

CONCORDIA AVENUE AND RONDO AVENUE RESURFACING PROJECT BICYCLE LANE SUMMARY OF ENGINEERING RECOMMENDATIONS

2024 Arterial Mill & Overlay Project

Report prepared: 6/17/2024

Public Hearing: 7/10/2024

PROJECT

Implementation of bicycle facilities on Concordia Avenue and Rondo Avenue from Pascal Street North to Western Avenue North.

Improvements include the installation of dedicated bicycle lanes, buffer zones, pavement markings, signage, and other elements as described below.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to provide an improved eastbound bicycle facility on Concordia and Rondo Avenues, and to make purposeful connections to existing nearby bikeways, improving safety, comfort, and connectivity for people using bicycles for transportation.

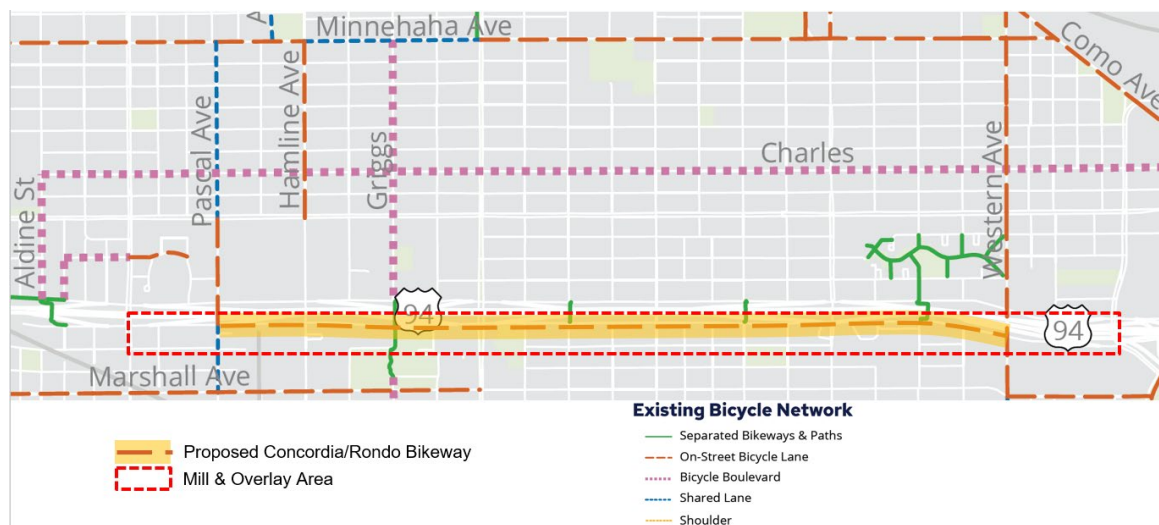


Figure 1: Project Map

I. INITIATING ACTION

The City of Saint Paul Department of Public Works is planning a mill and overlay of Concordia / Rondo Avenue between Snelling Avenue and Marion Street / Kellogg Boulevard in the fall of 2024. To take advantage of the efficiencies associated with implementing bicycle facilities with existing maintenance projects, Public Works is proposing to implement bicycle lanes on Concordia / Rondo Avenue within the mill and overlay boundaries. Notably, the Department of Public Works asked for and received a variance from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Office of State Aid for Local Transportation to reduce the number of travel lanes on Concordia / Rondo

Avenue. The variance was required because Concordia / Rondo Avenue is a Municipal State Aid (MSA) street, and existing MSA standards require that a one way MSA street (like Concordia / Rondo Avenue) has two travel lanes.

The Saint Paul City Council passed Resolution 24-190 on February 14, 2024, authorizing the Department of Public Works to seek a State Aid Variance. The justification is based on the existing traffic volume of the road and a history of neighborhood concerns about traffic safety and speeding. Reducing the number of lanes on a street is a well-recognized method for improving safety, calming traffic, providing better mobility for all users, and enhancing overall quality of life. Note that the reduction in the number of travel lanes on the street is the mechanism that allows for the possibility of adding a buffered bicycle lane in the space vacated by the former travel lane.

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Concordia Avenue and Rondo Avenue are classified as a major collector street within the project limits. Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) ranges from 2,200 and 4,850 vehicles per day. Higher volumes of traffic exist in immediate vicinity of on- and off-ramps from and to Interstate 94 (Snelling Avenue, Lexington Parkway, Dale Street). Historic speed data collected at midblock locations by the city have found that average speeds on this street range from 31 to 37 miles per hour. The posted speed limit is 25 mph.

Historic manual count data estimates for weekday bicycle trips on Rondo Avenue east of Griggs street do not show an appreciable number of bicycling trips, though bicyclists have been documented to cross Rondo Avenue in larger numbers at the pedestrian bridges at Griggs, Chatsworth, Grotto, and Mackubin Streets. Note that since no dedicated bicycle accommodation has been available to bicyclists on Concordia / Rondo Avenue, bicyclists may have understandably not chosen to use this road for trips.

A sidewalk is continuous along Concordia / Rondo Avenue between Snelling Avenue and Marion Street / Kellogg Boulevard, except for a short gap at Concordia University east of Hamline Avenue. This gap will be filled with the planned repaving project, and all pedestrian ramps that are not currently ADA-compliant along the corridor will be reconstructed to meet accessibility requirements.

There are no existing bike facilities installed within the project limits. The Saint Paul Bicycle Plan identifies a planned separated bikeway/path for Saint Anthony Avenue between Prior Avenue and Rice Street. It does not include a planned bikeway for Concordia / Rondo Avenue. Staff determined that as Saint Anthony and Concordia / Rondo Avenues function as a one-way pair of streets, and due the staff recommendation to reduce the number of travel lanes on Concordia / Rondo Avenue with the repaving project (and the resulting availability of space where one of the eastbound travel lanes will be eliminated), this presents an opportunity to provide additional and important connectivity in the bikeway network.

The planned Concordia / Rondo Avenue bikeway would connect to existing bike lanes on Pascal Street and Western Avenue, and a separated path and bicycle boulevard on Griggs Street. These further connect to additional destinations throughout the city on the bikeway network. Longer-term planned intersecting and nearby bicycle improvements in the area include separated bikeway/paths on Saint Anthony Avenue, Hamline Avenue,

Lexington Parkway, Marshall Avenue, and Marion Street / Kellogg Boulevard; and Bicycle Boulevards at Chatsworth Street, Grotto Street, and Mackubin Street.

Note that a similar repaving project will take place on Saint Anthony Avenue in 2025, and staff will be discussing bikeway options for this street with residents, stakeholders, council members, and agency partners at MnDOT and Ramsey County later in 2024. Further note that the entirety of both these streets is within the planning footprint MnDOT's Rethinking I-94 study area. Any projects resulting from this process will likely impact the long-term form and function of Saint Anthony, Concordia, and Rondo Avenues, but in the meantime the City of Saint Paul needs to address current pavement condition deficiencies and will take the opportunity of repaving work to implement bikeways as feasible with available funding.

III. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

- Removing one of two existing travel lanes and narrowing remaining travel lane to 13 feet
- Restriping roadway to add 7' EB bicycle lane with 2.5' buffers on both sides
- Installation of bike lane pavement marking and signage
- Removal of on-street parking on the south side of Concordia Avenue for approximately 170 feet prior to the Hamline Avenue intersection
- Construction of a bicycle ramp to an existing 8-foot-wide sidewalk prior to the merge with the I-94 Lexington Parkway off-ramp
- Resumption of on-street bicycle lane east of Lexington Parkway intersection
- Removal of on-street parking on the south side of Rondo Avenue for approximately 450 feet east from the Lexington Parkway intersection
- Bicycle ramp to a reconstructed 8-foot-wide sidewalk prior to the merge with the I-94 Dale Street off-ramp
- Removal of on-street parking on the south side of Rondo Avenue east of the Dale Street intersection for approximately 450 feet

Changes to On-street Parking

To accommodate the installation of bicycle facilities, changes to on-street parking are proposed for the following locations:

Parking will be prohibited:

- On Concordia Avenue, for approximately 170 feet west the Hamline Avenue intersection
- On Rondo Avenue, for approximately 450 feet east of the Lexington Parkway intersection
- On Rondo Avenue, for approximately 140 feet west of the Dale Street intersection, in addition to the existing 225 feet where parking is current prohibited for a total of 365 feet of prohibited parking
- On Rondo Avenue, for approximately 450 feet east of the Dale Street intersection

Parking will continue to be allowed:

- All other currently-allowed locations on the south side of Concordia / Rondo Avenue

There are a total of approximately 360 parking spaces on Concordia and Rondo Avenues within the project limits. This project will eliminate approximately 47 spaces, or 13% of available parking spaces. Aerial photographs from 2021 through May 2024 indicate between 14 and 35 percent of the total number of spaces available in use.

Parking demand is not evenly spread along the corridor. Parking is more heavily in use near Concordia University (at Hamline Avenue) and at several apartment complexes (St. Phillip's Gardens and Liberty Plaza Townhomes). Some blocks of single family housing also had consistently higher numbers of vehicles parked (Oxford-Chatsworth, Milton-Victoria, Avon-Grotto). A number of trucks and trailers are routinely parked along the corridor. Truck parking is no longer legal in Saint Paul, and truck parking was indicated as an issue in conversations with community members and stakeholders.

Jimmy Lee Recreation Center

Parks and Recreation Department staff indicated that park visitors to the Jimmy Lee recreation fields between Rondo Avenue and Iglehart Avenue use curbside parking on adjacent streets, including Rondo Avenue. Public Works staff reviewed options to preserve some parking near the Rondo Avenue / Oxford Street corner, but the majority of parking between Lexington and Oxford Street is proposed to be eliminated.

Permit Parking Area 8

The block of Concordia Avenue from Asbury Street to Pascal Street is within Permit Parking Area 8, which restricts parking to individuals with parking permits only. This block would not be affected by proposed bikeway implementation, which starts east of Pascal Street.

Event Parking

Part of the corridor is close to the Allianz Field soccer stadium. During events, parking is heavily used on the corridor and on neighborhood streets north and south of I-94. This trend of parking vehicles on nearby blocks would continue with the implementation of a bike lane, and the available parking on the corridor and other residential streets will be able to accommodate this demand fluctuation similar to today. A short zone of available curbside parking would be eliminated near Hamline Avenue – the only affected segment of the corridor close to the stadium that might regularly accommodate event parking, though this is also notably the location of routine long-term illegal truck parking that prevents the general public from parking along this continuous curb zone.

Parking Conclusions

Based on the data collected by Public Works and the proposed bikeway layout, it is anticipated that remaining parking supply on Concordia Avenue and Rondo Avenue (and on adjacent residential streets) following the implementation of bicycle lane will be sufficient to meet observed demand. The loss of parking will be relatively minimal for the benefits in terms of improved traffic safety and availability of transportation modes aligning with city plans to increase the numbers of people bicycling and walking.

IV. ALTERNATIVES

Not pursuing bicycle facilities with the 2024 mill and overlay would not improve safety or comfort for people bicycling on Concordia and Rondo Avenues. Further, reducing the number of travel lanes while *not* putting the lane proposed for removal into another use

would likely result in drivers using the available space, eroding the safety benefit of the lane reduction.

Staff reviewed alternatives for the positioning of the bike lane. While a left side bike lane would avoid conflicts with the parking lane and right turning vehicles, it would come into significant conflict near the I-94 merge zones. For this reason, staff did not recommend a left-sided bike lane. Staff received some public comment about the possibility of swapping the parking lane and bike lane – often referred to as a parking-protected bike lane. Parked vehicles are intended to provide a physical barrier between bicyclists and moving traffic where vehicles are parked. While this type of separation is important, the scope of the project is not sufficient to create a parking-protected bike lane without inclusion of some physical features to help direct drivers to the correct parking position. In the absence of these features, staff felt that paint alone would be insufficient, and more intensive features are beyond the current budget and scope for this mill and overlay project.

Parking removal is proposed at the locations indicated above. The main reason for parking removal is for appropriate traffic management – the inclusion of turn lanes where deemed necessary and the need to include adequate space for two lane portions of the corridor near I-94 on-ramps to safely merge into one lane. Staff worked to minimize the amount of parking impacted.

V. POSITIVE BENEFITS

This project will improve the safety of all users of the roadway. Providing a dedicated bike lane on Concordia and Rondo Avenues will improve the safety and comfort for people bicycling on the street, encourage predictable riding behavior, and will provide connectivity to existing bicycle facilities on Pascal Street and Western Avenue (and to points beyond). Eliminating a travel lane and narrowing the remaining travel lane will calm traffic and minimize exposure to motorized traffic for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the road.

VI. ADVERSE EFFECTS

Normal issues relative to implementing infrastructure improvement projects will be present. Those issues include, but may not be necessarily limited to, noise, dust, and general disruptions to vehicular traffic. Some disruption will occur with sidewalk and curb ramp work associated with the project, including temporary closure of some sidewalk segments and corner road crossings. Removal of some on-street parking will reduce overall parking capacity by approximately 13 percent.

VII. TIME SCHEDULE

It is anticipated that the bicycle improvements as proposed will be installed concurrent with the planned mill and overlay on Concordia Avenue and Rondo Avenue, scheduled for Fall of 2024. Concrete curb work would proceed earlier than the asphalt mill and overlay – likely starting in August of 2024.

VIII. COST ESTIMATE

Implementation of bicycle lanes and lane reconfiguration within the limits of the mill and overlay will incur little additional cost beyond the amount already budgeted for resurfacing. This is mainly a pavement marking element of the larger project, and staff have been careful to eliminate features that would result in extensive or complex marking.

I. ESTIMATED FINANCING

Signing and striping for bike lanes on Concordia and Rondo Avenues will be funded through funds budgeted for the Arterial Mill and Overlay program.

II. SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information, please contact:

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III. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Public Works believes the project submitted herein to be necessary and feasible. The Department's Engineering Recommendation is for approval of the project as proposed.