

Ashworth Road Improvements Project – 1st Street to 50th Street

“Why is this project necessary?”

The underlying pavement on Ashworth Road is deteriorating and approaching the end of its useful life. With reconstruction on the horizon, the new road will be built to current design standards and will address existing safety issues. This will improve the safety and function of the corridor for all roadway users.

“Why are we changing the current 4-lane street into a 3-lane street?”

Research has indicated that converting from a 4-lane street to a 3-lane street significantly improves safety on the corridor. This is largely due to the addition of the center left-turn lane. *Recent crash data for the 4-lane sections of Ashworth Road has shown that the lack of a left-turn lane contributed to 40-50% of reported crashes.* Modifying to a 3-lane section would improve the sight lines for left-turning drivers and help them to see oncoming traffic and pedestrians, reducing the chances of a collision.

The current lane widths on Ashworth Road (9'-10' for most of the project) is below the standard 12'. In addition to being uncomfortable for drivers, it creates issues when snow or rain in the gutter effectively shuts down the use of the outside lanes, reduces the capacity of the road as drivers tend to avoid passing other vehicles, and leads to potential sideswipe crashes. *The narrower lanes and tighter corners were a contributor in 10-20% of reported crashes.* Modifying to a 3-lane section would allow for the standard 12' lanes to fit within the existing roadway width.

“Will converting to 3-lanes allow for extra space for things like bike lanes?”

In many locations where a roadway is being converted from 4-lanes to 3-lanes, there is extra space created that can be utilized for on-street parking, bike lanes, or medians/landscaping. However, due to the narrow width of the existing 4-lanes on Ashworth Road, there is no extra space available after converting to 3 standard-width lanes.

“Why is a shared use path recommended with this project?”

A shared use path along Ashworth Road would significantly enhance walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized modes. Currently, there are no shared use paths near the project. A shared use path would help connect people to existing shared use paths and provide a critical trunk line that sidewalks, future trails, and on-street bicycle facilities could branch off from. It would also take up less space and have less of an impact to neighboring properties compared to widening both sides of the street for on-street bike lanes.

“Where are some similar examples that operate as 3-lane streets?”

There are many 3-lane streets in West Des Moines and the rest of the metro area that currently operate with similar traffic volumes as Ashworth Road. Examples include:

- University Ave east of 86th St (Clive/Windsor Heights)
- Douglas Ave east of Merle Hay Rd (Des Moines)
- Beaver Ave north of Urbandale Ave (Des Moines)
- Grand Avenue from Glen Oaks to South 88th Street (West Des Moines)
- Mills Civic Pkwy from South 81st Street to South 91st Street (West Des Moines)