



52nd Street and NW Radial Hwy

VIRTUAL BLOCK TALK



MAPA

52nd Street and NW Radial Hwy Virtual Block Talk

MAPA's mission is to provide local governments with planning and technical support, thinking regionally and long range on the core issues that impact the vibrancy of the Greater Omaha-Council Bluffs area. Facilitating Block Talks is just one of many ways MAPA is here to promote vibrant places to live, work and play.



In coordination with the Nebraska and Iowa Departments of Transportation and member communities, MAPA maintains a Safety Dashboard (safety.mapacog.org) which displays fatal and all injury crashes within the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. Figure 1 below shows pedestrian and bicyclist crashes for the period 2015-2020 along and near Northwest Radial Highway. In coordination with the City of Omaha, the Nebraska Department of Transportation, and local community members, MAPA conducted a series of block talks to engage and collaborate between the local community and policy and decision makers.

Most Severe Injury at Location

- Fatal Injury (K)
- Suspected Serious Injury (A)
- Suspected Minor Injury (B)
- Possible Injury (C)
- Block Talk Route
- Bus Stops

2016 - Bicycle

2017 - Pedestrian

2016 - Pedestrian

2016 - Pedestrian

2015 - Pedestrian

2016 - Pedestrian

2019 - Pedestrian

2017 - Pedestrian

2017 - Pedestrian

2017 - Pedestrian

2015 - Pedestrian

2020 - Pedestrian

2017 - Pedestrian

2020 - Bicycle

2015 - Pedestrian

52nd St

NW Radial Hwy

Bedford Ave

Maple St



FHWA | Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian Initiative

Under the Every Day Counts Initiative, FHWA is promoting the Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian (STEP) process which provides tools and best practices for the “Systemic application of cost-effective countermeasures with known safety benefits can help reduce pedestrian fatalities at both uncontrolled and signalized crossing locations.”¹

The FHWA STEP Studio is a toolkit that can be used to assist municipalities in identifying appropriate countermeasures for improved pedestrian safety (slide 3 of the toolkit is shown in Figure 1 below).

Figure 2: FHWA STEP Studio Selection Process

1 COLLECT DATA AND ENGAGE THE PUBLIC



Collect pedestrian crash and safety data

Review existing highway safety plans

Initiate a pedestrian safety action plan

Pedestrian safety policy analysis

Request and receive public input

Conduct a walkability audit

2 INVENTORY CONDITIONS AND PRIORITIZE LOCATIONS



Inventory roadway characteristics and pedestrian crossings

Conduct crash cluster analysis

Conduct systemic analysis

3 ANALYZE CRASH TYPES AND SAFETY ISSUES



Create crash diagrams

Identify crash factors

Conduct an RSA

4 SELECT COUNTERMEASURES



Review Table 1 (roadway features)

Review Table 2 (safety issues)

Review Table 3 (implementation & operations considerations)

5 CONSULT DESIGN AND INSTALLATION RESOURCES



MUTCD Guidance

AASHTO & State Guidance

Local and Other Guidance

6 IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES AND MONITOR OUTCOMES



Identify implementation opportunities

Consider funding options

Construct improvements

Monitor results of implementation

 Click a topic to learn more

The MAPA Block Talk is designed to accomplish Step 1 in the process 1.) *Request and Receive Public Input*, and 2.) *Conduct a Walkability Audit*.²

¹ FHWA. (2020). Center for Accelerating Innovation. Every Day Counts: Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_5/step2.cfm

² FHWA. (2020). STEP STUDIO: Tools for selecting and implementing countermeasures for improving pedestrian crossing safety. https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/step/resources/docs/step_studio.pdf



MAPA conducts Block Talks as a public engagement presentation to introduce stakeholders and citizens to experience the built environment from the perspective of vulnerable road users (defined here as elderly, disabled, or children that walk, bike, or scoot). The walk audits are designed to help participants identify strengths and weaknesses of the infrastructure in an area and initiate conversation between members of the community, policy makers and organizations responsible for roadway maintenance and operation. Walks look at the sidewalk and road design and how it relates to businesses and activities along the street. This report provides an assessment of public input from a Virtual Block Talk along NW Radial Hwy and 52nd Street focusing in particular at their intersection.

Participants were asked to rate each segment of street and provide feedback at specific stops that highlight some general concern from the area. This feedback will then be shared with stakeholders and partners to confirm or update organizations who were considered to be responsible for the development of projects, policies, or programs related to the comment.

The Block Talks were conducted in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Transportation and the City of Omaha Traffic Engineering to initiate the STEP process and involve the respective agencies early in the process.

Partner Organizations

Benson Neighborhood Association

The Benson Neighborhood Association strives to build community by connecting neighbors, fostering civic involvement, supporting business, and promoting a safe, vibrant neighborhood while celebrating our rich, diverse history.

Benson BID

The Benson Business Improvement District is responsible for raising funds to maintain and improve the Benson business district. They hold regular meetings for local businesses, maintain a directory, events calendar, and newsletter. The BID works to provide members with funding for projects and improve the physical landscape of Benson including the streetscape.

BFF

BFF is a nonprofit founded to promote art and inclusion in Benson and Omaha as a whole. They are dedicated to creating spaces for art throughout Omaha by bringing artists, businesses, volunteers, organizations, and the community together to create spaces through engagement and interaction.



City of Omaha Traffic Engineering and Maintenance

The mission of the City of Omaha Traffic Engineering Division is to provide for the safe, environmentally compatible, and efficient movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles through the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of traffic control systems.

The duties of the division include planning and design of traffic facilities, reviewing development plans as well as funding and administering 56,000 street lights. As described on their website, the Traffic Division oversees the placement and maintenance of the pavement markings on the City's streets, including bike lanes, parking stalls, and crosswalks, in addition to striping on over 1,160 miles of streets.³

Nebraska Department of Transportation

The mission of the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) is to provide the best possible statewide transportation system for the movement of goods and people. NDOT collaborates with local, state, and federal partners to improve roadway safety and reduce the number of fatal and serious injury crashes in Nebraska.

Federal Highway Administration - Nebraska Office

The local field offices for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Division provide leadership, guidance, and direction to State Departments of Transportation in the project development and delivery of transportation projects. Working collaboratively with State partners, FHWA Division Offices ensure that the nation's roads, bridges and tunnels are safe and continue to support economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Evolution of the Block Talk

In the fall of 2019, MAPA began to work with the City of Omaha and the Nebraska Department of Transportation to facilitate public outreach to better understand pedestrian and bicycle traffic along the Maple Street corridor. The first of several Block Talk events was held February 12, 2020. Unfortunately, the in-person event was poorly attended due to a snowstorm and particularly cold weather. Feedback from stakeholders later revealed that the distance of the Block Talk route, location for the walk, and the overall time commitment of the Block Talk (2 hours) as well as a single, scheduled event time made it difficult for people to attend. Therefore, MAPA was fortunate to have already been working towards the development of virtual (both

³ City of Omaha Public Works. Pavement Markings.

<https://publicworks.cityofomaha.org/residents2/traffic-engineering/traffic-signals-signs-markings-and-street-lights/pavement-markings>

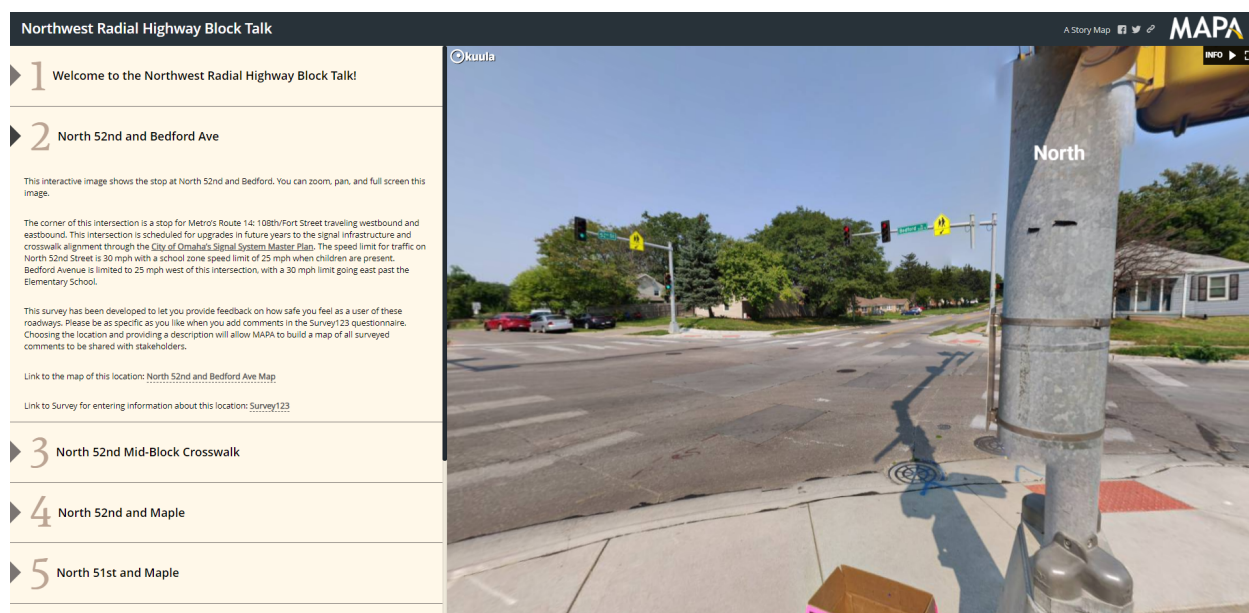


online self-access and facilitated) Block Talks prior to the impacts brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtual Tools

In order to make Block Talks more accessible and allow for social distancing, MAPA staff developed virtual Block Talks that allow for participants to virtually travel along the corridor. Participants can examine key points and intersections in depth with 360° virtual images both through the facilitator's shared screen or on their own link.

Figure 3: N 52nd Street and Bedford Avenue Facilitated Block Talk StoryMap Page



Participants then choose a numeric score to give the stretch and provide comments, similar to an in person Block Talk with facilitators recording comments on an intine survey tool. The Survey123 tool within ArcGIS Online allowed visitors to select a specific location on a map and provide their feedback. This input is then used to generate a map of the comments which was used to inform the facilitated Block Talk.

The facilitated Block Talks made use of the Google JamBoard collaboration tool. Facilitators could use this tool to collect comments from participants. Sharing this JamBoard on their screens during the virtual meeting streamlined the recording of comments, and allowed other MAPA staff members to add them to the Survey123 record.



Facilitated Block Talk

The facilitated virtual Block Talk was held the evening of October 20th on Zoom. The online virtual survey had been open for two weeks prior to facilitated Block Talk, and was left open for the remainder of October. Ten members of the public participated in addition to stakeholder agencies, and were broken into three groups to consider individual intersections with MAPA facilitation and input from NDOT, City of Omaha, Omaha Public Schools, and FHWA staff. Responses were recorded via Survey123 forms and Jamboard with each group reporting the main issues and solutions found for their segment. The evaluated intersections with overall scores (Lowest -1 to Highest -10) and number of identified safety issues are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Pedestrian Safety Evaluated Intersections and Segments



Summary of Public Comments



The most common concerns noted in both the self-guided and facilitated session were traffic speed and volumes. These concerns were typically mentioned in conjunction with comments regarding sidewalks being too narrow and/or close to the curb creating a sense of discomfort for pedestrians. The absence of, or degraded condition of crosswalk markings at intersections, and the long crossing distances for pedestrians (due to the large number of lanes and intersection skew). Finally, the lack of dedicated left-turn signals and protected movements at 56th and NW Radial Hwy often result in drivers' making risky, high speed turns in gaps or through the red light where they are less focused on pedestrians or bicyclists than oncoming cars.

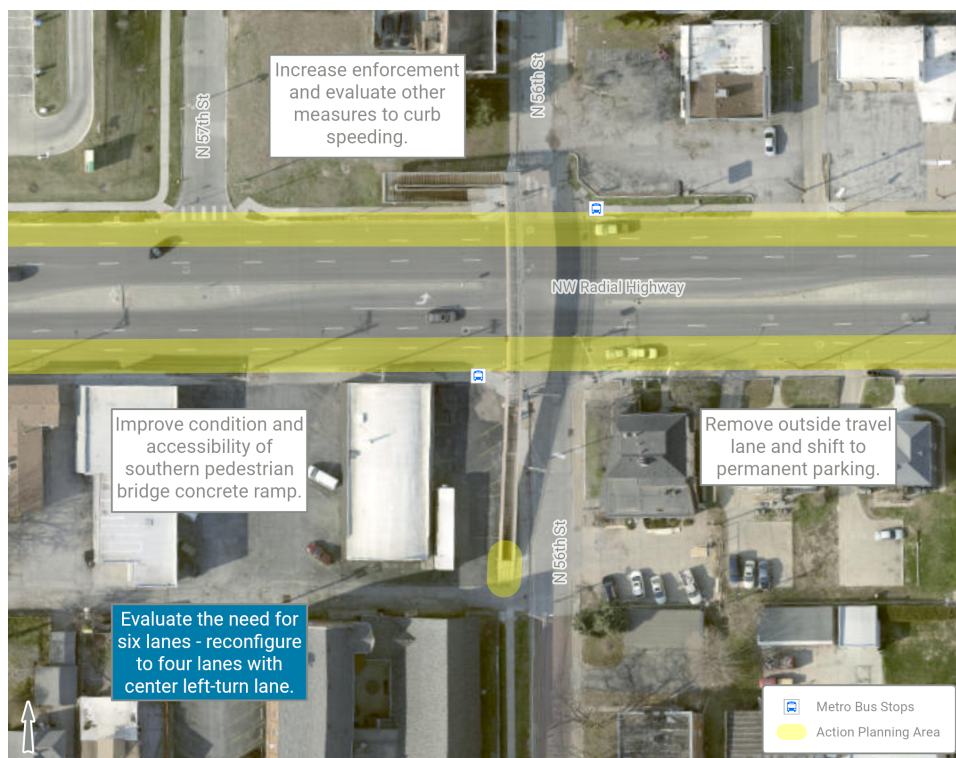


56th Street and NW Radial Hwy

The intersection at 56th Street features a pedestrian bridge allowing passage from north to south across NW Radial Hwy. The speed limit is 30 mph on NW Radial Hwy and 25 mph on N 56th Street. NW Radial Hwy is a six-lane section with raised median and left turn lanes in each direction. The outer lane can be used for parking outside the hours of 7 - 9 am in the eastbound direction on both sides of the intersection. Street parking is also available to the east of the pedestrian bridge in the westbound lanes outside of the hours of 4 - 6 pm.

Figure 5 below illustrates the recommendations for potential improvements to enhance pedestrian safety. The group noted that many elementary students use the pedestrian bridge at 56th Street to cross NW Radial Hwy. Some of those surveyed noted they didn't take the bridge due to fear resulting from being able to see through the metal walkway grating, and others noted that upkeep of the concrete at each landing was overdue. Overall, use of the bridge given the current configuration and operation of NW Radial Hwy was supported by those surveyed, but during the action planning phase one long-term recommendation was to remove the bridge or rebuild it to be more comfortable and accessible for users. If the bridge were to be removed, recommendations included providing refuge islands for pedestrians, setting the sidewalks back further and providing more greenery along the roadway. Additional lighting could also be provided at this location.

Figure 5: Map of Action Planning Project Responses at N 56th St and NW Radial Hwy



Country Club Ave and NW Radial Hwy

The signalized intersection at Country Club Ave is the first intersection west of 52nd St and NW Radial Hwy, and sits at the southwest corner of Gallagher Park. To the east of this intersection parking is allowed on Northwest Radial Highway in the outside lane during non-peak periods (7 am to 9 am eastbound and 4 pm to 6 pm westbound) which impact the number of lanes with moving traffic. Eastbound vehicles are not allowed to turn right during the morning rush (7 am - 9 am) and trucks over 6 tons licensed gross weight are prohibited from turning at any time. Northbound traffic on Country Club Ave is also prohibited from turning right from 7 am to 9 am. The speed limit on Country Club Avenue is 25 mph. This intersection provides access to local churches and businesses. Metro stops sit on the southwest and northeast corners for travelers taking Route 14 or Route 4 along NW Radial Highway.

Figure 6 below shows the recommended improvements to the second intersection along the Block Talk route. A few attendees noted that they would choose to cross at this intersection to avoid the challenges of crossing at N 56th Street and NW Radial Hwy intersection, which is one block to the west. The signals for this intersection are scheduled to be completely rebuilt in 2022 or 2023.

Figure 6: Map of Action Planning Project Responses for Country Club Ave and NW Radial Hwy



52nd Street and NW Radial Hwy

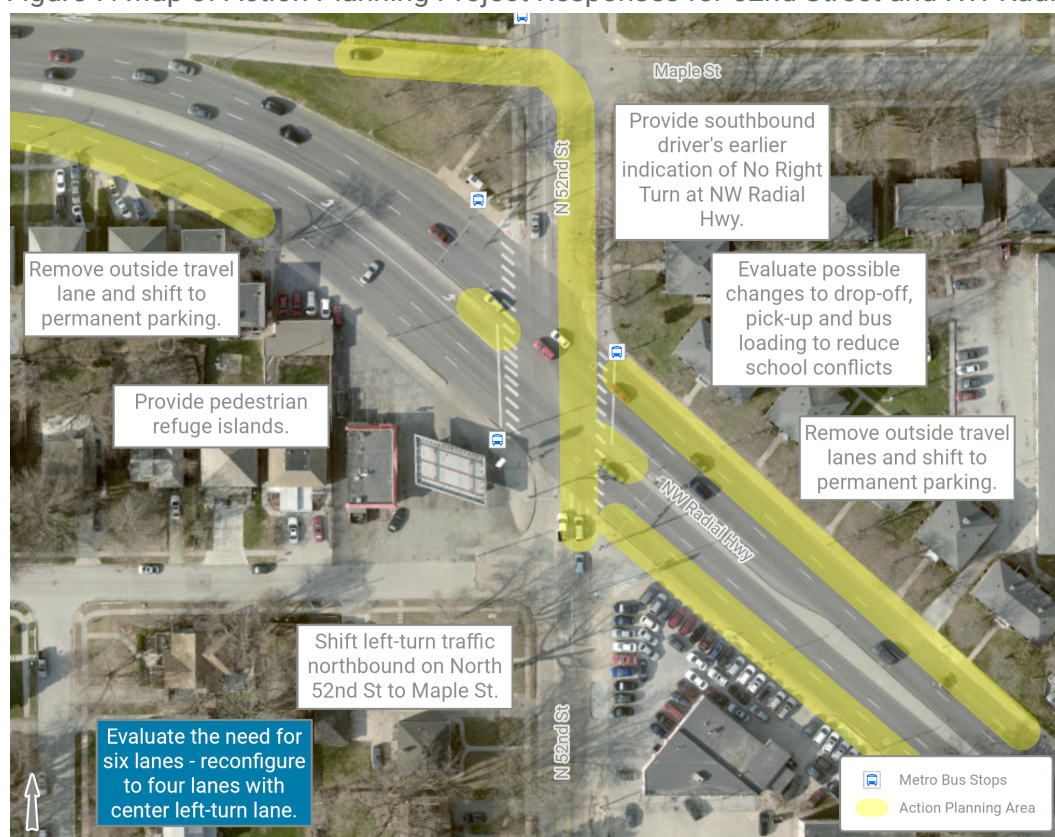
The speed limit on Northwest Radial Highway throughout this walk is 35 mph. Three through-lanes are provided in each direction, with a dedicated left turn for drivers' wanting to proceed both northbound or southbound on North 52nd Street. Traffic on North 50th Street has a single through-lane, and dedicated left turn lanes for drivers wanting to turn onto Northwest Radial Highway. Parking is allowed in the outside lanes of NW Radial Hwy in both directions on the east side of the intersection, with north-side parking being limited to 2 hours. Parking is also allowed outside the hours of 7 - 9 am in the outer, eastbound lane west of 52nd St. Bus stops are located on NE, NW, and SE corners of the intersection.

The skewed nature of this intersection impacts both drivers and non-motorists, and the resulting challenges featured throughout the discussion during the facilitated session. Pedestrians and bicyclists crossing NW Radial Hwy have a significant distance to travel, and are competing with both north and southbound left-turning vehicles. As previously mentioned, right turns are prohibited from 52nd Street onto NW Radial Hwy which sometimes comes as a surprise to drivers, causing last minute adjustments when entering the intersection. Lots of activity (both automobiles and foot traffic) at the gas station was listed as a consideration, particularly as school lets out in the afternoon. Finally, speeding along NW Radial Hwy seemed to be an issue day or night.

Recommended improvements included consideration of a dedicated left-turn signal, along with signal timing changes which improve pedestrian crossing. The addition of a pedestrian refuge and reducing the through-lanes to four and providing parking and dedicated bike lanes. Finally, if traffic signal upgrades were not possible for the left-turn movement, it was recommended that left turning traffic could instead proceed through the intersection and turn left at Maple St.



Figure 7: Map of Action Planning Project Responses for 52nd Street and NW Radial Hwy



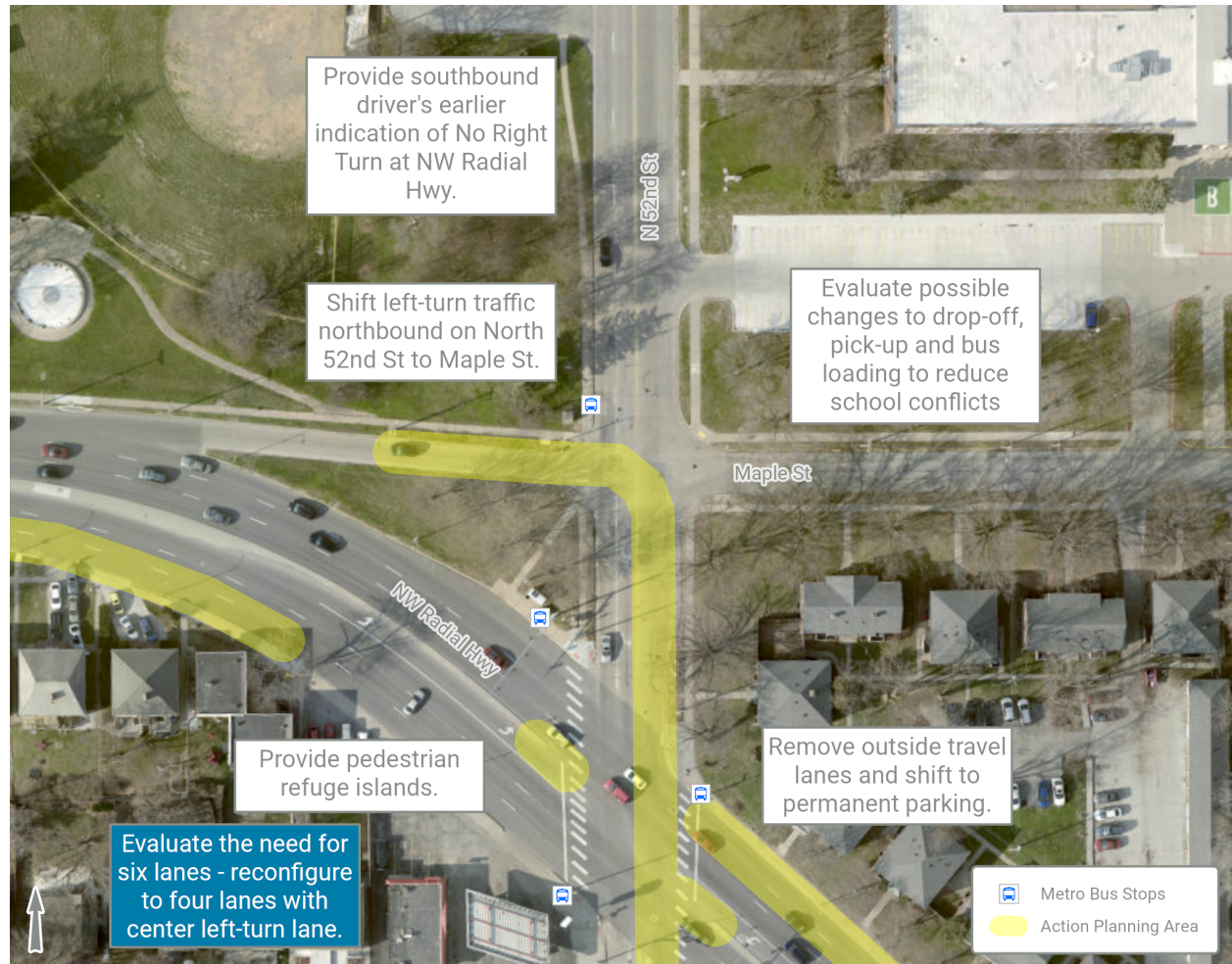
52nd and Maple Street

The intersection of 52nd and Maple Street is stop-controlled, with a stop sign only applying to westbound vehicles. The lack of controls on 52nd Street, combined with the close proximity to Gallagher Park and Benson High School parking lots, as well as intersection with NW Radial Hwy, creates conflicts, particularly at school drop-off and pick-up. N 52nd St is a speed limit of 30 mph, with a school zone limiting speed to 25 mph when children are present. There are two southbound lanes on N 52nd St, with one being clearly signed as a left turn only to accommodate traffic turning onto NW Radial Hwy. The northbound section widens to provide a right turn lane at Maple St but then continues as a single lane with no parking allowed. The lane width remains constant, with a right turn lane being striped as traffic passes through the pedestrian crosswalk to the north.

Attendees noted that westbound drivers often drive aggressively to find gaps through the intersection to travel westbound via the one-way access to NW Radial Hwy on the west side of the intersection. Although signs direct vehicles on 52nd Street to not block the intersection, it was noted to happen fairly frequently, as traffic competing for access to the school compete with school buses and drivers having completed the drop-off or pick-up of their children.



Figure 8: Map of Action Planning Project Responses for 52nd and Maple Street



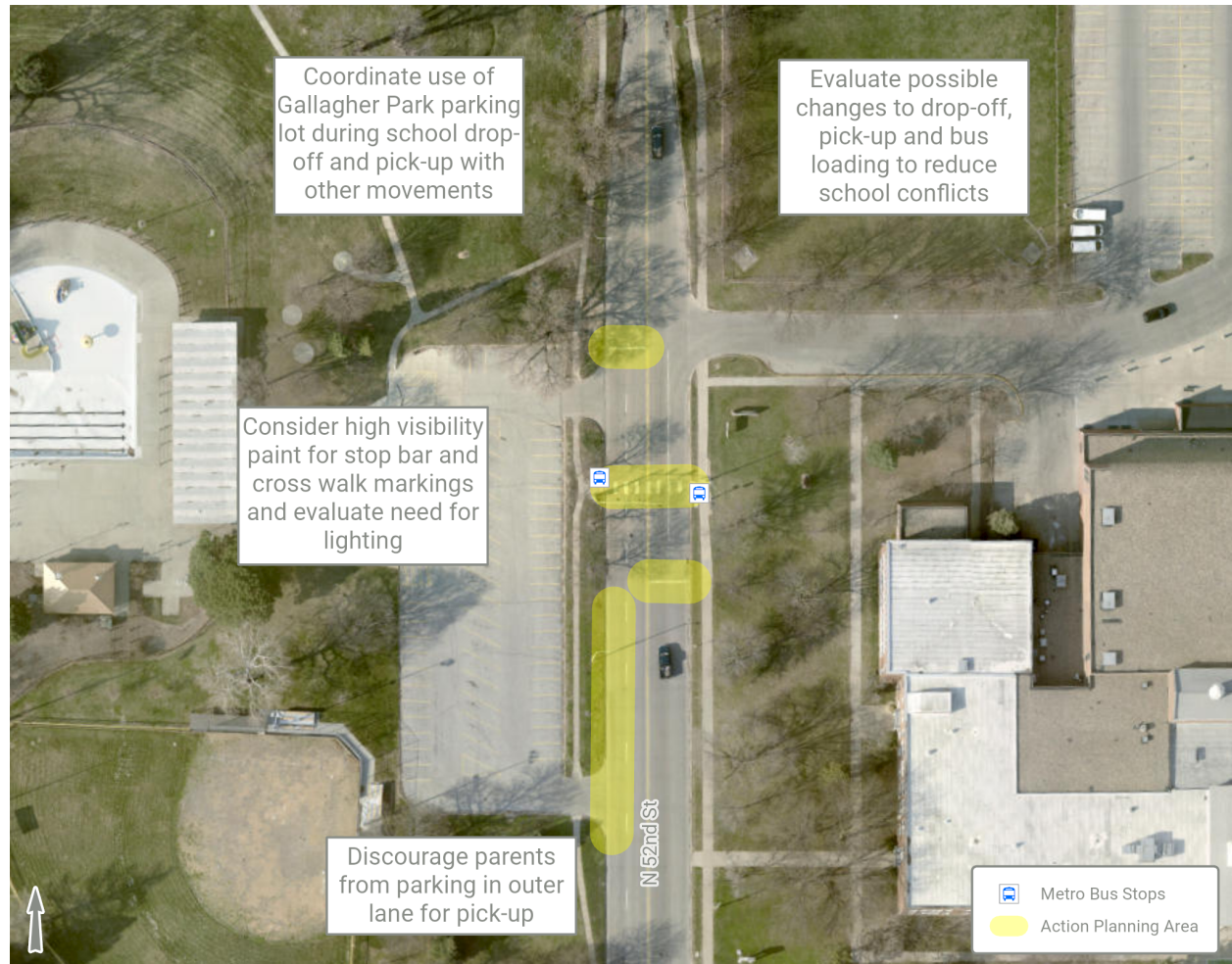
52nd Street Mid-Block Crossing

A push-to-cross pedestrian signalized crossing is located roughly 400 feet north of the Maple St intersection, and provides access to Gallagher Park, the Gallagher Swimming Pool, and Benson High. This marked crosswalk spans four lanes of traffic, with dedicated right turn markings beginning just south of the crossing to provide access to the primary parking for Benson High School. This location also serves as a bus stop for Metros Route 14 in both directions.

Recommended improvements at this location include the addition of lighting and consideration of higher visibility markings. As many attendees noted, the area around the crosswalk sees heavy traffic during dropoff and pickup times, with parents using the Gallagher Park parking, as well as choosing to park in the outside lanes of N 52nd St in the no-parking zones.



Figure 9: Map of Action Planning Project Responses for the 52nd Midblock Pedestrian Crossing



52nd Street and Bedford Avenue

This signalized four-way intersection sits at the northwest corner of Monroe Middle School. N 52nd St narrows as it proceeds north towards the intersection, and both north and southbound traffic is now limited to a single lane, with a dedicated left turn lane. The speed limit on N 52nd St remains the same at 30 mph with the 25 mph school zone. Bedford Ave is a two lane road with a speed limit of 25 mph to the west of the intersection, and 30 mph with a school zone limited to 25 mph to the east of the intersection. Parking is not permitted on either side of Bedford Ave until much further east of the intersection, where it is allowed on the north side of the road.



Figure 10: Map of Action Planning Project Responses for 52nd and Bedford Avenue



Action Planning Synopsis

Notes on Process

The action planning process establishes broad categories of Projects, Programs, and Policies, and identifies notional short and long-term periods to focus discussion. The complete set of pedestrian safety comments and potential solutions will be provided separately to the City of Omaha Public Works and NDOT participants. MAPA maintains a record of these comments for future use in safety planning and regional project selection processes.

NW Radial Corridor-Wide Considerations

A consistent set of comments across the three virtual groups and in the online comments are described here.

First, a recommendation to evaluate the need for six-lanes, given the changing nature of the roadway, noting the potential for safety improvements from road reconfiguration. Specifically, the option to apply a road diet to NW Radial Highway reducing the travel lanes to four through lanes with a center left turn lane was discussed. This reduces the crossing distance for pedestrians, and reduces the number of oncoming lanes a left-turning driver must consider when looking for a gap. This also provides the opportunity to commit to permanent parking, removing confusion for drivers and providing an opportunity to repurpose the outer lane where parking is not in demand.

A second theme was the confusion experienced by drivers due to the parking and prohibited turning movements at various locations and times of the day along the corridor. Specifically, several intersections allow for left turns but current turning volumes are insufficient to warrant a protected left turn phase. The prohibition of right turns at several intersections causes issues when unfamiliar drivers approach the intersection to turn but do not see the indication until they have passed other opportunities to turn earlier to get on to NW Radial Highway in their desired direction. A related conversation within all groups was the challenge of providing sufficient parking and smooth flow of traffic for an anecdotally growing number of parents dropping off and picking up their children at Omaha Benson High Magnet School and Monroe Middle School.

Related to signal improvements, the signals along this block talk route are scheduled for review and updates in Phase F1 of the City of Omaha Signal System Master Plan. Pending funding availability, this work could occur as soon as 2026. The one exception is the signal at Country Club Avenue and NW Radial Highway which is planned for improvements in the 2022-2023 timeframe. The City of Omaha is responsible for maintaining crosswalk paint and other intersection pedestrian amenities. Intersections are inspected annually but residents can also report discrepancies through the Mayor's Hotline.



Post Workshop Survey

After the virtual facilitated Block Talk, MAPA sent participants a survey to gauge their experience of giving feedback, using zoom, using the survey tools, and the structure of the meeting. Overall, the responses were positive with people feeling comfortable with the technology and that their input was received and would be acted on. Of the 8 participants 3 provided feedback

Table 10: Post Workshop Survey Results

Question	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
How would you rate your virtual block talk experience?	0% 0	50% 1	50% 1	0% 0	0% 0
How user friendly did you find the technology?	50% 1	50% 1	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0
How likely are you to recommend attending a Virtual Block Talk to others?	50% 1	50% 1	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0

More Opportunity for Input

MAPA is currently requesting public input on projects submitted for federal funding through the Transportation Improvement Program. This annual process provides the public an opportunity to comment on individual projects submitted by cities and counties within the MAPA region. You can find all the proposed projects at this [link](#), and in particular, the City of Omaha's [Cumming St/NW Radial Hwy/Military Ave Corridor Study](#).

The Highway 75 Corridor and Freight Strategy study will identify feasible, planning-level concepts that meet study mobility, safety, and community goals. You can find out more here at <https://mapacog.org/highway75/> with an opportunity for public input in Spring, 2022.

A Heartland 2050-funded study for 2022 will update the City of Omaha's Bike and Pedestrian Plan. Details of the study are still being finalized, but look for opportunities later this year to provide your input.

