I-376 Parkway East – Squirrel Hill Interchange Improvement Project
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

A public meeting was held on February 20, 2025, at Greenfield Elementary School, in the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, to provide the public an opportunity to review three alternatives that were developed to improve the safety and congestion within the Squirrel Hill Interchange on I-376 - Parkway East. The goal of the meeting was to listen to concerns and obtain feedback on the alternatives to guide the decision on which alternative to move forward with. The following questions were heard during the meeting and received through the public comment forms submitted at the meeting, through the mail, and online between 2/14/2025 and 3/27/2025.

Ramp Design

- **What is the existing acceleration distance for the Eastbound on-ramp before the tunnel and how does that compare to each alternative?**
    - Given the stop sign at the bottom of the ramp, there is technically zero acceleration length before the merge for the existing condition.

      The acceleration length, provided as a lane parallel to the mainline Parkway before the merge taper, is as follows for each of the alternatives:
        - Alternative B: 470 ft
        - Alternative D: 700 ft
        - Alternative F: 1115 ft

- **Did the project team consider closing the eastbound on-ramp, either permanently or during the afternoon rush hour to improve Interstate traffic flow?**
    - This idea was not included in the evaluated alternatives. The project team understands that this was something that occurred years ago, but based on current traffic volumes and property development that has occurred since that practice, it is not something that the Department feels is a feasible option.

      Ramp Metering can be used to mitigate the spacing of traffic merging into the mainline interstate in lieu of closing the on-ramp during peak hours, and will be investigated for the eastbound on-ramp during preliminary engineering.

- **What is Ramp Metering, and will it be considered in this project?**
    - Ramp metering is a traffic management strategy that includes the installation of traffic signals installed on freeway on-ramps to control the frequency at which vehicles enter the flow of traffic on the freeway. Ramp metering reduces overall freeway congestion by managing the amount of traffic entering the freeway and by breaking up platoons that make it difficult to merge onto the freeway. Ramp metering of the eastbound on-ramp will be evaluated on the preferred alternative in Preliminary Engineering to determine feasibility and operational effects on both the interstate and the local streets

(Beechwood Boulevard, Greenfield Bridge, Forward Avenue). For more information about ramp metering, please see the following: https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop14020/sec1.htm

- **Why not relocate only the eastbound on-ramp to the west and leave everything else in place?**
  - This would not accomplish the project's Purpose and Need. Due to topographic conditions, the elevation distance between Beechwood Boulevard and I-376, and the Greenfield Bridge structure, the farthest that that the eastbound on-ramp could be shifted to the west is 400'. A shift of 400' would neither eliminate the weave condition with the eastbound off-ramp, nor improve the congested traffic flow and unsafe conditions resulting from the weave condition with the eastbound off-ramp. This also would not improve the high-speed transition from the eastbound off-ramp to Beechwood Boulevard. In addition, there are other features of the interchange, such as the tight radius of the westbound off-ramp that are problematic, that wouldn't be improved if only the eastbound on-ramp was addressed.

- **Will this interchange project impact the Greenfield Bridge?**
  - No, this project will not impact the Greenfield Bridge. While the eastbound off-ramp would begin west of the Greenfield Bridge in each alternative, the bulk of the proposed changes to the interchange occurs to the east of the bridge.

- **Were large trucks taken into consideration on the layout of the alternatives?**
  - Larger vehicles and semi-trucks were considered for the widths of the turning roadways and the intersection radii of each of the alternatives. Truck turning templates were used for various-sized trucks to ensure maneuverability.

- **What will prevent drivers from entering exit ramps in the wrong direction, particularly when they are lined up with an opposing roadway at a signalized intersection?**
  - "Wrong Way" and "Do Not Enter" signs will be installed at all exit ramps. As the design progresses, an intelligent Wrong-Way Detection System will be considered.

Traffic Signals

- **How do additional traffic signals improve traffic flow? How do they reduce the travel time?**
  - The travel times are projected to improve for these reasons:

    1. The signals help to organize traffic flow and improve the flow of traffic through multiple intersections with coordination between the signals.
    2. Traffic signals will also reduce excessive delay for side street traffic as they would otherwise have to wait for gaps in free-flowing traffic in the absence of a traffic signal.
    3. Additional lanes are provided near the intersections for higher volume movements, which improves the flow of traffic along Beechwood Boulevard.

4. Left turn lanes also remove left-turning vehicles from the traffic stream, which can block through movements in the existing unsignalized free-flow conditions of Beechwood Boulevard.

These findings are supported by traffic modeling that was performed for the existing road network and each of the alternatives (for the Design Year 2048).

The proposed traffic signals are expected to provide a safer transition for drivers between the freeway and neighborhood and accommodate safer crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- **Why is the Design Year 2048 used in the traffic modeling?**
  - It is industry standard to base the design year 20 years after the originally anticipated completion/opening year for a project to forecast the traffic volumes. The traffic volumes are based on a travel demand model that incorporates land development and growth in the area, such as the Bates Street area and the Hazelwood Green site.

    Each alternative and the no-build condition is compared using the same forecasted traffic volumes. The travel time comparisons shown in the presentation are the reduction in travel time for each alternative compared to the travel time in 2048 if no improvements are made to the interchange (no-build).

Roundabouts

- **Can roundabouts be constructed instead of the other proposed signalized intersections?**
  - The project team has performed an initial Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) for each of the intersections proposed in all of the alternatives to verify that the proposed type (uncontrolled, yield-controlled, stop-controlled, signalized, or roundabout) of intersection control proposed is appropriate for each site. This takes into consideration the location of the intersection and the area context, current and future traffic volume, basic roadway characteristics and land use, and available right-of-way, among other things. Through this initial evaluation, it was determined that signalized intersections are the best option for most of the intersections, as identified in the alternative graphics. Once an alternative is selected, the project team will perform higher level Intersection Control Evaluations on each of the intersections to verify the current findings.

- **For the proposed roundabout at the Beechwood Boulevard/Monitor Street intersection, there are two eastbound Beechwood Boulevard lanes that enter the roundabout, with one lane continuing on Beechwood Boulevard and one lane continuing around the roundabout to Monitor Street. If there is no physical separation, such as a barrier, between the lanes, how will aggressive drivers who use the left lane to bypass the congestion and make late lane changes to avoid congestion be mitigated?**
  - At this time, it is anticipated that signing and pavement markings will be used to advise motorists of lane designation to align them in the proper lanes approaching the

roundabout. As the design progresses, other means to mitigate aggressive drivers will be evaluated.

- **How is pedestrian safety accommodated at the proposed roundabout?**
  - Motorists will be required to yield to pedestrians at the designated crosswalks with striping and signage that will be provided to cross both Beechwood Boulevard and Monitor Street at the roundabout intersection.

    Curbed splitter islands separate entering and exiting traffic near the roundabout so pedestrians will only cross one direction of traffic at a time and will have a safe refuge area to pause in between crossing entering traffic and exiting traffic. Crosswalks will be provided on roundabout approach legs with the fewest number of travel lanes for pedestrians to cross.

    Roundabout curvature is designed to intentionally reduce vehicle speeds (at or below 20 mph) as they approach a roundabout to encourage yielding to circulating vehicles and pedestrians. Per FHWA guidelines, crosswalks are placed approximately 25 feet from the edge of the circulatory roadway to allow pedestrians to cross behind a yielding vehicle. Vehicle speeds are relatively slow in these locations.

    Other features that may be considered to improve pedestrian safety at the roundabout are roadway lighting, pedestrian-activated devices such as LED edge lit signs or Rapid Flash Beacons, or raised "speed table" type crosswalks that offer more visibility along with slower speeds that can encourage vehicles to yield to the pedestrians. These additional features will be evaluated once the project moves into the Preliminary Engineering phase.

- **Can on-street parking be maintained within the roundabout area. Several houses within the intersection do not have driveways or other access to parking.**
  - On-street parking cannot be provided within the circulatory roadway within the roundabout intersection. However, the roundabout will be designed to maximize on-street parallel parking outside of the circulatory roadway along the residential sides of each approach and departure lane of the roundabout. This includes the area along Beechwood Boulevard that currently has on-street parking restricted. Additional options for on-street parking in this area will be considered as the design progresses.

Beechwood Boulevard Local Lane

- **If the Beechwood Boulevard local lane shown in Alternative F were implemented in Alternative B, would the additional parking provided in the local lane offset the 3,100 feet reduction in on-street parking in Alternative B?**
  - No, the addition of the local lane would not offset all of the on-street parking eliminated in Alternative B. With the addition of the local lane, the existing on-street parking in that area is shifting from the existing curb line to the opposite side of the local lane. This

shift would only increase the amount of on-street parking by the width of the driveway openings, which is much less than the anticipated reduction in parking for Alternative B.

Additionally, the majority of the on-street parking that would be eliminated in Alternative B is not in the area of the local lane. Instead, it is eliminated near the intersection of Boulevard Drive to provide the necessary turning lanes and intersection capacity.

- **Since adding the one-way local lane is feasible on all three alternatives, how much does that change things like right-of-way acquisition, cost, etc.?**
    - Adding the one-way local lane would not have a significant impact on additional right-of-way acquisition since the addition of the residential street would shift Beechwood Boulevard into the area currently occupied by the existing ramps. However, it would result in a moderate increase to construction and future maintenance costs, as there would be additional construction of pavement, possible drainage pipes and inlets, street lighting, etc.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

- **Can the potential shared-use path be connected to Pocusset Street or the Greenfield Bridge?**
    - The potential shared-use path is anticipated to be a direct connection from Forward Avenue to Saline Street. A spurred connection to Pocusset Street or the Greenfield Bridge is not anticipated to be constructed by PennDOT as part of the Squirrel Hill Interchange Improvement project due to the additional impacts to Schenley Park, a Section 4(f) and 6(f) resource. The design team has determined a feasible alignment for a connection to Pocusset Street, which will be provided to the City for future consideration.

- **Can dedicated bike facilities be added on Beechwood Boulevard between Forward Avenue and the Greenfield Bridge?**
    - Dedicated bike facilities cannot be provided for the entirety of Beechwood Boulevard and Forward Avenue because the limited availability of right-of-way and existing roadway width does not provide the opportunity to widen the roadway beyond the width necessary for the operational demands for vehicular travel lanes, on-street parallel parking lanes, and adjacent pedestrian accommodations. For alternatives that add the one-way residential street parallel to Beechwood Boulevard, a sidewalk and separated bike lane are feasible and recommended along the relocated portion of Beechwood Boulevard, between Forward Avenue intersection and the residential street egress intersection. It is anticipated that the appropriate pavement markings and signage, such as “sharrows” will be included on Beechwood Boulevard to alert motorists to bicyclists.

Right-of-Way Impacts

- **Will my property or the home I am renting be impacted by the project?**
    - The design team will make an effort to minimize property impacts for this project. Following environmental clearance and if your property is impacted by the project, your first contact will be a letter informing you that your property will be affected. You will also be personally assigned a Real Estate Specialist to answer any questions you may have and/or explain all of the benefits to which you may be entitled. The value of your property will be determined by a State Certified Appraiser. Local real estate trends and the value of comparable properties will be taken into consideration when determining the value of your property which you will be offered as Just Compensation. Future Public Meetings will include more information on the state's right-of-way process and the relocation benefits for eligible homeowners, tenants and businesses.

Noise Mitigation

- **Will noise walls be included in the project? Please also consider noise during Construction.**
    - A preliminary noise study will be performed during Preliminary Engineering, after a preferred alternative is selected. The findings of the preliminary noise study will determine if noise abatement is warranted, feasible and reasonable.

      Moving forward, the design team will also consider the effects of temporary construction noise, daytime and nighttime work, and construction duration.

Other Projects

- **Will the Department improve the Bates Street Interchange to provide access for all directions to alleviate the demand at the Squirrel Hill Interchange?**
    - There is a study underway to evaluate the cost-benefit analysis of improving the Bates Street Interchange, including providing the missing ramps (Eastbound/outbound off-ramp and Westbound/inbound on-ramp). Once that study is complete, it will be determined what, if any improvements will be developed into a construction project. Any improvements that come from the study will not be part of the Squirrel Hill Interchange Improvement project, but would be addressed through separate project(s).

- **How does the timing of this project compare to other projects in the area and along the Parkway? Will all of the projects occur at once, or one after another? Will this project be in construction for years?**
    - The Commercial Street Bridge project located on the Parkway on the other side of the Squirrel Hill Tunnels is currently under construction and is slated to be completed in the summer of 2027. The Squirrel Hill Interchange Improvement project is anticipated to start construction in 2029 and will likely last three years. As this project proceeds through Design, there will be coordination between other adjacent construction

projects, including the Parkway East Bridge over Four Mile Run, the City's Swinburne Bridge Replacement projects and others, to limit conflicting traffic impacts.

Other Topics

- **Can speed humps be installed on Beechwood Boulevard now as a short-term solution while the interchange project is being designed to slow down traffic?**
    - The City of Pittsburgh's Department of Mobility and Infrastructure has a Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, and any requests for speed humps on City streets should be coordinated through that program. For more information, please refer to: https://www.pittsburghpa.gov/Resident-Services/Road-Maintenance/Road-Safety/Traffic-Calming