

# **Westerly Creek and Toll Gate Creek Connections to Florida Station**

## **November 21, 2019 Public Meeting - Frequently Asked Questions and City Responses**

### **Q. Why was this project undertaken in the first place? Why the need for protected bike lanes?**

A. As part of a public process, planning for this project began with the identification of Florida Avenue as a bike lane candidate in the 2012 Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan. With the addition of the Florida Station on the R-Line light rail corridor, concepts for incorporating bike lanes on Florida Avenue began to take shape as the 2018 opening date for R-Line service approached. Because the Florida Station was planned as a station without vehicle parking, this station was a good candidate for projects that enhance alternative means of travel such as biking and walking. Research conducted by the City, and other local governments exploring multi-modal transportation alternatives, indicates that cyclists are much more likely to ride their bikes on streets that provide physical protection from vehicles. The same research also shows that bicycle/vehicle accidents decrease dramatically when physical barriers are used to separate bicycles and vehicles. DRCOG's (Denver Regional Council of Governments) TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) Grants provide federal dollars for projects focusing on multi-modal transportation. This project applied for and received funding through the TIP Grant program. Design began in 2017 and 2018 using the best criteria available for determining appropriate lane widths, physical barrier construction, signage and striping, and traffic signal modifications, with customizations appropriate for the Colorado climate. When this project is completed in Spring 2020, cyclists will have protected bike lanes and/or multi-use trails as far east as Buckley Road on Mexico Avenue, and as far west as Utah Park at Jewell Avenue.

### **Q. This project is impacting vehicle traffic flow on Mexico Avenue between Chambers and Buckley. Why were the traffic lanes reduced from four down to two?**

A. Mexico Avenue between Chambers and Buckley has been considered a good candidate for a lane reduction (often referred to as a "road diet") for several years because of the moderate number of vehicles per day and because of a relatively high number of accidents on this stretch that were a result of the lack of dedicated left turn lanes. This project presented an opportunity to establish the safer two-lane cross section with dedicated left turn lanes, while also providing protected bike lanes to improve safety for cyclists and vehicle drivers. The timing of this project also allowed the City to re-pave Mexico sooner than the City's budget normally would have allowed. Traffic signal timing at Buckley, Idalia/Helena, and Chambers will be adjusted to reflect the new lane configuration when the project is complete.

**Q. Why were the vehicle traffic lanes shifted to the south on Florida between Chambers and Abilene? Why do residents on Florida have to park on the north side of the street?**

- A. The vehicle traffic lanes were shifted to the south side of Florida to preserve better sight distance for drivers backing out of driveways. Although the original design attempted to preserve on-street parking on the south side of Florida, the design team quickly determined that parking on the south side of the street would dramatically impede a driver's ability to see on-coming vehicles. The design team also received considerable feedback from attendees of the first and subsequent public meeting when conceptual designs were presented to the public. Feedback from that public process indicated that the north side of the street is the best overall location for on-street parking.

**Q. With the lane shift to the south, how will mail service, trash pickup, deliveries, and ride sharing services impact vehicular traffic? And how will parking for sports events at Gateway High School impact on-street parking?**

- A. The City recognizes that the mail truck, trash trucks, moving trucks, and delivery vehicles will need to stop in front of homes for varying periods of time. The USPS indicated that they will convert this mail route from a driving route to a walking route so that the mail truck doesn't impede traffic daily. While the trash trucks must use the eastbound lanes for their booms to reach the trash cans, we anticipate that delivery drivers, moving trucks, and ride sharing services will use the parking lane on the westbound (north) side of the street. As is the case with any new lane configuration, it may take some time for delivery and ride-sharing services to adapt to the new conditions. Gateway High School and the Aurora Public Schools have indicated that attendees at sports practices and events should use the parking lots on the north side of the track/fields. Ample parking is available there, and APS's general policy is to reduce the impact to neighborhood street parking whenever possible. We will continue to work with the school as parents' behaviors adjust to the new conditions and utilize the school's parking. Starting in the Spring of 2020, the City will monitor the parking conditions during sporting events and consider making changes if conditions warrant.

**Q. Florida Avenue lanes are too narrow and the concrete barriers are adversely impacting the ability to make safe turns.**

- A. The vehicle lanes on Florida Avenue are 11 feet wide, not including the 2-foot gutter pans, which is a standard lane width for a roadway such as Florida. The perception of narrow lane width should also provide the unintended benefit of slowing vehicular traffic. We anticipate that some of the concrete barrier placement may need to be adjusted to promote safer turning movements. The project team has received feedback specific to numerous locations where concrete barriers may conflict with vehicle turning movements that will be evaluated and adjusted, if necessary. The City welcomes constructive feedback regarding how we can make the City's streets as safe as possible.

**Q. How will Florida be plowed during and after snow storms? How will snow plow and other drivers see the concrete barriers during storms?**

- A. The City is developing protocol for plowing snow on Florida this season, and will continue to make adjustments based on the size and intensity of storm events, as well as overall conditions on the City's street network. In general, the vehicle lanes will be plowed first, with an effort to push the snow to the north side of Florida. The bike lanes will be plowed last. Reflective, post-type delineators will be installed at the end sections of the concrete curbs, and at varying intervals along the curbs, to visually identify where the concrete curbs exist.

**Q. What steps is the City taking to ensure that this project is a success?**

- A. The City has installed bike and pedestrian counters at key locations to monitor usage. Baseline usage was established in 2017, and the City is committed to collecting data to determine how the new bike lanes are being used. Public Works will also continue to monitor how Florida and Mexico are functioning after the project is complete. If adjustments can be made to improve the project without compromising the overall goals and objectives of the project, the City will take steps to make the necessary improvements.