

Platte Avenue Corridor Study Summary of Public Engagement

Platte Avenue Public Engagement Touchpoints

In December 2021 the Platte Avenue Corridor Study project team was scheduled to host a virtual public meeting to present draft improvements being proposed for this 6-mile corridor. Due to severe weather conditions (high speed winds causing internet outages across the city, etc.) the materials were converted to a digital presentation and video recording made available on the project website. To supplement the public process over the last two months the project team has continued to engage with corridor community members via digital bilingual flyers, email, social media and direct meetings.

The project team has held the following meetings:

- Two community office hour sessions. The first saw nine total participants, and five of those nine joined for the full two-hours. Attendance for the second office hour saw eighteen total participants. A summary of each office hour session can be found on the project website.
- Seven one-on-one stakeholder meetings from early-December 2021 and the project team continues to engage with community stakeholders throughout their technical analysis.
- Multiple meetings for residents and neighborhoods including the Middle Shooks Run Neighborhood, the Boulder Street Neighborhood Group, and residents at the intersection of Sheridan Avenue and Platte Avenue.

In addition to the engagement mentioned above, the team continues to track emails, social media comments, public comment card and survey responses to understand the community perspective around the Platte Avenue Corridor Study. The comment card and survey closed on January 31st, 2022, and received a total of 449 unique responses divided between the following:

- 354 unique survey responses¹
- 95 unique comment card responses

Platte Avenue Key Themes

While the Platte Avenue Corridor Study is divided into four distinct character areas, public feedback was not limited to one aspect of the corridor, see Figure 1: Comment by Character Area. Many of the public comments card responses collected focused on the corridor-wide impact of the study, while very few comments addressed the Eastern Reaches Character Area of the study.

¹ The survey included numerous responses with resistance to any alternatives with insufficient information to provide a clear direction for further analysis.

Comment by Character Area

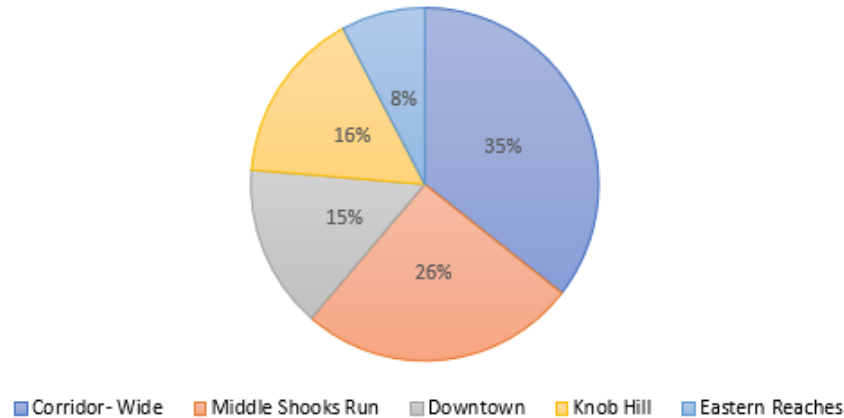


Figure 1: Comment by Character Area (Responses from the Platte Avenue Study Comment Card)

Despite the comment card’s focus on the corridor, attendees of stakeholder and community meetings helped to raise themes specific to each character area. Public feedback focused largely on the corridor-wide vision of Platte Avenue or the Central Corridor, which is made up of Middle Shooks Run and Knob Hill Character Areas. Feedback themes for each character area are the following:

Downtown Character Area:

- Concerns about traffic growth and lane reduction
- Mixed feelings about moving the General Palmer Statue
- Palmer High School drop-off operations
- Pedestrian safety
- Emergency Access
- Support of transformational alternatives

Central Corridor (Middle Shooks Run and Knob Hill Character Areas):

- Concerns about traffic growth and lane reduction
- Support for making North-South crossing easier for pedestrians and bikes
- Concerns about speed and noise
- Emergency Access to Memorial Hospital
- East-West Bike Infrastructure
- Right-of-Way Safety Concerns
- Prioritize On-Street Parking
- Shooks Run Trail is a community asset

Eastern Reaches Character Area:

- Support for widening Platte Avenue and keeping the “road” feel
- Support for shared path use
- Request for more details on quadrant intersections

A summary of the public feedback themes collected during this period of engagement are the following:

Study Process (Implementation Schedule)

Throughout the public engagement process, the public expressed interest in learning more about how the study developed, and when the recommendations from the study would be implemented. Community members asked how their public feedback would be incorporated into final design, and when would these projects be approved for construction.

The project team is continuing to meet with stakeholders to refine the recommendations and will present refined alternatives to the public.

Study Needs and Current Conditions Analysis

Regarding current condition analysis, feedback demonstrated that the public is concerned about worsening traffic, as the city continues to see population growth. Respondents and meeting attendees expressed concern that the current proposed alternatives would not account for current conditions or an increase of traffic.

Additionally, the public raised concerns about how lane reductions would support current and future traffic. Respondents to the public comment card expressed concern that lane reductions on Platte Avenue would increase traffic on parallel streets. The concern for increased congestion on parallel streets has also been expressed in the small community meetings, particularly around the proposed one-way couplet on Platte Avenue and Boulder Street. The public expressed concern that two lanes in each direction on Platte Avenue and Boulder Street would be unable to support traffic conditions; however, a one-way couplet that had three lanes in each direction would be more suited to the current traffic needs.

East West Connection

From comment card participation, forty-two respondents indicated that the Platte Avenue Corridor remains a key East-West connection. Respondents expressed concerns around lane reductions increasing commute times, as well as making travel throughout the city more difficult. Respondents expressed wanting to understand how each alternative would affect drive times throughout the corridor.

Additionally, those who use Platte Avenue primarily as their primary East-West connection would like to see higher speed limits, and increased road capacity. While feedback from

residents along the Platte Avenue corridor recognize its function as a key connection; however, they would like to see lower speed limits through their neighborhoods.

Incremental vs. Transformational Alternatives

Comment Card responses largely focused on the transformative aspect of the proposed study, in comparison to the proposed draft incremental alternatives. Based on comment card data, see Figure 3, 64% of responses focused specifically on the transformational aspects of the Platte Avenue Corridor Study.

Draft Alternatives Feedback

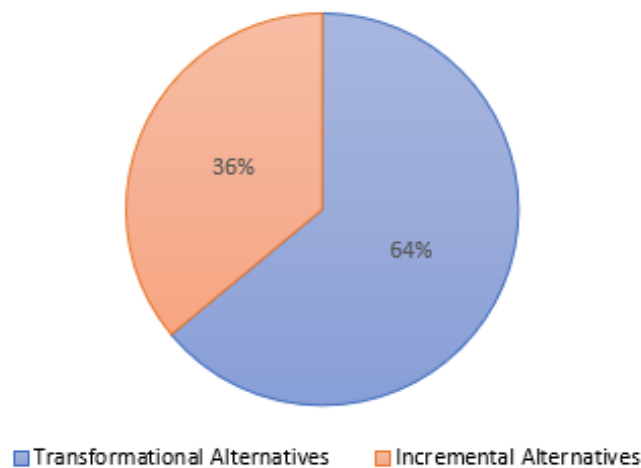


Figure 2: Draft Alternatives Feedback (from Comment Card data)

Comment card responses raised concerns about traffic capacity of a one-way couplet with Platte Avenue and Boulder Street. Additionally, many comment card responses advocated that no aspects of the study should be adopted, and rather, that Platte Avenue remains the same.

Stakeholder and community meetings also largely focused on the transformational alternatives proposed, particularly the one-way couplet configuration.

The public did raise concerns that none of the proposed alternatives include noise mitigation. Noise from vehicles and congestion has been cited as an issue by multiple meeting attendees and comment card responses. The public hopes to see the incorporation of noise mitigation into the recommended alternatives.

Transformational Alternative: One-Way Couplet

Community members and comment card participants expressed concern about how the one-way couplet would impact traffic on North-South streets, emergency response, and speed mitigation. In addition to community meetings and public feedback, the project team also met

with several stakeholders to discuss how the one-way couplet would impact their organization or community.

Concern from residents focused largely on how the proposed one-way couplet would change traffic patterns within their neighborhoods. As many North-South streets support residential parking, school pick-up, and church parking, their concern was how would cars navigate if they cannot go East-West solely on Platte Avenue or Boulder Street. Additionally, residents raised concerns about how turning lanes would function to access the North-South streets.

Additionally, the public expressed concerns about how emergency response would function if Platte Avenue and Boulder Street were to become one-way. Residents expressed concern that one-way streets or reduced lanes are a huge concern both for emergency response, as well as emergency evacuation. The project team has met with hospital stakeholders in the community and are continuing to work through how the one-way couplet would affect emergency operations.

Many public comments focused on speed limits and speed mitigation. Speed and noise mitigation was brought up by many residents within the Middle Shooks Run neighborhood, as well as by other residents who live along Platte Avenue. Residents expressed that currently speed is an issue with many people picking up speed as they pass through the Central Corridor on their way to downtown. Residents expressed the incorporation of slower speed limits and traffic signal synchronization as part of the proposed alternatives.

Multimodal Transportation & Safety

In addition to concerns about vehicle traffic congestion, the public raised concerns about the balance of the various transportation modes on Platte Avenue. Public feedback expressed skepticism that there were enough bike riders to justify the inclusion of additional bike infrastructure on Platte Avenue.

In terms of vehicle safety, the public expressed concerns that reducing lanes on Platte Avenue could create safety concerns for vehicles, particularly additional vehicular accidents.

The public remains skeptical of improved transit opportunities along the Platte Avenue Corridor. Many respondents expressed that including better transit facilities, particularly improved bus infrastructure, would not result in additional ridership. Residents expressed concerns that bus stops throughout the residential area of Platte Avenue would have a negative impact, particularly if bus stops are placed in people's front yards. The public also expressed concern about how a rapid-bus transit lane would reduce space for vehicles leading to additional traffic congestion. This sentiment was also expressed by those who provided opinions on social media.

The public also expressed their support of the incorporation of safety for all modes of transportation into the proposed alternatives. The public advocated that the draft

transformational alternatives would improve safety for all pedestrians, as well as for bicycles along the corridor. Particularly for pedestrians, public comments mentioned how the incorporation of green space would help pedestrians feel more comfortable traveling by foot throughout the corridor.

Neighborhoods and Community

The project team has met with multiple residents who live along the corridor, including those in the Middle Shooks Run neighborhood and the 800 block of Boulder. While in these meetings, it became clear that parking is a priority for residential areas of the corridor. Residents expressed that Platte Avenue and Boulder Street must retain parking, as current parking spaces are limited on these roads, as well as, on parallel North-South streets. Based on the feedback, the project team has incorporated parking as an ambition of the Central Corridor portion of Platte Avenue. Residents also expressed their desires for this section of the corridor to reflect the residential character, particularly in the Middle Shooks Run area, which would include speed and noise mitigation.

Public comment card responses also had an emphasis on keeping the character of the corridor and hoped that with the proposed transportation improvements would lead to additional community improvements like reduced crime and litter. Responses also supported improvements that created additional green space along the corridor.

El Paso Bridge & Shooks Run Trail

The El Paso Bridge in the context of noise mitigation, as well as current damage, has been a theme of the various community meetings. The public hopes that through the Platte Avenue Corridor Study, alternatives could address the current damage to the El Paso Bridge. The public also expressed hope that future solutions would mitigate the noise from loud cars both revving their engines and passing through the bridge's underpass.

Additional concern was shared by members of the community regarding the proposed alternative that would create an underground Shooks Run Trail. Those in the Middle Shooks Run neighborhood feel as though the path is an integral part of their neighborhood. Additional concerns from the public expressed concerns with other underground pedestrian trails in terms of safety and places for homeless populations.

Next Steps

The project team continues to meet with the community to collect and gather feedback about the draft alternatives. Additionally, the project team looks to continue to conduct technical analysis to proposed recommended alternatives that incorporate the public's feedback. The project team will be conducting on-going stakeholder meetings, joining existing community meetings, and hosting a public meeting in the Spring of 2022.