

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

STAFF: KATHLEEN KRAGER

PROJECT: CASCADE AVENUE PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE IMPROVEMENTS

APPLICANT: CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Project Description: The City of Colorado Springs Public Works Department is proposing to “right-size” Cascade Avenue through Colorado College to make it safer for students to cross while maintaining appropriate capacity for both existing and future traffic. The project will reduce the roadway section from four-travel lanes to two- from Uintah Street to Cache La Poudre Street and reduce the number of pedestrian crossings from four to two. The project will also allow the City to re-purpose one of the northbound travel lanes into a left-turn lane to better accommodate the turn volumes to Uintah. Additionally, the right-sizing of Cascade Avenue will allow the City to improve bike connectivity by installing bike lanes from the Uintah Street bike lanes to the Cache La Poudre bike lanes.

1. Planning and Development Team’s Recommendation: Support of the roadway safety project.

BACKGROUND:

1. Location: The project affects Cascade Avenue through Colorado College between Uintah Street and Cache La Poudre Street.
2. Comprehensive Plan/Designated 2020 Land Use: The area is recognized as a Major Institutional area on the 2020 Land Use map for the City of Colorado Springs.
3. Master Plan/Designated Master Plan Land Use: The area falls within the Colorado College Master Plan area (most recent major amendment approved in 2008) and the Imagine Downtown Master Plan area (adopted in 2009).

STAKEHOLDER PROCESS AND INVOLVEMENT:

The stakeholder process for this application includes a series of public meetings held in 2012 and 2013 and an open house held in May of 2016. City Staff has received input on the proposed work from a wide range of stakeholders.

ANALYSIS OF REVIEW CRITERIA/MAJOR ISSUES/COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & MASTER PLAN CONFORMANCE:

1. Review Criteria / Design & Development Issues:
Traffic counts have been conducted on Cascade Avenue several times over the past several years. The latest traffic count collected in April of 2016 indicates that approximately 10,600 vehicles per day are on Cascade Avenue between Uintah Street

and Cache La Poudre Street. This volume threshold is well within the 18,000-20,000 vehicles per day standard for a 2-lane roadway with similar characteristics. The oversized road results in higher travel speeds and the hidden car phenomenon where one car stops for a pedestrian but a vehicle in the adjacent lane does not because they do not see the pedestrian in the crosswalk. This type of accident is eliminated in a single lane condition.

The right-sizing project proposes to repurpose the two outside travel lanes of Cascade Avenue by converting them into buffered bike lanes. The project will also allow the City to utilize the repurposed space to extend the northbound left-turn lane at Uintah Street without modifying the historic medians. The northbound left-turn lanes already extend into the northbound travel lanes during peak traffic hours which results in single-through lane capacity for northbound traffic without excessive through lane queuing. The right-sizing of the roadway will improve driver expectation as motorists navigate through the intersection since through traffic will not be positioned in the left-turn lane nor queue.

Additionally, the right-sizing of this section will install bike lanes connecting the Uintah Street and Cache La Poudre bike lanes. Cascade Avenue is one of the Top 10 Bike Corridors as identified in the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments Regional Non-Motorized Study adopted in 2015. This proposal supports the recommendation from the study to develop Cascade Avenue as a primary corridor into core areas of downtown. Installing bike lanes on Cascade Avenue is one of the City's priority projects and is identified on the 2016-2019 Priority Bike Project List which was supported by the Active Transportation Advisory Committee and approved by the Citizens Transportation Advisory Board in May of 2016.

2. Conformance with the City Comprehensive Plan:

There are a number of objectives, policies, and strategies within the City's Comprehensive Plan that support the proposed project including:

Objective T 1: *Transportation Planning and Mobility*

Plan the City's transportation system to meet the present and future mobility needs of the community in a safe and efficient manner. Planning of the system will achieve a balance between improving mobility, increasing efficiency, maintaining safety and minimizing adverse impacts on adjacent areas.

Strategy T 102a: *Create a Balanced System*

Develop an integrated transportation system that includes a choice of modes and provides safe and convenient connections between modes.

Strategy T 201a: *Ensure Transportation System Compatibility with Adjacent Uses*

Design new transportation facilities and enhance existing transportation facilities to be compatible with adjacent land uses. Include neighborhood participation in design and implementation of these projects.

Strategy T 201e: *Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety*

Design pedestrian and bicycle facilities, including sidewalks, on-road lanes, off-road trails, connections, crossings, signals, and bridges to facilitate movement in a safe and efficient manner. Facilitate convenient and safe bicycle and pedestrian movement at crossings and traffic signals.

Policy T 202: Improve Mobility with Multi-Modal System

Plan and develop an integrated all-mode transportation system. Facilities and services will jointly serve all modes while respecting and maintaining the integrity of existing neighborhoods. Support and implement alternative modes and facilities to help maintain and increase Colorado Spring's attractive quality of life.

Strategy T 203c: Monitor Use of Alternative Modes

Monitor the use of alternative transportation options. Continue to refine policies and programs to support the use of such travel options.

It should be noted that a few of the same objectives, policies, and strategies listed above could be used to justify leaving Cascade Ave. as is to retain vehicular capacity through the campus.

3. Conformance with the Area's Master Plan:

The 2008 Colorado College Master Plan includes a series of maps illustrating the existing and proposed uses, buildings, and mobility network for the area. After significant stakeholder dialog and discussion at Planning Commission and City Council the three primary maps were approved with a note reading "additional Planning Commission and City Council review and approval is needed prior to any physical changes to public improvements, including Cascade Avenue, being implemented." Additionally, the Plan's third map, which focuses on changes to public improvements, highlights the Cascade corridor noting "significant modifications to Cascade Avenue will require public outreach and hearings at Planning Commission and City Council."

The text of the Colorado Master Plan, often referred to as the Long Range Development Plan (LRDP), also includes a number of sections that support the proposed changes to Cascade Avenue. Specifically, the section titled "Vehicular Circulation and Parking" includes a number of statements supporting the project including:

- "The College has a responsibility to provide safe passage in a pedestrian-oriented environment and has a desire to limit (to the extent possible) the reliance on the automobile by its students, faculty and staff." Though the plan also acknowledges the context of the campus in an urban area and its relationship to major transportation networks.
- Cascade Avenue "is also a safety concern to the College and its students, faculty and staff, as well as the Old North End Neighborhood as it divides the primary academic areas to the east of the street from the primarily campus life uses to the west – on a daily basis nearly all campus users will cross Cascade at least once. To improve the safety of both pedestrians and vehicles and to slow traffic, the Plan suggests traffic calming solutions be explored by City Traffic Engineering, City Planning and the broader community."

The Master Plan also includes sections confirming the historic significance of the Palmer Quadrangle, the historic cross-axes, and the existing and preferred pedestrian framework on the campus. The plan clearly supports the proposed changes to Cascade.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Item No: 16-389

Approve the proposed right-sizing of Cascade Avenue as required by the Colorado College Master Plan, based upon the finding that the roadway geometry complies with the Traffic Engineering Design Manual and will increase the safety of non-motorized users, including pedestrians and bicyclists, along N. Cascade Avenue between Uintah St. and Cache La Poudre St.