

Policy Briefing Summary

City Council



Regarding:	Move Safely Blue Ridge Regional Safety Action Plan and East High Street Demonstration Project Alternative Selection
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Presenter:	Ben Chambers, Transportation Planning Manager
Date of Proposed Action:	June 2, 2025

Issue

Background / Rule

The United States Department of Transportation ("USDOT") established the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act to fund initiatives to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. This Program provides \$5 billion dollars over five (5) years toward planning and projects that are aimed at that goal. USDOT supports localities with funding for comprehensive safety action plans, and in 2023, awarded the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission ("TJPDC") with funding to begin a Regional Safety Action Planning effort, called [Move Safely Blue Ridge](#). Move Safely Blue Ridge takes a detailed look at historical crash trends throughout the region, identifies emphasis areas and high-risk locations, evaluates policies and programs, and provides guidance on implementation.

Within the Study, special emphasis was placed on safe access for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users within the urbanized area, and particularly within the City. While many of the findings within the rural parts of the region are focused on roadway and automobile safety improvements, the array of mode choices in the City presents a different set of challenges for transportation safety. During the course of the Study, areas within the City where these mode options conflicted were highlighted, including at the intersection of East High Street and Meade Avenue. The Move Safely Blue Ridge Study scope included the design of a Demonstration Project within the City, and this location was identified as a candidate for testing potential options that could be implemented within the context of a larger, more permanent solution to the safety concerns.

Analysis

The Move Safely Blue Ridge Project Team will provide an overview of the Regional Safety Action Plan. This Plan identifies key areas of concern across the region's transportation network and provides recommended strategies with aims to meet adopted jurisdictional safety targets, including City Council's adopted targets of eliminating roadway fatalities and halving the number of serious injuries by 2045. The Project Team is sharing the Final Plan with each participating jurisdiction's governing body and requesting adoption as the Region's Safety Action Plan. Adoption of this Plan allows the region and its individual localities to apply for federal funding through future rounds of the Safe Streets and Roads for All Program for implementing projects. The final version of the Plan can be viewed at movesafelyblueridge.com.

As a test of the strategies identified in the Plan, the Move Safely Blue Ridge Project included planning work for a Demonstration Project at a location identified through the Project's safety analysis. Roadway and pedestrian safety concerns at the intersection of East High Street and Meade Avenue were identified by City Staff and the Project Team as an ideal candidate for this temporary

Demonstration Project.

The Move Safely Blue Ridge Project Team developed three alternative designs for the Demonstration Project area, all with the goals of improving pedestrian crossings and visibility at the Meade Avenue intersection and move left turn movements onto Meade Avenue to an area with better visibility. These design alternatives were shared with the public to collect feedback, through an Open House at Burnley Moran Elementary on February 25, 2025, and an online survey, open between February 14 to March 6, 2025. The public engagement effort collected 368 responses through paper and online surveys, with most (257 responses) supporting one (1) of the two (2) options that would allow for one (1)-way northbound traffic on Meade Avenue at East High Street. While the surveys did not include an option for "none of the above," 81 respondents did indicate through their responses that they would prefer that option.

The proposed City Staff-recommended alternative for the East High Street Demonstration Project is a refinement of Option 2 from the public Open House and survey, with changes adopted based on public feedback. This design alternative would turn off the street signals at East High Street and Meade Avenue and install a new temporary stoplight at the intersection of East High Street and Stewart Street. The ability to turn left from East High Street on to Meade Avenue would be removed, and only northbound traffic on Meade Avenue would be allowed at the intersection. A temporary left turn lane on East High Street would be marked at Stewart Street, along with temporary crosswalks. The northbound approach of Meade Avenue would be made perpendicular to East High Street and a temporary crosswalk would be installed. South of the intersection, bi-directional travel on Meade Avenue would be allowed, with no impacts to parking. Included refinements to this option following public feedback include the provision of an all-way stop at the intersection of Meade Avenue and Stewart Street, an additional crosswalk at the East High Street and Meade Avenue intersection, and refinements to driveway impacts.

The Demonstration Project will be implemented on a temporary basis (up to sixty (60) days) to test changes to traffic and pedestrian volumes, turning counts, and speeds, as well as perceived safety conditions. An additional survey to collect feedback on the test will be made available several weeks into the deployment of the Demonstration Project. City Staff anticipates deploying the Demonstration Project during the upcoming summer months, scheduled in part to avoid traffic volumes and delay impacts that are associated with the school calendar.

Results from the Move Safely Blue Ridge Demonstration Project, as well as the recommended strategies of the Action Plan itself, will inform future Grant Applications to address conditions. This will provide additional support for pursuing funding for some of the City's more difficult sidewalk and safety priorities, including those in the East High Street corridor.

Move Safely Blue Ridge Regional Safety Action Plan process has had three (3) rounds of public engagement since the Project began in December 2023. This outreach effort has included a Regional Safety Summit, two (2) rounds of online surveys, multiple rounds of public and virtual Open House meetings, and dozens of pop-up events. Initial design alternatives for the Move Safely Blue Ridge Demonstration Project were shared with the public to collect feedback, through an Open House at Burnley Moran Elementary on February 25, 2025, and an online survey, open between February 14 to March 6, 2025. An additional survey will be released during the implementation of the Demonstration Project.

Financial Impact

The Move Safely Blue Ridge Safety Action Plan and associated Demonstration Project would not result in any direct budgetary impact. Existing capital funds for Neighborhood Transportation Improvements would be used for implementing the Demonstration Project.

Recommendation

City Staff recommends City Council adopt the attached Resolution for deployment of the temporary Demonstration Project at the intersections of East High Street, Meade Avenue, and Stewart Street, as developed through the Move Safely Blue Ridge Safety Action Plan Project and detailed as proposed in the City Staff recommended alternative, for up to sixty (60) days.

Adoption of a Regional Safety Action Plan allows City Staff to pursue federal funding for implementing projects through the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program.

Support for design and public engagement for the development of the Demonstration Project alternative were included in the Project Scope of the Move Safely Blue Ridge Regional Safety Action Plan. Existing funds under Neighborhood Transportation Improvements will be used for the implementation of the Demonstration Project.

Recommended Motion (if Applicable)

"I move adoption of the attached Resolution for deployment of the temporary Demonstration Project at the intersections of East High Street, Meade Avenue, and Stewart Street, as developed through the Move Safely Blue Ridge Safety Action Plan Project, and detailed as proposed in the City Staff recommended alternative, for up to sixty (60) days."

Attachments

None