

RICHFIELD

Intersection

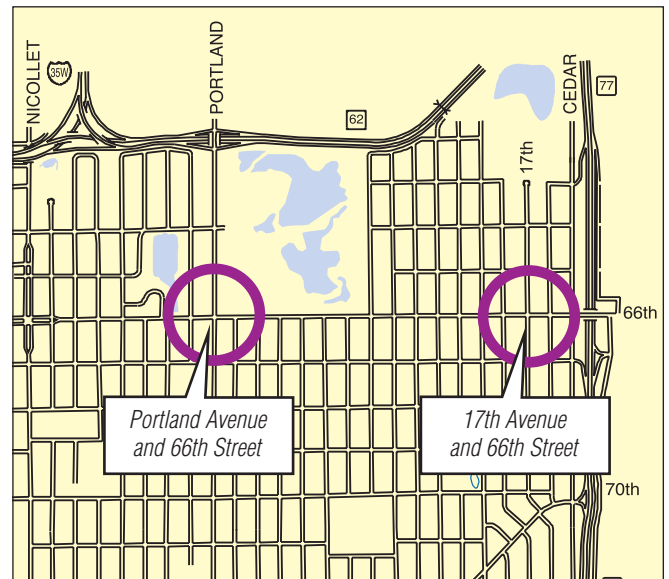
IMPROVEMENTS Q&A

City Holds August 10 Open House on 66th Street Intersection Improvements

The City will hold an open house on Wednesday, August 10, to provide information and receive feedback from the public on the need for improvements and alternatives being considered for two intersections – **66th Street and Portland Avenue**, and **66th Street and 17th Avenue**. The open house will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 6700 Portland Avenue.

Everyone is encouraged to come, view exhibits, talk to staff, provide your ideas on possible solutions, give us your feedback on options that have been developed, and fill out a comment sheet. Your participation is very important to these proposed projects.

This Q&A newsletter is divided into three sections. There is one section with questions on the 66th Street and Portland intersection and one section with questions on the 66th Street and 17th Avenue intersection. In addition, since each of the projects has a roundabout option, there is a separate set of questions on roundabouts with a roundabout diagram.



Top photo: Portland Avenue and 66th Street – ranked by Hennepin County as among the worst suburban intersections for safety based on number of crashes, frequency of crashes and cost of crashes. Four design options have been developed for review at the open house.

Bottom photo: 17th Avenue and 66th Street – which will need to be upgraded to meet traffic demands of the new Cedar Point retail center, and future development along the Cedar Avenue Corridor. Two design options have been developed for review at the open house.

66th Street and Portland Avenue

Q. Why are improvements needed at this intersection?

A. The 66th Street and Portland Avenue intersection has experienced a high number of crashes for many years. In fact, Hennepin County ranks it as the worst suburban intersection for safety based on three factors: the number of crashes; frequency of crashes; and cost of crashes. The intersection does not have left turn lanes, making it difficult to turn left and contributing to the high number of crashes. Traffic forecasts show steady growth in traffic during rush hour, increasing the congestion that already exists.

Q. Why is the City addressing this intersection now?

A. Fifteen years ago Hennepin County initiated an effort to address the 66th Street and Portland intersection, but that effort did not move forward. Since that time, the problem has gotten worse. In December 2004, the Richfield Transportation Commission began considering options to address the 66th Street and Portland Avenue intersection with an intersection improvement study. The City received \$1.9 million in federal funds for improvements to the intersection. That funding will expire if the City does not have final design plans ready for the intersection by Fall 2006.

Q. What is being proposed for the intersection of 66th Street and Portland Avenue intersection?

A. There are four different design options for the 66th Street and Portland Avenue intersection. All of the designs will be available for people to view at the open house. One of the options for the intersection is a roundabout and the rest are traditional signalized intersection designs with medians and turn lanes.

Q. Would homes or businesses need to be acquired to make improvements to this intersection?

A. Yes, any measure proposed to improve traffic flow at this intersection will require the acquisition of property that is fully developed. Any plan must be sensitive to existing businesses and residents who may need to relocate.

Q. How many properties would need to be acquired and what other impacts are there?

A. The open house will provide further information on the number of properties to be acquired under each of the options and any other impacts. The City would be required under federal law to acquire a certain number of properties because of the impacts of the improved intersection, such as noise. Plans for the intersection improvements will also include a discussion of possible reuse of any excess land that must be acquired in the area of the improvements but is not needed for the roadway.

Q. Are there other funding sources for this project in addition to the \$1.9 million in federal funds?

A. Yes. In addition to the \$1.9 million in federal funding, intersection improvements at 66th Street and Portland Avenue could include Transit Oriented Development grant funds from Hennepin County and Municipal State Aid funds (gas tax revenue) and other City funds.

Q. How can I stay informed?

A. Come to the open house on August 10th. There will be additional opportunities for public comments as described in the Next Steps section for each project. Also, updates will be provided on the City's Web site at www.cityofrichfield.org. If you have questions, you can contact Kristin Asher on road issues at 612-861-9795 or e-mail at kasher@cityofrichfield.org, or Bruce Nordquist on development at 66th and Portland at 612-861-9777 or e-mail at bnordquist@cityofrichfield.org. (See chronology on back page.)

ROUNDABOUTS



Q. What is a roundabout and how does it work?

A. A roundabout is a type of circular intersection where traffic travels in a counterclockwise direction around a center island. This circular intersection can be used in place of standard signal-controlled intersections with less delay and potentially safer conditions for motorists and pedestrians. Key features of a roundabout are:

- Yield at entry (giving priority to vehicles circulating in the roundabout);
- No parking (roundabouts prohibit parking on the circulating roadway and for a short distance on each approach; and,
- Driving circulation (all vehicles in a roundabout must circle to the right of the center island).

Q. Why is the City considering a roundabout for these two 66th Street intersections?

A. In the last ten years, cities throughout the United States have begun to build roundabouts at busy intersections. The roundabout design has been shown to provide many benefits over a standard signalized intersection, such as:

- Fewer and less severe accidents;
- Lower vehicle speeds;
- Fewer vehicle delays;
- Less vehicle pollution;
- Lower maintenance costs as compared to a traffic signal; and,
- Increased landscaping opportunities.

Q. Where are the nearest roundabouts?

A. The first two roundabouts in Minnesota were installed at the Medford exit off of Interstate 35 to handle increased traffic from the Medford Outlet Mall. Since then several other busy intersections have installed them, including one at Frost Avenue and English Street in Maplewood and one on Minnehaha Parkway in Minneapolis.

However, these locations have single-lane roundabouts. The roundabouts being considered on 66th Street are two-lane. Currently, there are no two-lane roundabouts in Minnesota, although there are some planned for the near future.

In general, there are about 40 roundabouts in Wisconsin near Madison and Milwaukee and roundabouts in Kansas, Nevada, Maryland and Colorado, many of which

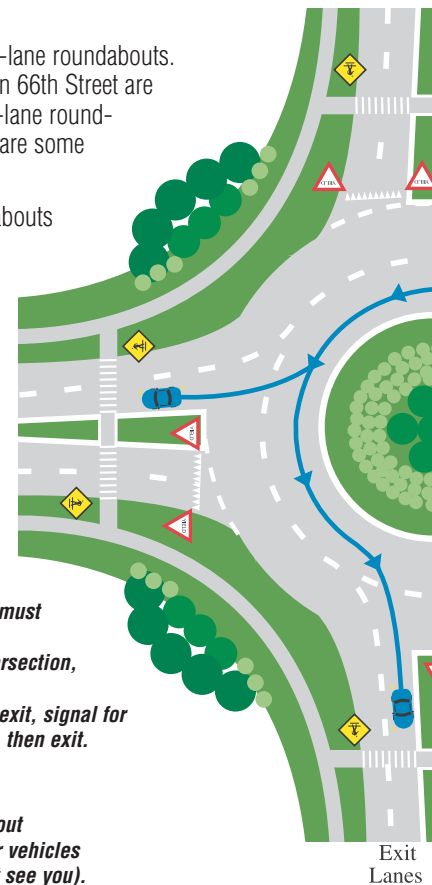
Tips for two-lane roundabouts

DO:

1. As you approach the roundabout, select the appropriate lane:
 - To turn right, you must be in the outside (right) lane.
 - To make a left turn or a U-turn, you must be in the inside (left) lane.
 - To continue straight through the intersection, you can be in either lane.
2. After passing the street before your exit, signal for a right turn, wait for a gap in traffic, then exit.
3. Be aware of traffic in the other lane.

DON'T:

1. Do not change lanes in the roundabout
2. Do not pass or drive alongside other vehicles (they may straddle lanes or may not see you).



66th Street and 17th Avenue

carry two-lanes. Currently across the U.S. there are more than 500 roundabouts installed and more planned. Recently, the Minnesota Department of Transportation approved the use of two-lane roundabouts in Minnesota.

Q. If roundabouts are so good, why weren't there more of them installed in the past?

A. The predecessor of the modern roundabout - the circular intersection - was somewhat common in the U.S. and in Europe in the early 1900s. In the early years, no uniform traffic laws were in place because traffic volumes were so low at the time, none were needed. In 1913, Wisconsin became the first state to adopt the "yield to right" rule, giving right of way to entering vehicles. However, as traffic volumes increased, the early circular intersections would "lock up." Many early circular intersections were removed as a result.

However, the British continued to refine and advance the concept with research leading to advancements in curvature design in entry and exit points, lower speeds, and the adoption of the "yield at entry" rule in 1966. These advancements and refinements resulted in increased safety, increased capacity, and reduced delay and have led to increased adoption of roundabouts in the U.S. and in Europe over the past 20 years.

Q. Do roundabouts require more property acquisition than traditional intersection options?

A. In both the case of 66th Street and Portland Avenue and 66th Street and 17th Avenue, the roundabouts would not require more land than the more traditional signalized intersection options. In fact, in the 66th Street and Portland Avenue case the roundabout will require less land to be acquired.

Q. How do pedestrians use roundabouts?

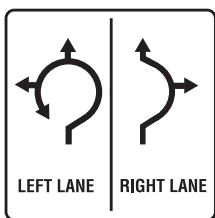
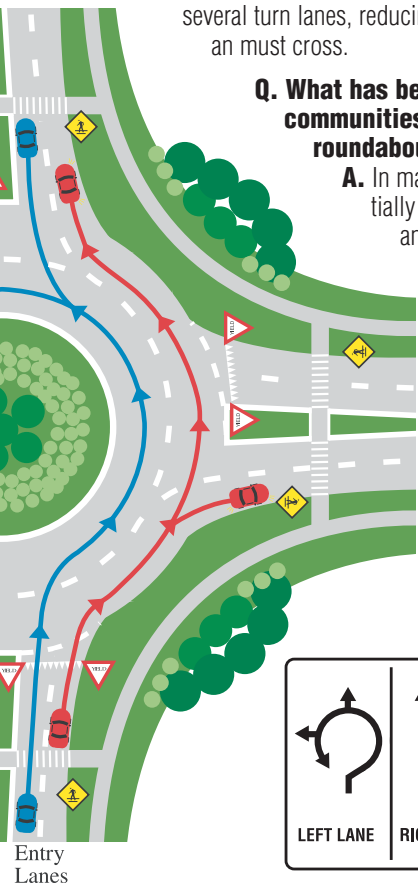
A. Pedestrians do not cross into the center island of the roundabout but cross the street on the outside perimeter of the roundabout (as shown). A roundabout reduces the conflict points between vehicles and pedestrians as well as lowering the speed of vehicles. Using an island in the roadway, a roundabout provides a pedestrian with a refuge area and allows pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time. In addition, a roundabout eliminates the need for several turn lanes, reducing the number of lanes that a pedestrian must cross.

Q. What has been the experience of other communities in the U.S. and in Europe with roundabouts?

A. In many cities, roundabout proposals initially have been met with public skepticism and negative press. However, opinions have generally changed once a roundabout is constructed and the public is given time to adjust. Roundabouts are growing in popularity because of their safety and capacity advantages.

Q. How can I learn more?

A. Come to the open house on August 10. If you have questions, you can contact Kristin Asher on road issues at 612-861-9795 or e-mail at kasher@cityofrichfield.org.



Typical lane control signage for a two-lane roundabout

Graphics provided by the Center for Transportation Research and Education
Iowa State University

Q. Why are improvements needed at this intersection?

A. The intersection at 66th Street and 17th Avenue will need to be upgraded to meet traffic demands of the new Cedar Point retail center in addition to future development along the Cedar Avenue Corridor as part of the Airport Mitigation Plan. The Airport Mitigation Plan calls for commercial/office development along the west side of Highway 77 to act as a noise buffer for residential areas. The plan created a new intersection at the entrance to the commercial shopping area with a new north-south road that will separate residential from commercial and office land uses. Without a plan for the intersection and entrance to Cedar Point, the commercial traffic may cause congestion on 66th Street and conflict with residential development located west of 17th Avenue.

Q. Why is the City addressing this intersection now?

A. The City and HRA have entered a final development agreement with Ryan Companies for the Cedar Point commercial development and construction is scheduled to begin in Spring/Summer 2006. Improvements to the 66th Street and 17th Avenue intersection can ensure adequate capacity to handle the traffic generated by the new Cedar Point development. The roadway improvements would be constructed simultaneously with the construction of the development.

Q. What is the Cedar Point Development?

A. The Cedar Point Development will include a Super Target, a Home Depot, and 60,000 square feet of additional commercial space and restaurants. It will be located between 17th Avenue and Cedar Avenue, north of 66th Street and south of Taft Park.

Q. What is being proposed at the 66th Street and 17th Avenue intersection?

A. There are two designs for the 66th Street and 17th Avenue intersection and both of these design options will be available for people to view at the open house. One of the options is a roundabout and the other is a traditional signalized intersection design with medians and turn lanes.

Q. Would homes or businesses need to be acquired to make improvements to this intersection?

A. Yes, any measure proposed to improve traffic flow at this intersection will require the acquisition of property that is fully developed. Any plan must be sensitive to existing businesses and residents who may need to relocate.

Q. How many properties would need to be acquired and what other impacts are there?

A. The open house will provide further information on the number of properties to be acquired under each of the options. The City would be required under federal law to acquire a certain number of properties because of the impacts of the improved intersection, such as noise. Plans for the intersection improvements will also include a discussion of possible reuse of any excess land that must be acquired in the area of the improvements but is not needed for the roadway.

Q. How would these intersection improvements be funded?

A. The 66th Street and 17th Avenue improvements would be funded through funds that could come from the developer, Transit Oriented Development grant funds from Hennepin County, Metropolitan Airport Commission funds, State bond funds and City funds.

Q. How can I stay informed?

A. Come to the open house on August 10th. There will be additional opportunities for public comments as described in the Next Steps section for each project. Also, updates will be provided on the City's Web site at www.cityofrichfield.org. If you have questions, you can contact Tom Foley on road issues at 612-861-9791 or e-mail at tfoley@cityofrichfield.org, Patrick Smith on Cedar Point development at 612-861-9779 or e-mail at psmith@cityofrichfield.org. (See chronology on back page.)

Chronology: 66th Street and Portland Avenue

1990 – High crash rates at the intersection lead Hennepin County to initiate an effort to develop support for improving the intersection. The Richfield City Council chooses not to proceed with improvements at that time.

1990s to present – The intersection of 66th Street and Portland Avenue is ranked one of the highest suburban intersections in number of crashes, cost of crashes and frequency of crashes, according to Hennepin County.

2000 – City receives \$1.9 million in federal funds for improvements to intersection, but must be in final design plans by Fall 2006 or lose the funds.

December 2004 – Richfield Transportation Commission begins a traffic and land use study, focusing on potential improvements at 66th and Portland.

July 25, 2005 – Richfield Planning Commission studies alignment options that result in land use changes due to possible improvements at 66th Street and Portland Avenue.

NEXT STEPS

August 3, 2005 – Richfield Transportation Commission considers four design options and four different alignment alternatives for the intersection in preparation for a public hearing on September 7, 2005, to obtain community feedback.

August 10, 2005 – Open house is held at Richfield City Hall at 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to provide information and receive public comments on the need for the project and possible additional solutions.

August 22, 2005 – Richfield Planning Commission recommends alignment (land use) alternative for possible improvements at 66th Street and Portland Avenue.

September 7, 2005 – Richfield Transportation Commission holds public hearing on 66th and Portland project at Richfield City Hall at 7:00 p.m. to obtain public comments on four design options and four different alignment alternatives.

October 5, 2005 – Richfield Transportation Commission makes recommendation to City Council on preferred design type and alignment alternative on 66th Street and Portland Avenue.

October 25, 2005 – City Council considers recommendation by Transportation Commission on proposed improvements to 66th Street and Portland Avenue intersection.

November 2005 – City begins to purchase properties and relocates property owners if City Council approves project.

2007 or 2008 – Construction of improvements occurs at 66th Street and Portland Avenue.

Chronology: 66th Street and 17th Avenue

1996 – Minnesota State Legislature selects the existing airport site over the Rosemount site for airport expansion. Richfield City Council begins to develop an Airport Mitigation Plan that would mitigate the noise impacts of the airport expansion along the Cedar Avenue Corridor.

June 2004 – Ryan Companies proposes the Cedar Point Development – placing the commercial buildings on the west side of the Cedar Point property with the back of the buildings adjacent to 17th Avenue. The new entrance on 66th Street was proposed to be located close to 18th Avenue.

Late 2004 – City holds open house to receive feedback on land use design issues for the Cedar Avenue Corridor, including consideration of intersection improvements at 66th Street and 18th Avenue.

February 2005 – Ryan Companies submits a revised site plan for Cedar Point Development that moves the commercial buildings to the east side of the Cedar Point property so the front of the buildings face 17th Avenue. The City responds by relocating the new entrance on 66th Street close to 17th Avenue. City generates two design alternatives for the new intersection.

NEXT STEPS

August 10, 2005 – Open house is held at Richfield City Hall at 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. to provide information and receive public comments on the need for the project and possible additional solutions.

August-October 2005 – Ryan seeks land use approvals and environmental approvals for Cedar Point Development.

September 7, 2005 – Richfield Transportation Commission considers alternatives and evaluation criteria for possible improvements at 66th Street and 17th Avenue.

September 14, 2005 – Second Open house is held 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Richfield City Hall to receive feedback on options being considered for the intersection and evaluation criteria.

September 28, 2005 – Transportation Commission holds public hearing on proposed improvements at 66th Street and 17th Avenue.

October 5, 2005 – Transportation Commission makes recommendation to City Council on preferred design type and alignment alternative on 66th Street and 17th Avenue.

October 25, 2005 – City Council considers recommendation by Transportation Commission on proposed improvements to 66th Street and Portland Avenue intersection.

Spring/Summer 2006 – Ryan Companies purchases 33 properties and relocates property owners. HRA purchases six properties and relocates property owners. Then, construction begins on the Cedar Point development and simultaneously on the intersection improvements.

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