

VETERANS BOULEVARD CORRIDOR

EXTENSION STUDY

Corridor Vision Report

November 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Building a future extension of the Veterans Boulevard corridor from scratch lets the community focus on want and needs to define the future land use and roadway network. This means engaging with property owners, developers, government entities, and the general public to understand key issues surrounding development of the future corridor. The purpose of the Visioning Report is to summarize all the different ways that the existing and projected needs and opportunities of the corridor were identified. To help guide the development of alternatives for the future corridor, this report summarizes the key stakeholder engagement, the community engagement, and the collective vision for the corridor that emerged.

KEY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A study review committee (SRC) was assembled to review all project materials and provide guidance throughout the visioning phase. The committee consisted of 15 representatives from eight government entities, listed below.

- » City of Fargo
- » City of West Fargo
- » City of Horace
- » Cass County
- » Southeast Cass Water Resource District
- » Metro COG
- » North Dakota Department of Transportation
- » Federal Highway Administration – North Dakota

In addition to reviewing project materials, this committee participated in a series of direction-setting exercises during a visioning workshop. A description of each workshop item is described below with a summary of the results.

VALUE PROFILE

The Value Profile was a worksheet distributed to each SRC member during the visioning workshop. Each member was asked to place a priority score on four values (Vehicle Efficiency, Safety, Livability, and Cost and Impacts) such that the sum of the scores across the four values was equal to 100. This priority scoring was done separately for two segments of the Veterans Boulevard Corridor: 40th Avenue to 76th Avenue and 76th Avenue to 100th Avenue.

For both segments of the Veterans Boulevard Corridor, twelve value profile sheets were completed. Figure 1 shows the average value scores for the corridor between 40th Avenue and 76th Avenue. Figure 2 shows the average value scores for the corridor between 76th Avenue and 100th Avenue.

Figure 1: Value Profile Results, Veterans Boulevard between 40th Avenue and 76th Avenue

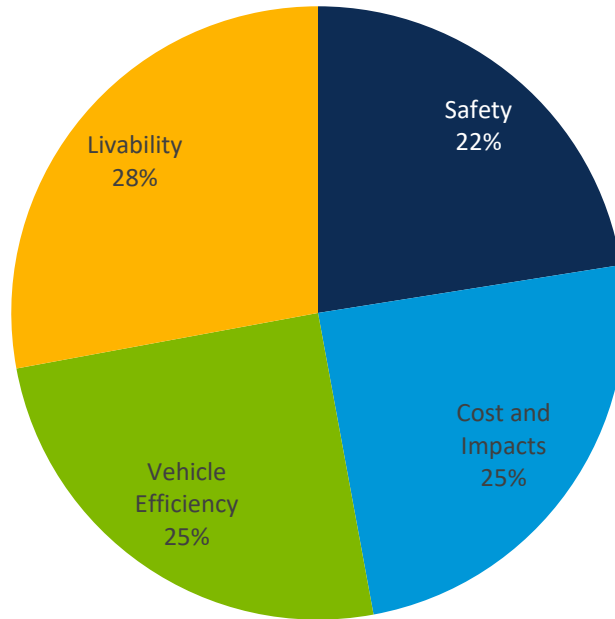
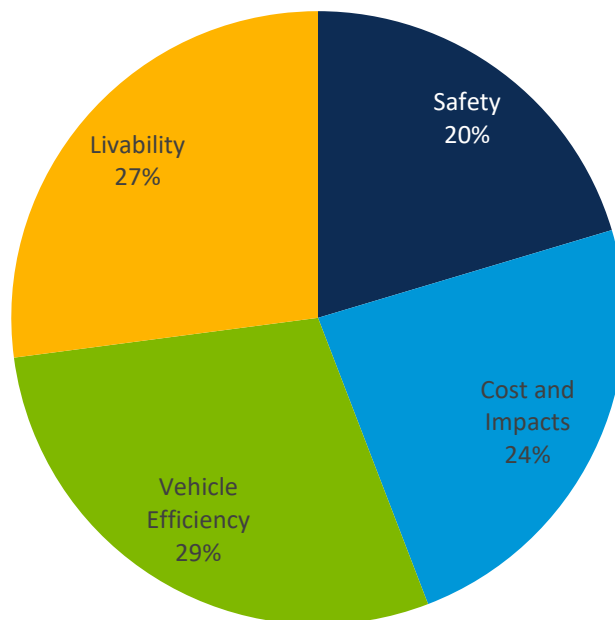


Figure 2: Value Profile Results, Veterans Boulevard between 76th Avenue and 100th Avenue



VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

At the visioning workshop, SRC members were given a Form and Function Survey that asked the question, “If you got to build a road from scratch, what would it look like?”. This question was asked for three different categories: Bike and Pedestrian Facilities, Cross Sections and Traffic Control, and Street Features. For each category, committee members could select as many pre-determined features as desired, and also had the option to add an “other” response. Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5 show the results from the Form and Function Survey.

Generally, the committee preferred shared use path with boulevard for the bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Other considerations were to incorporate a shared use path on both sides of the roadway and to ensure connections to the future facilities along Drain 27.

For the cross-section and traffic control, the committee generally preferred the raised medians and roundabouts, similar to the Veterans Boulevard section between 40th Avenue and 52nd Avenue, as well as rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) at high activity crossing locations (schools, recreation destinations, etc.). The committee suggested the use of grass medians with street trees and ensuring the roundabouts are more appropriately sized.

For the street features, decorative lighting, bus shelters, street furniture, bioswales, and refuge islands were the most popular features. The committee also suggested plantings and native plantings.

Figure 3: Form and Function Survey Results, Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

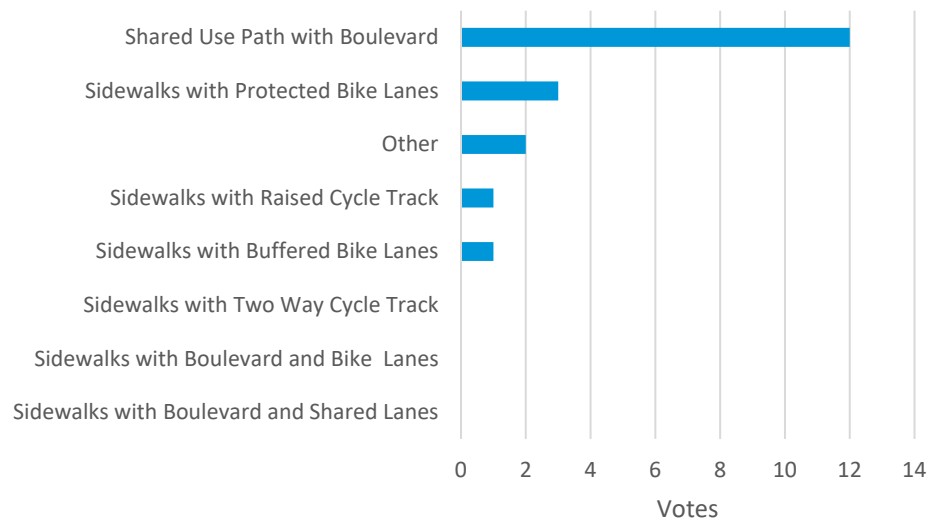


Figure 4: Form and Function Survey Results, Cross Sections and Traffic Control

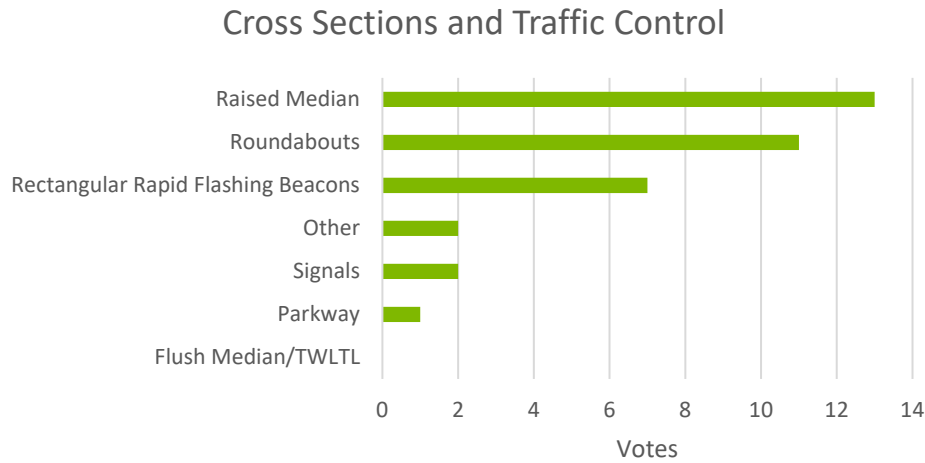
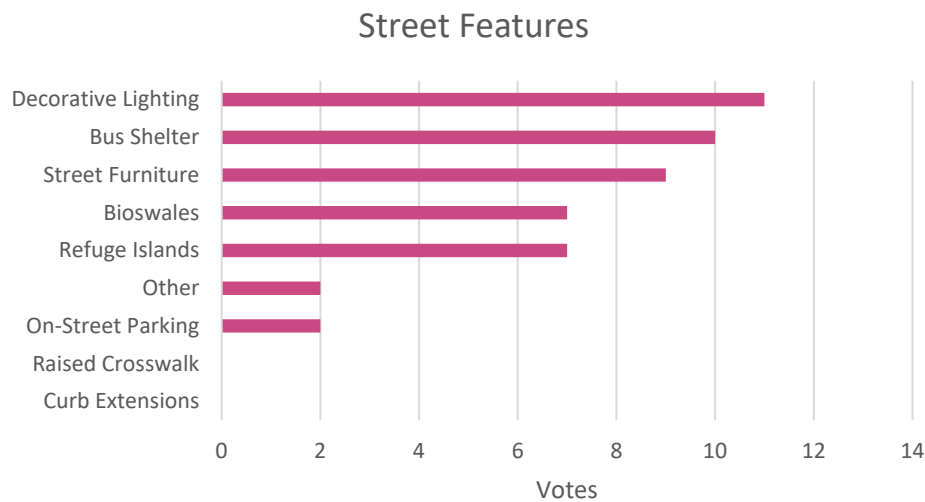


Figure 5: Form and Function Survey Results, Street Features



DEMOGRAPHICS AND GROWTH

The visioning workshop concluded with a discussion of future land use and socioeconomic expectations used in Metro COG's travel demand model. Members of the SRC agreed that residential density was likely to increase between 52nd Avenue and 76th Avenue within the 2045 planning horizon. It was also mentioned that the 2045 MTP demographic allocations for Horace are likely too low given certain developments that were unknown at the time. In addition the citing of new schools, including Horace High School and Heritage Middle School were unknown at the time. Ultimately, the SRC revised the socioeconomic data for the travel demand model based on these new land use expectations.

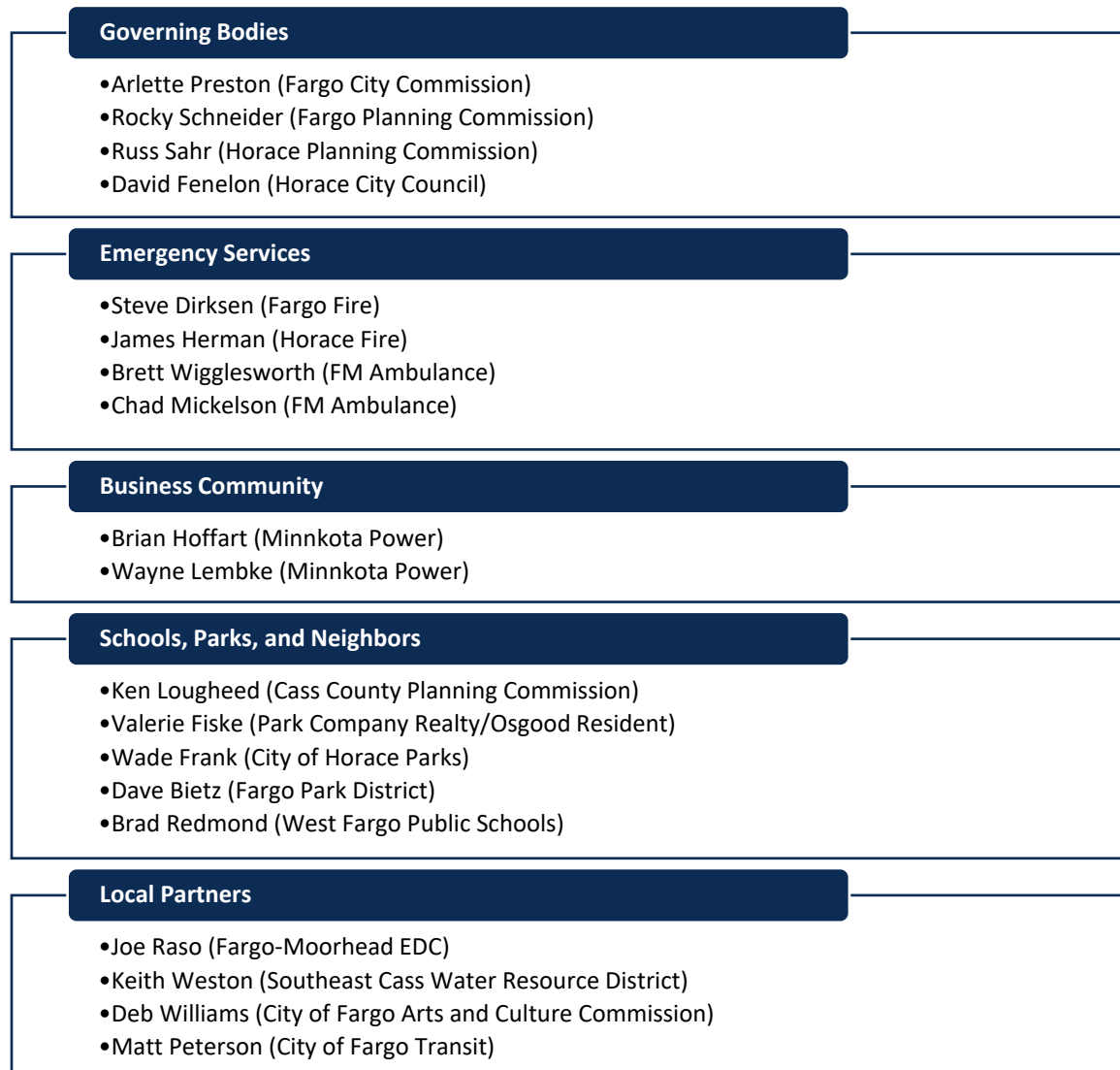
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the study review committee's feedback, the first round of public engagement focused on understanding the community's primary issues, needs, and opportunities as related to the Veterans Boulevard corridor. This was done in two ways: focus groups and a virtual open house.

FOCUS GROUPS

Listening sessions were held with some of the key stakeholders identified by the Study Review Committee for this project. Five listening sessions were held with representatives of governing bodies, emergency services, the business community, local partners, schools, parks, and residents.

Figure 6: Focus Group Participants



Focus Group Discussion Summary

The purpose of the listening sessions was to provide an opportunity for the project team to listen and learn from those most directly impacted by the project regarding the public participant's concerns, issues, and visions of the corridor. The following is a summary based on questions asked of the participants. Four general questions were prepared for the listening sessions. The summary of the sessions is discussed below.

What do you love about your community?

Four major themes emerged when this question was asked at each focus group meeting. Below is a summary of the responses.

- » **Close-knit Community:** In each focus group meeting, at least one person described their love for the sense of community in the Fargo-Moorhead metro area. Some talked about small-town feel, others described it as a sense of belonging, and some talked about how well the communities work together.
- » **Recreational Amenities:** Many focus group members loved the parks, bike trails, walking trails, and open space throughout the metro area.
- » **Urban Vibrancy:** Many loved that Fargo-Moorhead balanced a small town feel with the amenities of a large metro area. A vibrant downtown area, shops, walkable residential and commercial areas, urban continuity, and extensive tree canopy were all identified as attractive features of the metro area.
- » **Connectivity and Accessibility:** Participants in several of the focus groups loved the ease of getting around the metro area. Particularly for emergency services, the road network is well connected and well maintained.

What places do you enjoy walking, biking, or driving, and what places do you avoid?

This question received a wide range of responses. Some focus group members were specific about locations locally and nationally, while others described situations without one location in mind. Table 1 summarizes the responses to this question received from all focus groups.

Table 1: Focus Group Responses

Enjoyable places to walk, bike, or drive...	Avoided places...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Have good directional markings » Have green space and trails » Have good tree canopy, including evergreens to add color during the winter » Have shared-use paths connecting schools to neighborhoods » Are walkable » Have public art and landscaping » Have water features » Have transit stops that are well integrated into the street design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Are inaccessible or difficult to navigate by emergency vehicles and buses » Have poor visibility » Have too much side street traffic (poor access spacing) » Have poor quality pavement » Have high vehicle speeds and heavy traffic » Have too many traffic signals » Have large parking lots

What aspects of Veterans Boulevard between 40th Avenue and 52nd Avenue do you like?

The points below summarize the responses to this question from all five focus groups.

- » The roundabouts were generally popular among focus group participants. Several mentioned that roundabouts help control traffic speeds, make the corridor safer, and allow vehicles to pass through without stopping.
- » Several participants approved of the clean and modern design of the corridor. In particular, the medians, shared-use paths, and limited access points contribute to the success of the corridor.
- » Other aspects that were popular include traffic speeds that are not too slow or too fast, separation between the road and shared-use paths, and the green spaces.

What issues exist on Veterans Boulevard between 40th Avenue and 52nd Avenue?

The points below summarize the responses to this question from all five focus groups.

- » Focus group participants generally approved of roundabouts, but several voiced that the existing roundabouts are too small, becoming a challenge to navigate in winter. In particular, the roundabouts cause issues for emergency vehicles and lengthen response time. One focus group member suggested that future roundabouts have a mountable curb that large vehicles can drive over.
- » Driver visibility is poor in winter. This is partially due to the open spaces creating a windy environment in which snow rapidly accumulates on the road.
- » The Osgood Elementary School was repeatedly mentioned as a cause for traffic congestion on Veterans Boulevard. Many described backups during pick up and drop off times, which sometimes impact the roundabouts.
- » A concern that was voiced by several participants was connectivity to and between residential developments adjacent to the corridor. Limited access points for vehicles were viewed as positive from a safety and traffic management perspective, but potentially problematic for residents living nearby for whom the limited access is inconvenient and challenging for emergency services.
- » The corridor lacks identity. Very little indicates being located in Fargo.
- » The corridor is not comfortable to walk along as the road is too busy and lacks a sense of enclosure.

What features are most important to include on the future Veterans Boulevard extension?

The points below summarize the responses to this question from all five focus groups.

- » A common concern among focus group members was the road width and setbacks. The future corridor extension should have large enough setbacks to avoid encroachments and sufficient road width for traffic demands and emergency response needs.
- » Many identified the need for green space, trees, public art, and landscaping along the corridor. One member suggested integrating public transit stops into the landscaping. Focus group members were particularly interested in artwork that reflected the community.
- » Good visibility, lighting, and clear signage are important to several focus group members.
- » While many agreed that limiting access points along the corridor improved operations, several focus group members also felt that east-west access into Deer Creek will be critical to the success of the corridor extension.
- » Several suggestions were provided for the roadway design, including points for vehicles to turn around and change direction, midblock pedestrian crossings between roundabouts, and dedicated turn lanes.

Are there connections to Veterans Boulevard you think should be evaluated?

The points below summarize the responses to this question from all five focus groups.

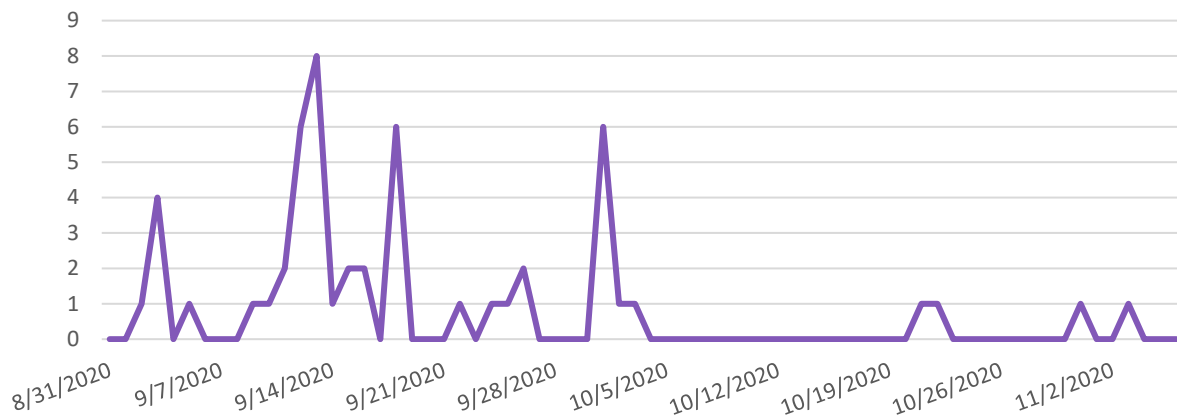
- » Connections to new housing developments are needed in general. For example, a Deer Creek access point around 58th/60th Avenue and between 64th and 76th Avenue.
- » Connections to parks and schools.
- » Connections to other major roads.

VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first public input opportunity was held entirely online on a dedicated open house website, www.vetsblvdextension.com. At the virtual open house, visitors could review project documents, watch informational videos, complete a survey, and leave comments on an interactive map.

The open house ran from September 8th through October 4th. The open house was left open through October 31st to allow all focus group participants the opportunity to visit, if they hadn't already. Throughout this open house, there were 52 unique visitors. From these visitors, ten comments were left on the interactive map and 18 survey responses were recorded.

Figure 7: Visitors to the Virtual Open House



Survey

The Veterans Boulevard extension survey contained three parts: a value profile, a series of questions regarding the vision for the future corridor extension, and demographic identification questions.

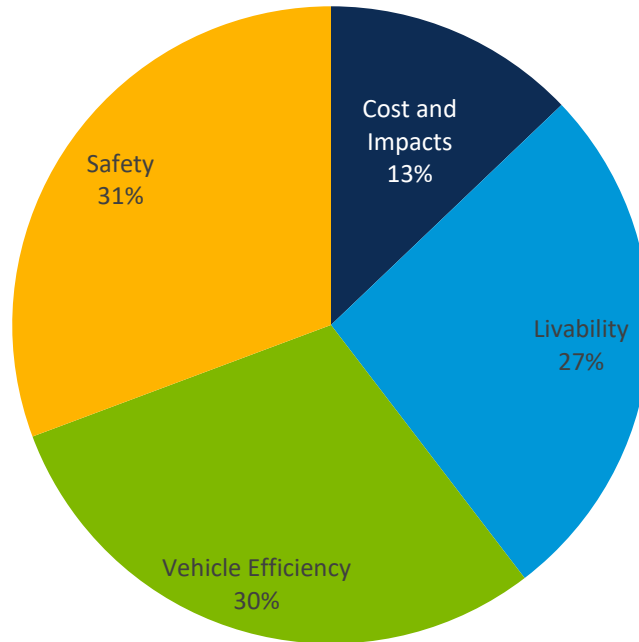
Value Profile

Similar to the Study Review Committee, the value profile helps understand the community's priorities when developing and evaluating the alternatives. The public was asked to assign a value between 1 and 100 to each of the following categories:

- » **Vehicle Efficiency** - Maintaining a high level of vehicle operations through 2045.
- » **Safety** - Minimizing conflict potential for all modes of transportation.
- » **Livability** - Providing high quality multimodal facilities and safe and convenient crossings.
- » **Cost and Impacts** - Reducing the roadway footprint to minimize costs and environmental/property.

Figure 8 shows the average value scores from all survey responses. Safety and Vehicle Efficiency were the highest scoring values, followed closely by Livability. Cost and Impacts scored much lower than all other values.

Figure 8: Public's Value Profile



Visioning Survey

In this section of the survey, the public was asked to identify elements desired on Veterans Boulevard in the future. Three questions were asked, one for each of the following categories: Cross Sections and Traffic Control, Bike and Pedestrian Facilities, and Street Features. Figure 9, Figure 10, Figure 11 show the question that were asked, and the responses received.

Figure 9: Visioning Survey Responses, Cross Sections and Traffic Control

Which of the cross-section and traffic control options would you like to see on Veterans Boulevard? Choose all that apply.

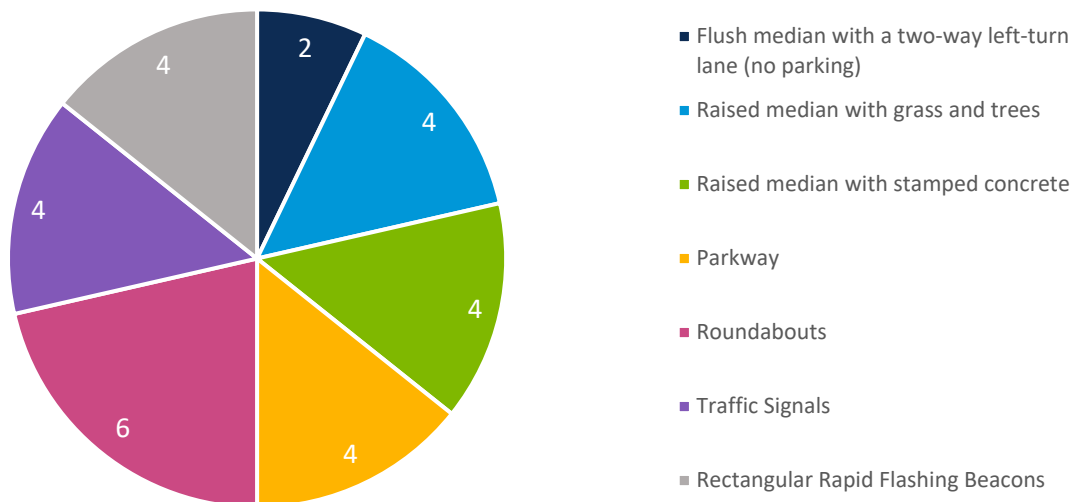


Figure 10: Visioning Survey Responses, Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

Which of the bike and pedestrian facility options would you like to see on Veterans Boulevard? Choose all that apply.

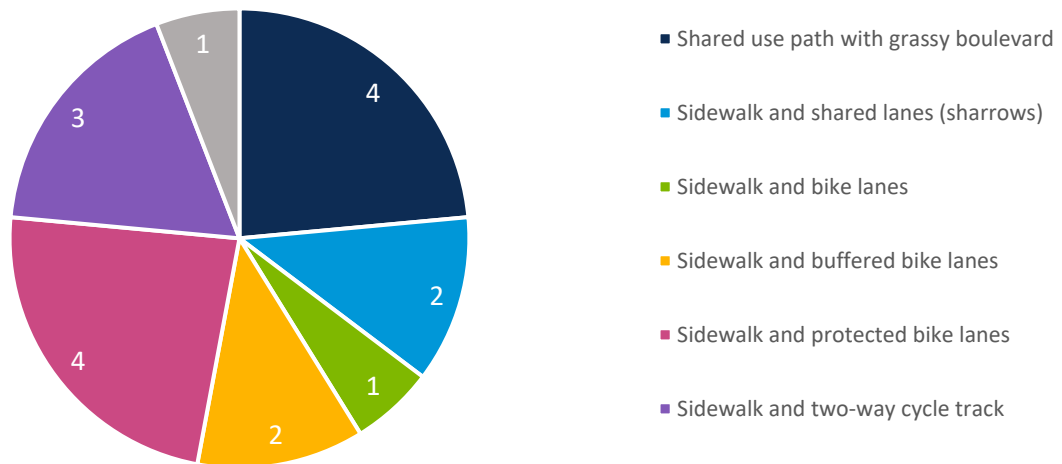
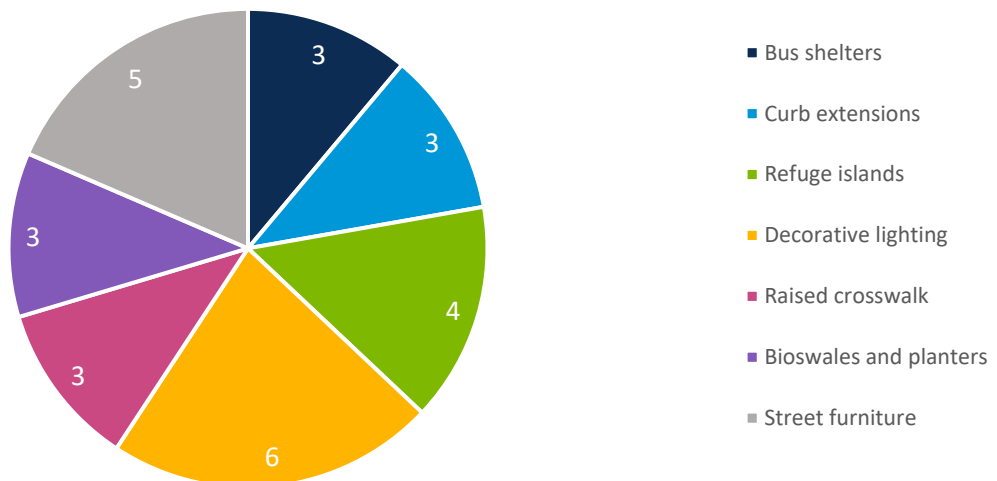


Figure 11: Visioning Survey Responses, Street Features

Which of the street features options would you like to see on Veterans Boulevard? Choose all that apply.



Interactive Issues Map

The interactive issues map allowed participants to drop comments at specific locations around the issues and opportunities for five categories: Pedestrians, Bicyclists, Transit, Traffic, and Other. Ten comments were added to the map. Nine of the comments were related to traffic operations and safety, and one was related to roadway expansion. Below is a copy of all the comments that were added to the map, sorted from north to south along Veterans Boulevard.

40th Avenue South to 52nd Avenue South

- » Consider adding some offset to the left turn lanes [on the northbound and southbound approaches to the intersection of Veterans Boulevard and 40th Avenue South]. It is difficult to see through traffic from the left turn lanes when there are vehicles occupying the turn lane opposite of one another.
- » It appears that the accesses at 38th Ave S and 58th St S for Sheyenne High School are not included in the scope of this study. However, [the intersection of Veterans Boulevard and 40th Avenue South] is. I think that reducing these accesses to right in/right out would improve safety for young drivers attending the high school. Can this intersection be modified to allow SB drivers to U-turn and head north on Veterans?
- » It would be good to look for methods to expand Veteran's Blvd between 40th and 52nd that doesn't involve an entire re-build in order to reduce cost and special assessments on neighboring properties.
- » If we decide to up Veterans Blvd to 4 lanes between 40th and 52nd, possibly further, what do we plan to do about [the three existing roundabouts]? Is there a way to expand them to keep them operational?

52nd Avenue South to 76th Avenue South

- » Possible future intersection [between 52nd Avenue South and 64th Avenue South] providing connection to deer creek and additional connectivity.
- » Consider the possibility of adding a connection to the Deer Creek neighborhood to allow the neighborhood to have access to Veterans. Since this [connection to Veterans at 59th Avenue South] is not a direct route through the neighborhood cut through traffic should not be as much of a concern as allowing the neighborhood additional exit points.
- » Should consider preserving [the segment of the Veterans Boulevard extension between 64th Avenue South and 76th Avenue South] for a future intersection for connectivity between the major arterials.

76th Avenue South to 100th Avenue South

- » Should consider preserving [the segment of the Veterans Boulevard extension between 76th Avenue South and 88th Avenue South] for a future intersection for connectivity between the major arterials.
- » Should consider preserving [the segment of the Veterans Boulevard extension between 88th Avenue South and 100th Avenue South] for a future intersection for connectivity between the major arterials.
- » What if we placed a roundabout at [Veterans Boulevard and 100th Avenue South] to keep traffic flowing smoothly on 100th Avenue?

Figure 12: Comment Type by Location



CORRIDOR VISION

The Veterans Boulevard Corridor Extension presents an opportunity for the community to shape the future road network of the southwest metro area. Neighbors, local business owners, city officials, emergency service workers, non-profit representatives, and city planners were all heard during this engagement process. Each brought a unique perspective to the issues and opportunities in the study area. The Corridor Vision, presented below, is a set of common interests and needs that emerged from the engagement process.

The Veterans Boulevard Corridor will enhance livability and serve the whole community. Creating a “sense of place” was a thread that ran through all the listening sessions. Community members felt that the corridor should be more than just a route through the southwest metro area, and should be a destination. Displays of public art that reflect the community, landscaping, green spaces, tree canopy, and recreational amenities will bring the community’s vision to life.

The Veterans Boulevard Corridor will serve all modes. Throughout the listening sessions, community members expressed the importance of the corridor serving pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorized traffic. The corridor was envisioned as a place where traffic flows smoothly and walking feels comfortable and safe. Beyond the needs of small vehicles, community members envisioned a corridor that was easily navigable by emergency vehicles and buses.

The Veterans Boulevard Corridor will improve connectivity and remain flexible for future growth. Veterans Boulevard is a critical connection between Horace and Fargo. As residential growth continues in the southwest metro area, connections from residential development and major east-west routes to the corridor will need to adapt to shifting demands. The Veterans Boulevard extension was envisioned as a roadway that can grow and change over time, with measures taken today to allow for the addition of intersections and roadway improvements in the future.