

Project Questions and Answers

Why traffic circles and why are you using the quick build version instead of the concrete ones like I've seen at other locations in Missoula?

We have found that the addition of traffic calming circles and stop signs reduces both speeds and volumes on neighborhood streets. Our preliminary data suggests that recent installations on Kemp St. and Schilling St. in the Franklin to the Fort neighborhood reduced traffic volumes by 30% and vehicle speeds by 4 mph. The neighbors over there have been thrilled at the traffic calming effects, as the added stop signs and traffic circles seem to have really kept traffic using the main streets (Johnson, 14th, Eaton).

The benefits of installing “quick build” traffic circles made of signs, paint, and plastic bollards include the following:

- They are inexpensive—we can install them within existing City department budgets and do not have to go to neighbors to pay for them through special improvement districts. (For comparison, the circles in the University District would cost about \$20K each and require adjacent property owners to fully fund them.);
- They are flexible—we can measure how they are working and adjust with ease; and
- They are not permanent—we can measure how they are functioning and then work with the neighborhood to make them more permanent in the future, if desired.

The drawback is the aesthetics because the circles are pretty bare bones. This is where neighborhood engagement comes in. Several of our quick build circles have been adopted by neighbors and have seen murals painted within them (see Maurice/Hastings, Kemp/12th, Franklin/Longstaff) and planters placed in them (many of them along Maurice, Franklin, Kemp, and Schilling). Several of your neighbors have said they are interested in taking ownership of these circles and helping make them something the neighborhood can be proud of.

Why are the circles only every other block?

The City typically wants to place circles at every other block spacing. The circles need to be large enough to calm traffic. In order to do so, they also make it difficult for large trucks to make left turns through them (trailers fit through fine but require very low speeds). While we don't typically want large trucks in our neighborhoods anyway, we do need to accommodate fire trucks, moving trucks, delivery vehicles, etc. By placing circles at every other intersection, these large trucks can navigate the neighborhood without having to turn left through the circles.

Why is the pattern set the way it is (i.e., circle at Queen/Dearborn instead of Queen/Livingston and Fairview)?

There are a couple reasons for this. First, Dearborn residents have been more unified in their requests and very interested in developing/maintaining an artistic circle. Second, with the main entrance for Sentinel across from Dearborn, the problems seem more acute on this street; therefore, it is arguable that a more physical presence (as opposed to stop signs) is needed to help manage traffic.

Why are the stop signs facing east-west instead of north-south?

The problem behaviors, as expressed by the neighborhood, are related to high school traffic using the neighborhood to get from Bancroft to South Ave. and/or Higgins. By facing the stop signs in the east-west direction, we are requiring some change in behavior no matter which street a driver takes. We have not heard a complaint (nor do we think it is an issue) about people turning from South Ave. to go to Bancroft. A stop sign in the north-south direction would be more effective at deterring this movement, but again, there is no evidence to suggest this is happening.

Why stop signs at all?

While it is true that stop signs, by themselves, have limited efficacy at slowing traffic, the overarching goal here is safety. At the intersections where we propose installing stop signs, there are sight obstructions (usually houses) that prevent people from seeing traffic coming on the cross streets. Stopping at an intersection allows drivers to see further up the cross street and brings the sight distance into compliance with our design guidelines. Stop signs can also act as a traffic deterrent because people who encounter them will try to find a route with less resistance. In this case, we want non-local traffic on Bancroft and South Ave. because those streets are built to handle higher volumes. The hope is that stop signs (especially if enforced a little more after installation) will encourage high school students and others to stay on the main streets.

What about Benton?

Speeding is a concern on Benton as well. Currently, cut through traffic on Benton is less of a concern, as the high school parking lot does not face Benton as it does Fairview, Dearborn, and Livingston. We plan to collect additional data after the installation of the current project and determine if and how we might need to better manage traffic on Benton. Though there have been similar requests for help on Benton, and it is reasonable to expect some amount of overflow from the streets we are currently planning to calm, the interventions we might be able to use on Benton need a little more time to vet internally, and we are not able to propose something for implementation this fall that we think will be effective. We will be looking closer at this over the coming months and may bring plans for Benton back to the neighborhood next year.

How do I go about decorating the traffic circles?

Inspiration and information about how to activate our local streets can be found here:

https://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/DocumentCenter/View/56341/Neighborhood_Energizers.

We are working on developing guidelines to address questions about visibility and height restrictions, painting process and material choice, and other design details. Our basic rules for art in the public right-of-way are:

- No words other than street or neighborhood names,
- No logos or marketing,
- No political symbols, and
- No symbols that could be construed as traffic control.

Anyone interested in being involved with this part of the project should contact the Lewis & Clark Neighborhood Council and Ben Weiss.

What about other improvements, like better sidewalks, speed zones by the schools, more crosswalks, etc.?

Sidewalks: Missoula is missing miles and miles of sidewalks—at the current rate of construction it will take over 100 years to fill them all in. The L&C neighborhood has sidewalks, and though they may not meet the City’s current standards (curb side instead of boulevard), we will largely be prioritizing filling in gaps before bringing existing sidewalks into compliance with current standards. The exception to this is on our Neighborhood Greenway projects. Park St. is prioritized as a Neighborhood Greenway in our master plans and as such, we will be coming through and making this street more accessible. This means making sure the curb ramps are appropriate and meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, fixing broken or hazardous panels, and changing driveway and alley approaches to be less steep and meet ADA. At that time, we will also seek to install traffic calming along Park St. This project is still at least 2-3 years away and will have a much more extensive public process than the one we are pursuing for the current quick build traffic calming project. Look for more information about this project in the coming months.

School speed zones: On City Council request, staff is currently in the process of developing a uniform policy for how to address school zones everywhere in the city. While we don't have anything specific to share quite yet, it is likely that we will be pursuing speed limit reductions on Bancroft and South Ave. weekdays between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. We will have more information to share later this fall.

Crosswalks: Per state law, every intersection has crosswalks—whether they are marked or not—and drivers need to yield to people walking. Due to budgets that are already stretched very thin, the City has policy language around where we will consider striping crosswalks or adding enhancements. Typically, we mark crosswalks that are immediately adjacent to schools, at traffic signals, downtown, and where primary trails cross streets. We want to see at least 20 people (15 students) crossing a street before we will consider marking a crosswalk at other locations. We also want there to be accessibility features, like curb ramps. The need for additional enhancements, like center medians, bulb outs, flashing lights, etc., is determined by looking at vehicle speeds and volumes, number of lanes, crash history, and adjacent land use.

Neighborhood Greenway Route: Park St. is planned for improvements as a priority route on our Neighborhood Greenway network. You may be aware that Park St. is a great connector to Franklin St., Ivy, California, and over the bridge to the westside. You can bike or walk nearly the entire length of the city without being on a main road. The extent of improvements to Park St. is yet to be fully determined but likely will include ADA curb ramps at all intersections, ADA upgrades at alley and driveway entrances, broken/hazardous sidewalk panel repairs, traffic calming at select intersections, and crossing enhancements at Mount Ave. There will be a public process, likely kicking off this fall/winter, to help determine exactly what these traffic calming and crossing enhancements can look like. Our hope is to then add some “quick build” traffic calming in the interim (like what has been recently installed on Kemp, Schilling, Franklin, and Maurice streets and is being proposed in the neighborhood here), with an eye to evaluate what is working before going into final design. We anticipate actual construction of full improvements is still at least 2 to 3 years away.

What are Neighborhood Greenways?

Neighborhood Greenways are low-volume, low-speed local streets that are prioritized for bike/pedestrian travel, both within the neighborhood and as part of a larger network. This network was identified in the *2016 Long Range Transportation Plan* and subsequent *Bicycle Facilities Master Plan*. Most Neighborhood Greenways are parallel to main streets and provide access to the same destinations without the stress of our busy streets. Neighborhood Greenways are not busy enough to warrant full blown separated bicycle facilities, but the City is working to ensure that they stay safe, comfortable, and convenient and connect users across busy intersections as the city grows. For example, in the Lewis & Clark Neighborhood, Park St. is part of a fantastic route that you can use all the way from Pattee Creek at the south end, up to Franklin, then Ivy, California, and across Broadway into the westside. A person can bike or walk nearly the entirety of the city without having to be on a major street.

The other Neighborhood Greenway in the Lewis & Clark neighborhood is Benton St., which connects Playfair Park/Sentinel High School through to the parking lot at Dornblaser Stadium to the Lewis & Clark Trail, north on Gerald Ave. to the Riverfront Trail system. Typically, Neighborhood Greenways have shared lane markings for bikes, traffic calming at minor intersections, and enhanced crosswalks at major intersections. We are working to implement the network in various places in the city. Most recently, some greenway improvements were made along Schilling St. in the Franklin to the Fort neighborhood. Full build out is still a long way off, but we are biting off a little bit every year. The full network can be found at tiny.cc/MissoulaBikeMap.