, but focused on making the corridor safer for cars, bikes, and pedestrians. Efforts will be taken during the project design to avoid utilities to the extent practicable. Private utilities that are in the highway right-of-way by permit and in conflict with the proposed improvement would be required to relocate at their expense.

Can you close Walnut Street to allow emergency vehicles only?

No. There is no effective way to close Walnut Street without negatively impacting the Village's emergency response times and access to local businesses. Walnut is one of the primary routes used by police and fire to access the Edens expressway and the east side of Northfield.

Why is the intersection at Winnetka Road being reconfigured?

The current configuration at Winnetka Road is confusing to motorists, results in backups and does not allow pedestrians to safely cross the roadway. The intersection does not currently meet a substantial amount of state and federal design standards. Due to its proximity to New Trier High School, it is imperative the intersection to be safer for vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians. Realignment of the intersection will also help to improve sightlines and minimize traffic congestion. The current alignment makes it difficult for large vehicles (such as buses, fire trucks, and semi-trailers) to turn without encroaching onto other lanes, so wider turning radii will accommodate the larger vehicles by preventing overlaps. Additionally, improved sidewalk configurations will help pedestrians trying to cross at the intersection, meeting standards for citizens as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).





Will the temporary traffic signal at Winnetka Road remain?

The temporary traffic signal currently in place has worked extremely well and has received extensive support from New Trier High School, residents, and local emergency response personnel. A permanent traffic signal will improve the situation even more by correcting the deficiencies of a temporary traffic signal, such as waiting times during non-peak hours.

Can the project scope be changed to include the portion of Winnetka Road west of Happ?

No. The project limits were established at the start of Phase I project. The improvement of Winnetka Road would need to be undertaken as a separate project

When will construction start?

The Phase I Study is anticipated to be completed in Spring/Summer of 2018. Upon completion of the Phase I Study, the Village and County will work to secure funding for the Phase II design and project construction. After funding has been identified, the required right-of-way acquisition and Phase II design will begin and is estimated to take 18-24 months. Construction will begin after the required property has been acquired.

We thank you for your comments, and please know if these issues are not addressed in this study, they will be addressed as part of separate initiatives.

