

# Mathis Avenue Improvements

## Public Engagement Phase Comment and Response Document

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### INTRODUCTION

The City of Manassas published preliminary design plans and renderings of the Mathis Avenue in early February 2022. Following this, two public information meetings were held. First a virtual meeting was held via Zoom on February 23, 2022, then an in-person meeting was held at the Prince William Islamic Center at 9002 Mathis Avenue on March 17, 2022. The public had the opportunity to share comments or questions at each meeting or through a comment submission portal on the [project website](#).

The following is a summary of the comments and questions received during this public engagement process. They are arranged according to topic and include comments received during public meetings, via comment submission portal, and directly sent to the City's project manager. The City has provided responses accurate as of the publishing of this document. Any further questions about the project not addressed below may be submitted to City staff via this linked [Mathis Avenue comment submission portal](#).

### PUBLIC COMMENTS

#### Comment 1

*What funding is allocated to this project?*

#### Response

As of July 1, 2022, there are \$1.677 million of local Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) funds allocated to the project.

#### Comment 2

*Do we have timeline for construction start date?*

#### Response

The construction start date will depend on the award of funding for the project. If funding is awarded through the BUILD Grant the City has applied for, construction would be anticipated to begin in 2024.

#### Comment 3

*Will the street be shut down during construction?*

#### Response

The street will remain open to two-way traffic as much as possible during construction. There will be periodic lane closures utility installation or other short-term work, but the street will remain open to 2-way traffic for the majority of construction.

#### Comment 4

*Has a traffic study been done to determine the effects of reducing the road by one lane in each direction? And, if so, the results?*

Response:

Yes, a traffic study was conducted on this project, primarily to determine the impact of the removal of the center turn lane. No through lanes will be eliminated. The goal of the project is not to reduce capacity. The conclusion of the traffic study states the following: "Based on the data analysis and results described in this document, the proposed configuration of Mathis Avenue will operate at acceptable levels of delay and queuing under both Existing and Ultimate Build land use scenarios."

Comment 5

*Mathis Avenue is a major thoroughfare for folks traveling between Liberia and Sudley Rd. Has a traffic study been conducted to see how eliminating the center turn lane will back up traffic from people turning into those businesses that line Mathis Ave?*

Response:

A traffic study has been conducted by the design team and is posted on the project website. In the analysis of the ultimate condition, the traffic study states the following:

"Capacity results also indicate that the mainline delay along Mathis Avenue is less than 2 seconds for all uncontrolled northeast-bound and southwest-bound movements. This indicates left and right turns from Mathis Avenue to driveways do not significantly impact through-movement capacity with the removal of the two-way left turn lane.

Comment 6

*What is the traffic count from this street?*

Response

Average daily traffic varies within the corridor from 8,500 to 11,200 vehicles per day.

Comment 7

*What about the line of site at intersections and driveways, how is that being accounted for.*

Response

In the next stage of design, the team will be analyzing sight triangles to verify adequate sight distance is provided at all entrances and crossovers. This will also help to determine final locations of landscaped items.

Comment 8

*Please consider the following comments regarding the Mathis Ave project:  
Recommend a design speed of 20 mph with a 20 mph speed limit. 20 mph is a safe speed for an electric bicycle to coexist on the roadway with vehicles. To achieve this, please consider raised intersections and speed humps/table (<https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/street-design-elements/vertical-speed-control-elements/speed-hump/>)*

Response

City staff have reviewed the request to reduce the speed limit to 20 mph on Mathis Avenue. It has been determined that the speed limit should remain at 25 mph at this time. Altering the speed limit would contradict assumptions of the traffic study for the corridor. Speed tables or speed humps are not included in the design at this time. If speeding is found to be prevalent and causing safety concerns on the corridor following construction, additional traffic calming measures may be incorporated at a later date.

Comment 9

*Can we lower the speed limit of Mathis Avenue to 15 MPH? There is a concern for bike travel and scooter travel throughout the road.*

Response

City staff has reviewed the request to reduce the speed limit and has determined that the speed limit should remain 25 mph at this time. The median, street trees, crosswalks, and short curb returns will all act as passive measures to lower natural vehicle speed. But reducing the speed limit would conflict with assumptions made in the traffic study developed in the concept phase of the project and could change traffic patterns within the corridor.

Comment 10

*As a daily commuter using the Mathis every day, I'd like to add my opinion regarding the rendered plan view at the starting point of the project.*



Response

The traffic study completed evaluated queueing lengths at all of the intersections in the corridor, including Sudley Road. It found the ultimate condition to have average queueing lengths in the PM peak hour of 215 feet for this left turn movement and 120 feet for the straight through movement. This would require more storage than is provided in the current design. The design will be evaluated for possible solutions.

Comment 11

*At the intersection of Reb Yank, can there be a left turn space to accommodate queues?*

Response

The traffic study reviewed queueing for these movements and found them to be minor and not causing significant delays in the corridor.

Comment 12

*Consider Short Left-Turn Lanes at Reb Yank Drive and Carriage Lane*

*The advertised design does not include any space in the center of the roadway (beyond the intersection itself) to store vehicles waiting to turn left at Reb Yank Drive (from both directions) or southbound at Carriage Lane. While shortening the raised medians to add short left-turn pockets at those three locations could increase travel speeds along Mathis Avenue and could*

*also remove the proposed median refuges for crossing pedestrians at those unsignalized intersections, it may be prudent to add those left-turn pockets to smooth traffic flow, reduce traffic congestion, and lower the incidence of rear-end collisions at those locations. However, if traffic studies have already documented that those left-turn pockets are unnecessary, then please retain them.*

Response

The traffic study conducted at the concept design stage showed that no left turn lanes are warranted at the intersection of Reb Yank Drive, thus facilitating the pedestrian refuge in the median.

Comment 13

*How many mid-block curb cuts are being eliminated for the pedestrian activity and are the entrance radii being modified to reduce speed.*

Response

The number of private entrances will be slightly reduced. Most entrances will not be reconstructed, so radii will remain the same. Radii for curb returns that are reconstructed will be as small as possible while accommodating the design vehicle.

Comment 14

*The bus stop hub is currently located here. It's important to remember that local buses that support the business need to be considered.*

Response

Agreed, the City is coordinating this design with OmniRide/PRTC. Bus pullouts are likely not feasible due to right-of-way and utility constraints, but the City's goal is to provide shelters at bus stops along the corridor.

Comment 15

*Will the driving lanes will be wide enough for two cars to pass side-by-side? The graphic makes it appear as though the driving lanes will only be wide enough for one car to travel at a time. That may be an issue if a vehicle becomes disabled as other vehicles following won't be able to hop the curb along the side of the road or the median to pass by.*

Response:

Vehicle lanes are designed to be 10' wide and there will be a single travel lane in each direction, so passing slower vehicles will not be permitted. We do not anticipate disabled vehicles being a major concern due to the frequent driveways allowing them to exit the travel lanes and adjacent roadways allowing temporary alternate routes.

Comment 16

*Are there any discussions regarding bike lanes in this corridor?*

Response

As part of the City of Manassas TMP, the bike route has been identified as Portner Avenue for this area of the City. There have been discussions about bike lanes in the corridor. The constraints of this project are to maintain the existing curb lines for budgetary reasons, so we were not able to include bike lanes as part of this project. The Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM) includes provisions to require a two-way cycle track on the west side of Mathis Avenue with redevelopment.

#### Comment 17

*I am strongly opposed to the current new design. I have been bicycling nearly every day on Mathis Avenue for 17 years from my home in Manassas to my job in Chantilly. Currently, motorists can legally pass me by moving over to the turn lane to give me the required 3 feet of minimum passing distance. It appears that under the new design, they will not have this option. Thus, angry motorists will be forced to stay behind me for the entire length of the street, or attempt to pass me illegally. Both scenarios dramatically decrease my safety. Under the Virginia Code Title 46.2-800 et seq, bicyclists have the same rights to the road as motorists.*

#### Response

The City agrees that cyclists have the same rights to the road as motorists. Due to budget and right of way constraints, the proposed design maintains existing curb lines and does not widen the roadway. Construction of the median would narrow the street to 10-foot lanes, making it impossible for vehicles to pass bicycles.

To set appropriate expectations for motorists, the corridor will be marked and signed as a shared roadway, incorporating shared lane pavement markings (“sharrows”) and warning signs. Additionally, the [Article 9-520.4](#) of the Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM) now includes requirements that redevelopment along Mathis Avenue incorporate a two-way cycle track.

#### Comment 18

##### ***Bicycling Accommodations and Roadway Design Speed***

*The lack of bike lanes (or any alternative bicycle facilities) in this project is disappointing but is also understandable since the existing curbs are not being moved to keep the existing storm sewer infrastructure in place, to minimize costs and commercial property impacts. However, without bike lanes, the construction of raised medians will degrade bicycling conditions substantially, and those degraded conditions are unlikely to be remedied by a future roadway widening when the corridor is eventually redeveloped.*

*Presently, motorists can readily safely overtake people riding bicycles on Mathis Avenue by passing in the two-way central left-turn lane. The raised medians, however, will prevent motorists from overtaking bicycle riders, who typically travel at 10-16 MPH. Thus, people riding bicycles on Mathis Avenue will serve as slow-moving traffic-calming devices. This roadway change will make bicycling unpleasant for nearly all riders and will subject people riding bicycles to increased harassment from frustrated motorists who are unable to pass. Moreover, since Mathis Avenue would probably not be rebuilt with added bike lanes when redevelopment occurs in the future, this degradation of bicycling conditions on Mathis Avenue is likely permanent.*

*The fact that nearby Portner Avenue is designated as a bicycle route is no reason to degrade bicycling conditions on Mathis Avenue. While many through bicyclists already prefer to travel on Portner Avenue, only Mathis Avenue serves the businesses and jobs located along Mathis Avenue, and people will someday live on this segment of Mathis Avenue too.*

*Thus, for both bicycle access and pedestrian safety, this project should strive to reduce the design speed for Mathis Avenue--and ideally the posted speed limit--to 20 MPH or below. The raised median with street trees—and especially street trees in future curbside planting strips and future taller buildings closer to the roadway---should encourage motorists to drive more slowly on*

*Mathis Avenue, but other design changes are needed too.*

*Shorter curb-return radii at corners and sidewalk curb cuts would help reduce motor vehicle speeds, and electronic speed-feedback signs paired with posted speed limit signs would warn speeding motorists to slow down. In addition, shared-lane markings (aka “sharrows”) centered in each travel lane would inform both motorists and bicycle riders that this is a shared roadway.*

Response

The City understands that the proposed improvements will make it impossible for vehicles to pass bicycles on the corridor. As mentioned, the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) designates Portner Avenue as the major bicycle route through this part of the City. After reviewing requests to lower the speed limit, City staff have determined that it should remain 25 mph at this time. However, to set appropriate driver expectations in the corridor, Mathis Avenue will be marked and signed as a shared street with “sharrows.” The latest DCSM update includes provisions to require a two-way cycle track along Mathis Avenue with redevelopment.

Comment 19

*Are there any zoning change plans for residential or commercial use in the vicinity?*

Response

The City has no current rezoning applications for the corridor.

Comment 20

*At this point, this area isn't much of a destination like Downtown Manassas is. So why are we spending \$7.3M to improve the streetscape? What is the overall vision for this area? Is this project a catalyst to remake this whole corridor? What type of redevelopment are we hoping for this corridor?*

Response

The City has been developing a long-term plan for the Mathis corridor since 2006, when the Mathis Avenue Sector Plan was published. The Sector Plan called for high-density, mixed-use development, enhanced streetscapes, and pedestrian and bicycle linkages. In 2015, City Council incorporated Mathis Avenue enhancements into the City’s Strategic Plan. Mathis Avenue Streetscape Standards were then developed and incorporated into the City’s Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM) in 2017 and 2018. The Transportation Master Plan, completed in 2019 and subsequent inclusion of this project in the Capital Improvement Program led to the project as it is scoped today.

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan, adopted by City Council in 2020, proposes the Mathis Character Area as an opportunity for revitalization to “Build upon the strength of Downtown and the northeast access provided by Route 28.” Its objectives include development of mixed-residential and commercial uses within the character area with improved streetscape elements. Please see the [Chapter 3 – Land Use of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan](#).

Comment 21

*The Proposed Design is a Reasonable Interim Aesthetic Improvement but Lacks Essential Pedestrian Amenities for a Vibrant, Mixed-Use Street  
As a final condition for a revitalized Mathis Avenue as a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented street--ideally with robust bus transit service--the proposed design would be a major disappointment. However, as an interim improvement intended to transform the appearance of this somewhat*



*desolate commercial street and to promote future mixed-use redevelopment at minimal cost, this project does appear to have merit.*

*In particular, the proposed design provides sidewalks that are too narrow for comfortable two-way walking, are too close to the roadway, and lack street trees and pedestrian-serving street furniture in what should be much wider curbside planting strips and furniture zones. In addition, the sidewalks are interrupted with frequent curb cuts, where motor vehicle cross flows impede safe and comfortable walking.*

*However, considering the need for Mathis Avenue to continue serving the existing auto-oriented businesses beside it, especially along the east side of this street, until redevelopment occurs some years in the future, the imperative to minimize right of way takings and to preserve the existing curb cuts is understandable.*

*To effectively promote the specific forms of redevelopment that the City seeks and to ensure that this redevelopment incorporates the necessary mobility infrastructure to equitably support that redevelopment, the City's Department of Planning and Community Development should undertake a robust community-based planning process to develop a detailed form-based zoning code for the Mathis Avenue corridor. Form-based zoning codes are a proven tool to effectively promote the specific forms of redevelopment desired by localities.*

#### Response

The City Council initiated a review of residential zoning codes in Fall 2021 and the Planning Commission's zoning ordinance review committee has been meeting monthly since April 2022 on this update. Recommendations for zoning changes to the Mathis Corridor are a key priority for this project. Public comment on recommended changes is anticipated in Fall 2022.

#### Comment 22

*Thinking long term maintenance, how will this impact cost to properties?*

#### Response

Improvements and landscaping are primarily within the right-of-way. Any landscaping within the median will be maintained by the City of Manassas. Cutting grass between the curb and right-of-way boundary is the responsibility of the property owner, but any landscaping, street trees, etc. would be the City's maintenance responsibility.

#### Comment 23

*Is there a concern that the trees will impede visibility for drivers turning left into shopping centers?*

#### Response

As part of final design, the engineer will review sight distance for all entrances and turning movements to verify that adequate sight distance will be provided. Landscaping will be designed not to conflict with required sight distance.

#### Comment 24

*Can you please speak to any drainage or stormwater management issues that may occur with the new plantings in the median?*

#### Response

Existing curbs and the storm drainage system will not be moved for this project. The conversion of the median from asphalt to grass and plantings will directly benefit stormwater management by reducing runoff.

#### Comment 25

*The City has the draft changes to Article 9 of the DCSM out for comment. Changes integrate with 2040 Comp Plan. Will this project comply with Section 9-300 Complete Street Design as the DCSM changes will be approved before the first shovel is turned?*

#### Response

Yes, given the project's right-of-way and budget constraints, the project is intended to comply with the update to Article 9 of the DCSM to the extent practical.

#### Comment 26

*Are electric power lines being put underground?*

#### Response

All electric power facilities have previously been undergrounded on Mathis between Sudley Road and Liberia Avenue, so no additional utility undergrounding will be done with this project.

#### Comment 27

*Can the project limits be increased on Mathis past Liberia to create a connection for pedestrian activity towards Liberia House?*

#### Response

The sidewalk between Mathis and Liberia House is outside the scope of the project at this time, but the City will look at the feasibility of improving that pedestrian connection.

#### Comment 28

*Why are stamped crosswalks being proposed along Mathis, high visibility would be safer for pedestrians?*

#### Response

The proposal for stamped crosswalks is based on DCSM requirements for the Downtown and Mathis Character Areas. High visibility crosswalks are provided for the crosswalks at Mathis Avenue due to higher traffic volumes.

#### Comment 29

##### ***More Visible and Shorter Crosswalks***

*One notable design feature that should be changed is the proposed use of brick-colored stamped asphalt crosswalks. While intended to impart historic charm, brown-colored crosswalks are far less conspicuous to motorists than modern high-visibility and reflective thermoplastic crosswalk markings. The primary purpose of marked crosswalks is to alert motorists to the likely presence of crossing pedestrians, encouraging drivers to slow down, look for, and prepare to yield to and stop for pedestrians who may be crossing the roadway. A faux-brick aesthetic is far less important than the safety of people who are walking across the street.*

*In addition, the final design of each intersection should pay particular attention to shortening the length of all crosswalks to the extent feasible and to install two separate curb ramps for the*



*crosswalk landings at each corner. The present design includes a single combined curb ramp at the southeast corner of Mathis Avenue and Sudley Road and at all four corners of Mathis Avenue and Liberia Avenue, the two on the north side not being rebuilt.*

*Designing shorter curb-return radii at all intersection corners, as suggested above to reduce the roadway design speed, would also reduce the crosswalk lengths at those intersections.*

#### Response

Stamped thermoplastic crosswalk markings are proposed along Mathis Avenue to comply with DCSM requirements for the Downtown and Mathis Character Areas. The City has a history of safely using the same crosswalk design in and around the historic downtown area. The design does feature 12-inch wide white stripes on each side of the brick pattern for enhanced visibility.

The City agrees with the principle of shortening crosswalks lengths and providing directional curb ramps. The center median will allow median refuge for pedestrians, shortening crosswalks on Mathis Avenue to as little as 12 feet. The project will replace curb ramps on the north corners of the intersection of Mathis and Liberia Avenues. Additionally, all curb ramps designs will be vetted at the next stage of design to install directional ramps wherever possible. Further, curb return radii at Carriage Lane and Reb Yank Drive will be reduced to the extent possible following an AutoTurn analysis of the design vehicle for the corridor.

#### Comment 30

*The City previously acquired right-of-way for frontage improvements for the original Mathis Ave widening project. How much additional right-of-way will be required on the parcel on the southeast corner of Mathis and Liberia Avenue? Is any property required off of Liberia Avenue?*

#### Response:

The proposed right-of-way line ranging from 5 to 5.5 feet behind the existing sidewalk along the Mathis Ave frontage and tapering into the existing ROW line as the sidewalk turns onto Liberia Ave. No improvements are proposed on Liberia Avenue except for curb ramps at the intersection, so the only right-of-way required will be to taper the sidewalk back to meet existing.