



Redesign, Pedestrian & Bike Safety Advocacy

Background

In 2008, Seward Redesign, Seward Neighborhood Group and the Seward Civic and Commerce Association partnered to lead a community planning process called the Franklin Vision. This year long initiative brought together local residents and business owners to identify the strengths and areas for improvement along the Franklin Avenue corridor. Out of this process, “multi-modal movement” was articulated as a core value of the community. More specifically, “crossing” and “biking” were identified as key areas that should be addressed to enhance the community.

The next step in advancing this work came in 2009. Redesign obtained a small grant from the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center to carry out additional planning on transportation related issues. As a part of these efforts, Redesign convened a neighborhood committee to explore options for addressing these concerns. This committee included representatives from SNG and SCCA along with staff from Councilmember Cam Gordon’s office, Hennepin County Public Works and Minneapolis Public Works. Additionally, Redesign asked Transit for Livable Communities, a local non-profit that is a strong advocate for bicycling and pedestrian safety, to participate as well.

In consultation with a contracted transportation planner, this committee studied in depth issues at several key crossings on or near the Franklin Avenue corridor:

- Crossing without traffic signals along East Franklin between 22nd Avenue South and 26th Avenue South
- The intersection of 26th Avenue South and East Franklin Avenue
- The midblock crossing north of Franklin Avenue on 26th Avenue South between Seward Towers West and Triangle Park (the tower’s designated greenspace)

The committee met five times over the course of February, March, and April. Members examined and discussed motorized vehicle counts, pedestrian and bicycle volumes, bus ridership, and motorized vehicle accident data to obtain an accurate picture of the factors that influence walking and bicycling conditions. The committee also mobilized volunteers to spend two hours on a February night to collect additional needed data on pedestrian crossing volumes during peak traffic hours.

Proposed Improvements

After reviewing this information with its transportation planning consultant, the following engineering elements were agreed upon:

- Curb extensions at intersections of 25th Avenue and Franklin, 24th Avenue and Franklin, and 23rd Avenue and Franklin (proposed placement is not expected to result in a decrease in availability of on-street parking)
- Re-striping of Franklin Avenue to include bicycle lanes while leaving room for on-street parking and one lane of traffic in each direction
- Installation of a custom patterned crosswalk at the western north-south crossing of Franklin Avenue at 24th Avenue
- Installation of additional countdown timers at 26th Avenue and Franklin Avenue for the north-south crossings
- Installation of additional lighting along Franklin Avenue between 22nd Avenue and 26th Avenue
- Installation of a neighborhood information kiosk at 26th Avenue and Franklin Avenue
- Installation of neighborhood gateway monuments along Franklin at 23rd Avenue, 24th Avenue, and 25th Avenue

These improvements are intended to achieve the following goals:

- Narrow the Franklin Avenue corridor to encourage slower speeds
- Increase the visibility of pedestrians along the corridor and at key crossings
- Increase safety for bicyclists and acknowledge the inclusion of Franklin Avenue as a bicycle corridor in the City of Minneapolis Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans
- Slow vehicular traffic speeds by enhancing the image and perception of Franklin Avenue as a unique district and a destination as opposed to a thoroughfare.

Implementation of these improvements as currently planned call for the following adjustments to public and private property:

- Elimination of the west bound bus stop on the north side of the intersection at Franklin Avenue and 23rd Avenue to make room for a curb extension along the northern side of the intersection (Redesign has received notification from Metro Transit that this stop has already been targeted for elimination)
- Relocation of the eastbound bus stop at the southwest corner of 24th Avenue to the southeast corner of the intersection (near Himalaya and the Metro Building) to make room for the curb extension at the southwest corner (this changes would require support from the city councilmember and the effected businesses)
- Separate parking lot of Franklin Freeze from lot for Franklin Student Housing Cooperative and restrict driveway facing Franklin Avenue to inbound traffic only to minimize threats to pedestrians crossing at 24th Avenue and Franklin Avenue

Next Steps

Redesign has been informed by the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County that any major roadwork for Franklin Avenue is not included in the current five year capital improvement plan for transportation infrastructure. However, Riverside Avenue is scheduled to be resurfaced starting in 2011, to be completed 2012. Additionally, the City of Minneapolis is in the process of planning for streetscape improvements in the vicinity of the Franklin Avenue LRT station. The timing of both of these projects makes it very important that the community move forward with a vision Franklin Avenue between Riverside and 22nd Avenue so that the designs and decisions regarding these three areas are integrated and reflect the community's goals and concerns.

The improvements described above do not constitute a full transportation plan for Franklin Avenue. Seward Redesign is actively seeking out additional resources that can be used to further elaborate on these concepts.

Drawings illustrating the work describe above are attached.

To find out more, please contact Katya at 612-435-0276, or katya@redesigninc.org