

December 4, 2024

Residents and Public:

Thank you for attending or communicating with us regarding the July 17, 2024, open house hosted by the City of Columbus for the addition of on-street separated bike lanes planned on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Mt. Vernon Avenue between Hamilton Avenue and Champion Avenue. The City appreciates your interest in our work to make safety improvements to the Mt. Vernon Avenue corridor.

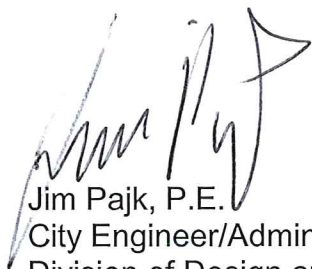
This comment and response summary packet is being provided for your information to document questions and concerns brought up by individuals before, at, or after the public meeting. Any additional questions or concerns regarding this project may be mailed to:

**Attention: Karin Ely**

City of Columbus, Department of Public Service  
111 N. Front Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Or emailed to [kmely@columbus.gov](mailto:kmely@columbus.gov)

Karin may also be reached at (614) 645-5671

Respectfully,



Jim Pajk, P.E.  
City Engineer/Administrator  
Division of Design and Construction

*The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by ODOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated June 6, 2018, and executed by FHWA and ODOT.*



## **Public Involvement Information**

As part of the project development process, the City of Columbus regularly conducts public involvement with residents, property owners and other interested parties. The City of Columbus is proposing improvements along Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Mt. Vernon Avenue in Bronzeville in Franklin County, to be constructed in phases that will enhance safety, specifically for people who are walking and biking. This is the first phase of the project.

This first phase will add on-street separated bike lanes on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Mt. Vernon Avenue between Hamilton Avenue and Champion Avenue and will include:

- on-street separated bike lanes for the project limits;
- concrete median to separate vehicular and bicycle traffic;
- sidewalk bump-outs to shorten crossing distance;
- bus islands;
- sidewalk and curb repairs;
- signal removal at Mt. Vernon Avenue and 17<sup>th</sup> Street;
- signal replacement at Mt. Vernon Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street;
- other improvements such as drainage, pavements markings, signage, street trees, sediment and erosion control, and water main and hydrant adjustments

This project is referred to as Roadway – Multimodal – Mt Vernon Ave Phase 1, FRA-SRTS Mt. Vernon Ave, PID 120251, with an estimated construction start of summer 2026.

The City of Columbus hosted a public meeting on July 17, 2024, distributed a public notification letter, and utilized the project website and City of Columbus social media as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Public Involvement process for outreach and comment from the businesses and residents in the area of the proposed project.

Comments were received from 11 individuals. Three comments were emailed before the public meeting, five comments were received directly at the public meeting, one comment was emailed after the public meeting, and two additional comments were received on the project website after the public meeting.

The individual comments and City of Columbus responses are provided on the following pages. Responses will be provided to each comment in kind.

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## **Comment No. 1 – Email Comment**

### **Comments from Anne Evans, Co-Founder and COO, Columbus Underground, The Metropreneur:**

I love the separated bike lane plan for Mt Vernon Ave.

I am a resident on Hamilton Ave, since 2007.

With all of the changes and additional residents being added to our area, I would love for the city to consider narrowing Hamilton Ave from Broad Street through to Mt. Vernon Ave. The road is just way too wide. We have people regularly running the stop signs.

With the additional pedestrians, people casually biking around, people taking small children to the daycare, and the influx of children in the area, having the road this wide causes traffic to go well over 25 mph. We need to have wider sidewalks throughout to make the neighborhood welcoming and easier to navigate.

With the opening of Elijah Pierce, it makes sense to direct Downtown traffic to that street, and make Hamilton narrower with wider sidewalks and trees, keeping street parking, but removing the turn lane. The intersection at Hamilton and Spring/Martin Luther King is huge and no longer needs to be that way.

It would be appropriate for this to occur or be in the plans when the separated bikeway is being planned.

Thank you for considering my thoughts on this issue.

### **City of Columbus Response:**

Thank you for your support. The city looks forward to improving safety for all roadway users and increasing mobility options for residents in the project area.

The Hamilton Avenue corridor is out of the scope of this project; however, your comments and suggestions have been forwarded to the city's Division of Traffic Management for review. We appreciate you voicing your desires to improve safety and mobility along additional corridors within Columbus. The goal is to create inclusive transportation designs that benefit all members of the community.



## Comment No. 2 – Email Comment

### Comments from Benjamin Keith, Zoning Committee Chair, Commissioner, North Linden Area Commission:

Does the Mount Vernon Avenue Bikeway project have its own newsletter, that I can sign up for to receive updates?

The reason I ask is because I learned about <https://bronzevillemoves.com/> and tomorrow's meeting from Trevin Flickinger's Good Works Columbus newsletter, not from any City communique. Unfortunately, due to a conflict, I won't be able to attend tomorrow's meeting.

I haven't seen anything about this project in the City's Bike Plus, Vision Zero, or Rec Parks newsletters. It also isn't listed in the DPS projects page at <https://www.columbus.gov/Business-Development/Design-Construction/Public-Service-Project-Fact-Sheets> and I can't find anything about this project in the Columbus.gov search. How is the City communicating to residents and bicyclists about this project?

### City of Columbus Response:

Thank you for your comment. This project does not have a newsletter, but does have the website, <https://bronzevillemoves.com/>. It was created as part of the Bronzeville / Mt. Vernon Avenue Mobility and Safety Action Plan, which kicked off in fall 2020. The goal is to improve traffic safety on Mt. Vernon Avenue by reducing speeding and crashes, increasing mobility options for residents, and enhancing neighborhood aesthetics. The website has been updated as the project has progressed from planning to the design phase.

The city has been communicating with residents since the beginning stages of this project. An Advisory Coalition of Bronzeville residents, business owners and other community stakeholders has been engaged throughout planning and public engagement. Public engagement has included a residents survey and public meetings held as the project has progressed, with information shared on the project website and in notification letters to corridor area residents. A project fact sheet can be found at <https://www.columbus.gov/files/sharedassets/city/v/1/public-service/design-and-construction/fact-sheet-files/design/mt-vernon-ave-area-phase-1-improvements.pdf>



## Comment No. 3 – Email Comment

### Comments from Eric May:

I am writing to you to express my support for the Mt. Vernon Avenue Bikeway Project and in support of future efforts to reduce our reliance on car-only infrastructure in the city of Columbus.

The best way to reduce car crashes and safety related incidents is to attack the problem at its source, which is the car-only development patterns that have dominated American transit planning for decades and have led to negative externalities that we now have to face.

As Columbus continues to experience growth and beneficial revitalization of our urban environments, lowering barriers to participate in the economy with better mobility patterns (walk/bike/train) will help to alleviate poverty, create a healthier population, and enable dense development which will help address the affordability crises that the United States is experiencing, and the city of Columbus *has yet to truly experience*.

We should work closely with all partners, including ODOT and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (I'm a member of the Community Advisory Committee), to focus our efforts on slowing vehicles down, getting people out of their cars, and allocate funding toward more cost-efficient transit patterns that align with our city's goals.

Any design pattern which seeks to address our future transit needs like the Mt. Vernon project has my support.

### City of Columbus Response:

Thank you for your support. The goals of this project include improving traffic safety on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Mt. Vernon Avenue by reducing speeding and crashes, increasing mobility options for residents, and enhancing neighborhood aesthetics. The city looks forward to accomplishing these goals with the installation of the on-street separated bike lanes along the project corridor.

Due to the proximity of Champion Middle School to the project corridor, the project qualified to receive funding from ODOT's Safe Routes to Schools program. The city has worked with ODOT throughout the design phase of the project and will use the Safe Route to Schools funding to aid in the construction of the proposed improvements. The city will continue to work closely with ODOT and MORPC to improve transportation corridors for all roadway users and residents in the Columbus and surrounding areas.



## Comment No. 4 – Email Comment

### Comments from Patricia Kovacs:

We met at the review on July 17. I submitted these comments on the [bronzevillemoves.com](https://www.bronzevillemoves.com) website because I don't know if you are receiving email. But I'm sending these comments to you in case you can receive them.

I do not approve of the 2-way separated bike lane. Bike lanes should be 1-way on the proper side of the street. The Summit St bike lane increased crashes 3x over no bikeway infrastructure, both due to wrong way riding and visibility due to the parking lane. Please see this document for the crashes which occurred on Summit St:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UTSvrBxWqFpE1k6L212ppmSUo1N3g3qx/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UTSvrBxWqFpE1k6L212ppmSUo1N3g3qx/view?usp=drive_link)

Also read this discussion of the problem with separated bike lanes:

<https://cyclingsavvy.org/2024/06/how-to-ruin-a-buffered-bike-lane/>

There was a recent study out of Texas A&M of separated bike lanes which concluded they are 53% safer than traditional bike lanes. The study only considered midblock crashes, not intersection crashes. Summit St had 52 crashes in 8 years, 49 were at intersections. The study was misleading and meaningless.

I understand that the majority of reviewers requested separated bike lanes. Engineering should be driven by data, not feelings. My biggest concern is regarding the 2-way design. Please use 1-way bike lanes on both sides of the road.

Questions:

1. How will cyclists transition from the left to right side at the 71 interchange?
2. Will two stage turn boxes be marked at each intersection, not just the traffic signals?

### City of Columbus Response:

Thank you for your comments. There are differences between this project and the Summit St project that you mentioned. Mt. Vernon is predominantly one-thru lane in each direction, a different context than Summit St. With this project, the two-way bike lanes will be separated from vehicular traffic with a concrete median that is a minimum of 1.5' wide. The concrete median will act as a physical vertical element separating the vehicles and bicycles, but will not negatively impact visibility. The concrete median will help eliminate perceived risk and fear of collision. Additionally, these bike lanes will not be adjacent to on-street parking, thus eliminating the risk of cyclists crashing into car doors of parked vehicles.

There will always be tradeoffs in design options. Through our Bike Plus engagement, 92% of people want protected infrastructure. In this instance, having 1-way bike lanes on each side would not allow space for physical protection between motorists and cyclists. The primary audience for these facilities is the Interested but Concerned rider who typically does not feel safe in an unprotected bike lane. The proposed 2-way provides physical protection, plus better integration with COTA bus stops. We know that intersections are the most difficult spots, and most stressful. Care has been taken to look closely at each intersection, with multiple stop measures designed for all users.

This project does not include any work at the intersection of E Spring Street and the I-71 ramps. At the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Hamilton Avenue, there are green bike lane crosswalk markings and a bike two-stage turn box marking to cross Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and access the bike lane on the north side of E Spring Street, which provides access thru the intersection with the I-71 ramps. Two-stage turn boxes are not needed at all intersections to make left turns, as the intersections are either T intersections, all-way stops, or there is barrier present to prevent the left turn. All intersections will include the necessary signing and pavement marking that are required for bike lanes.



## Comment No. 5 - Website Comment

### Comments from Dan Dolinka:

Very supportive of the in street protect bike lane and other details of this project. Would love to see designs like this, including the median island, on more city streets. Removal of parking in this area will be worth it, and the bumpouts will enhance safety. I would prefer the intersection with Hamilton Ave have bumpouts as well, that turning radius is pretty wide.

### City of Columbus Response:

Thank you for the support. The city looks forward to improving safety for all roadway users and increasing mobility options for residents in the project area.

The proposed median will protect the bike lanes and help eliminate perceived risk and fear of collisions. It will also add a level of predictability making streets safer for everyone. The proposed sidewalk bump-outs will help define on-street parking and shorten crossing distances for pedestrians.

The project team understands that parking can provide challenges for some roadway users yet is important for others. Due to the limited space within right-of-way, parking was removed on Mt. Vernon Avenue from 20th Street to Champion Avenue. For the residents and businesses in this stretch of Mt. Vernon Avenue, there is existing parking that will remain off of Mt. Vernon Avenue.

Hamilton Avenue at the intersection of Mt. Vernon Avenue currently has one thru lane in each direction, a center left turn lane, and on-street parking on both sides of the roadway. Sidewalk bump-outs at Hamilton Avenue are not included in the scope of work for this project. However, your comments and suggestions have been forwarded to the city's Division of Traffic Management for consideration on future projects on Hamilton Avenue. The goal is to create inclusive transportation designs that benefits all members of the community.



## **Comment No. 6 - Website Comment**

### **Comments from Eugene Johnson:**

The question is why are y'all callings it a bike path when y'all are moving one race in and another race out and I feel the letter I got today too much later was done on purpose so nobody would attend the meeting and I want to know how can y'all come in a neighborhood and wipe the whole neighborhood out it got to be a way around all that

### **City of Columbus Response:**

The city hears your frustration and concerns, and wants to assure you that the intentions behind the changes in the neighborhood are not to push anyone out or to replace one community with another. It is important for everyone to feel secure and valued in their own home and neighborhood. The project team apologizes that the timing of the letter felt like it was done on purpose; that wasn't our intention.

The proposed project will add on-street separated bike lanes, incorporating bus islands, sidewalk bump-outs, and sidewalk and curb repairs on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Mt. Vernon Avenue from Hamilton Avenue to Champion Avenue. While this project will need to acquire temporary easements or small areas of right of way to construct the project, none of these will require residents to be relocated. The project will be constructed within the right of way for the benefit of the general public.

The city wants to make sure that all voices are heard and that everyone has a chance to be involved in these conversations. If there's a way to address your concerns more directly or provide more transparency around what's happening, please let the project team know. It's important to us that we work together to find solutions that honor and uplift all members of the community.





## **Comment No. 7 - Public Meeting Comment**

### **Comments from a concerned citizen:**

Here is my suggestion: If you're going to push out the Black people from this neighborhood you should at least have the honesty and decency to say "We're going to push you Black folks out of your neighborhood to make room for whites to move in." If you don't say it I'm going to say it for you every chance I get.

### **City of Columbus Response:**

Thank you for sharing your concerns. The city understands that discussions around neighborhood changes and development can bring up strong emotions, especially when it comes to preserving the character and culture of historically Black communities. To be clear, it is not the project's intent to displace or push out any residents.

The proposed project will add on-street separated bike lanes, incorporating bus islands, sidewalk bump-outs, and sidewalk and curb repairs on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Mt. Vernon Avenue from Hamilton Avenue to Champion Avenue. While this project will need to acquire temporary easements or small areas of right of way to construct the project, none of these would require residents to be relocated. The project will be constructed within the right of way for the benefit of the general public.

The goal is to create inclusive development that benefits all members of the community. The city is committed to transparency and open dialogue with residents to address concerns about affordability, housing stability, and maintaining the unique identity of our neighborhoods. We encourage you to stay engaged and continue sharing your thoughts. Together, we can work toward a future that respects the history and heritage of this community while creating opportunities for everyone to thrive.



## **Comment No. 8 - Public Meeting Comment**

### **Comments from Willis Brown:**

The proposed designs are great, but what about the roundabouts at St. Clair and Champion Ave?

### **City of Columbus Response:**

During the early stages of the Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Mobility and Safety Action Plan, installation of roundabouts was preliminarily investigated at the St. Clair Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd/Mt. Vernon Avenue intersection and the Mt. Vernon Avenue and Champion Avenue intersection. Installing a new roundabout at an intersection requires the city to acquire sections of land from the surrounding properties that could negatively impact the property owners. When compared with the other conceptual alternatives, the roundabouts had the lowest benefit per value and therefore were not chosen as the preferred alternative.

The construction of the on-street separated bike lanes will require acquisition of temporary easements or small areas of right of way to construct the project. However, none of these will drastically change someone's property or require residents to be relocated. The proposed project will be constructed within the right of way for the benefit of the general public.



## **Comment No. 9 - Public Meeting Comment**

### **Comments from Anonymous:**

Champion & Mt Vernon needs a light

### **City of Columbus Response:**

Thank you for your comment. The recommended traffic control for the intersection of Mt. Vernon Avenue and Champion Avenue is an all-way stop. The crash issues that were occurring previously have been remedied by the addition of the all-way stop. There are no additional changes recommended for the Mt. Vernon Avenue and Champion Avenue intersection.



## **Comment No. 10 – Public Meeting Comment**

### **Comments from Eric Hutchison:**

Generally in favor of the project. Especially traffic calming with X bike lane, bump outs, etc.  
If a light at 20<sup>th</sup> & Mt Vernon is justified why isn't one at Champion and Mt Vernon justified?

### **City of Columbus Response:**

Thank you for the support. The city looks forward to improving safety for all roadway users and increasing mobility options for residents in the project area with the installation of the on-street separated bike lanes and sidewalk bump-outs along the project corridor.

A traffic signal is recommended for the intersection of Mt. Vernon Avenue and 20<sup>th</sup> Street, as the pharmacy building on the southeast corner is a vision obstruction that cannot be remedied. The building is extremely close to the roadway on this corner.

The recommended traffic control for the intersection of Mt. Vernon Avenue and Champion Avenue is an all-way stop. The crashes that were occurring previously have been remedied by installation of the all-way stop. There was a 91% reduction in total crashes in the 23-month period following installation of the all-way stop in October 2021, and no fatal crashes have occurred. Zero crashes occurred at the intersection from November 2021 through February 2023.



## **Comment No. 11 – Public Meeting Comment**

### **Comments from Lea Austin:**

I appreciate the bike lanes with a curb separating those lanes from the traffic lanes (car, etc). My question is the number of parking spots that are lost especially for apartment dwellers on Mt. Vernon. Will their needs be met?

### **City of Columbus Response:**

Thank you for the support. The city looks forward to improving safety for all roadway users and increasing mobility options for residents in the project area with the installation of the on-street separated bike lanes.

The proposed median separating the bike lanes from the vehicular lanes will protect the bike lanes and help eliminate perceived risk and fear of collisions. It will also add a level of predictability making streets safer for everyone.

The project team understands that parking can provide challenges for some roadway users yet is important for others. On-street parking will remain on the north side of Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd from Hamilton Avenue to St. Clair Avenue and on the north side of Mt. Vernon Avenue from St. Clair Avenue to 20th Street. Due to the limited space within right of way, parking was removed on Mt. Vernon Avenue from 20th Street to Champion Avenue. For residents and businesses in this stretch of Mt. Vernon, existing parking will remain in place outside of the roadway, within existing parking lots and driveways and along the side streets.

