

Staff Report

CAMPUSTOWN INCLUSIVE CROSSWALK

September 14, 2021

BACKGROUND:

At its August 24, 2021 meeting, the City Council directed staff to develop a plan for an inclusive crosswalk at the intersection of Welch Avenue and Chamberlain Street in Campustown and further directed the *ex officio* City Council Liaison to obtain student involvement in the project.

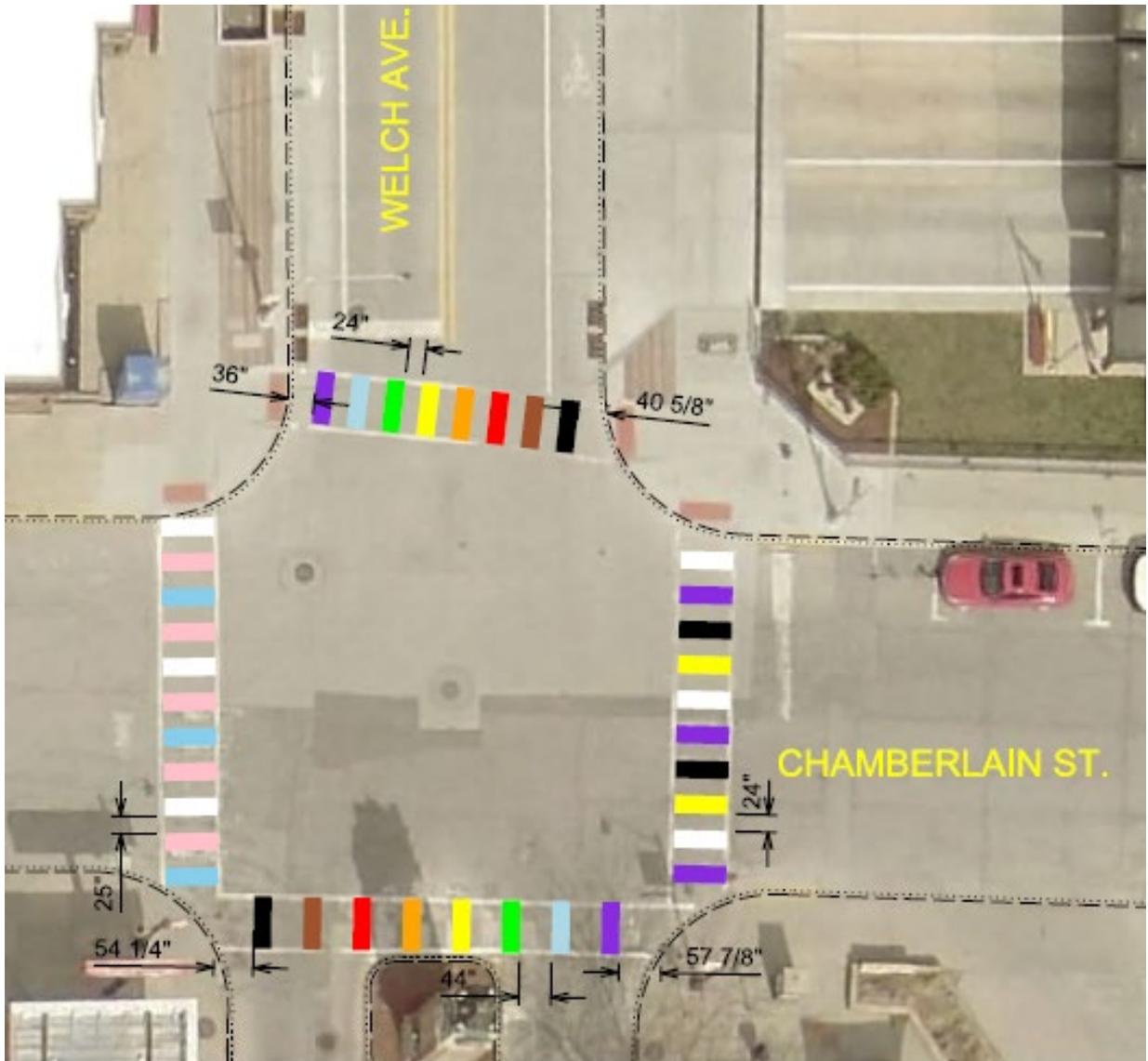
A similar inclusive crosswalk design was installed at the intersection of Fifth Street & Douglas Avenue in 2019 and re-painted in August 2021. The design consists of two-foot by six-foot bars mimicking the “International” crosswalk pattern but installed in various color patterns rather than white. The colored bars are placed within the two parallel six-inch solid white lines that serve as the official crosswalk marking for the intersection, per the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

The concept for the installation Downtown was brought to the City’s attention by the ISU Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, after observing a similar installation in State College, Pennsylvania. The patterns used represent variations of LGBTQ Pride Flag colors in a symbol of the City Council’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. Two of the crossings use the Pride Flag colors plus brown and black to represent racial minorities, one crossing uses blue, pink, and white in a variation of the transgender flag, and the fourth crossing uses white, purple, black, and yellow to represent nonbinary individuals.

Staff has prepared a graphic illustrating the proposed design for the Welch/Chamberlain intersection (see below). **The first question for the City Council is whether the Council approves this proposed design.**

TIMING:

The next major issue to address is the timing of the installation. As with the Downtown installation, staff would intend to use a high-quality household latex paint rather than standard traffic paint. This is primarily due to the lack of availability of traffic paint in the required colors. The drawback to the use of this paint is that it requires a significantly longer drying time. The household paint requires approximately 24 hours to fully cure and protect it from being peeled up by hot vehicle tires driving over it. The installation must occur on a warm, sunny day with no precipitation to be most effective.



Additionally, this intersection experiences significantly more foot traffic, vehicle, and transit buses than the Downtown intersection, making closing the intersection for 24 hours more disruptive. There is also a greater risk of damage to the paint in the overnight hours while the intersection is unattended.

Given the closing window for optimal weather this season, and the need for the paint to cure with minimal disruption overnight, staff recommends that the installation be planned for May 2022 after ISU's spring semester ends. At that time, temperatures will be suitable for the installation and foot and vehicular traffic will be significantly less.

The Council should be aware that the expected life of the paint is 1-2 years, given the harsh winter conditions experienced in Ames. Additionally, the 200 block of Welch Avenue, including up to the middle of this intersection, is planned to be reconstructed in summer 2024, which will result in the crosswalk being partially removed. **As part of the**

preparation for that reconstruction project, the City Council could consider directing staff to explore incorporating longer-lasting colored thermoplastic tiles for the crosswalk when the reconstruction has concluded.

VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT:

As demonstrated in the recent repainting of the Downtown crosswalk, the installation of an inclusive crosswalk is a project that can easily incorporate volunteers. Since this intersection has not been painted before, staff estimates that preparatory work (measuring and taping) will require additional time compared to the recent Downtown repainting.

Staff estimates that a team of 2-4 City staff paired with 8-10 volunteers could tape the outlines in approximately three hours, and up to 15 volunteers could paint the bars and clean up the site in approximately two hours.

COST:

City staff estimates the cost for the paint and consumable supplies for this project to be less than \$1,500. In addition, staff time will be required to organize the logistics, prepare the pavement, supervise the volunteer work, and complete the final clean-up required to open the intersection. The staff time costs would not be charged to the project.

Staff recommends that the funding for the paint and supplies come from the Road Use Tax Fund, which was the source used to install the original crosswalk Downtown.

OPTIONS:

1. Direct staff to:
 - a. Proceed with the design prepared by staff for an installation of an inclusive crosswalk at the intersection of Welch Avenue and Chamberlain Street
 - b. Plan for installation to occur in May 2022 after ISU's spring semester ends.
 - c. Authorize funds from the Road Use Tax Fund to finance the project.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff regarding the design, timing, and funding source for the project.

STAFF COMMENTS:

The inclusive crosswalk project is a visible symbol of the City Council's commitment to diversity and inclusion. The initial installation in Downtown exceeded staff's

expectations for durability and cost. The project is manageable for a group of volunteers to undertake with City staff supervision.

The Council may recall that prior to the Downtown installation in 2019, the City received notice from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that the installation would not comply with FHWA policy. The City Council requested and received a memo from the City Attorney indicating that the FHWA's letter would not, in and of itself, increase the City's liability.

Following the installation, FHWA issued a letter of non-compliance and requested that the installation be removed. City staff has not received any subsequent communications from FHWA regarding the Downtown crosswalk, nor has staff received any FHWA communications regarding this proposed Campustown crosswalk. It is important to note that neither the Downtown location, nor the intersection of Welch/Chamberlain, is a state or federal highway or classified in the Urban Federal Functional Classification scheme.

As with the Downtown installation, the Public Works engineering staff cannot make a professional recommendation in support of the installation of the decorative inclusive crosswalk knowing it contravenes FHWA policy and could result in a letter of non-compliance. However, the City Council may choose to weigh the information provided in this report and direct staff to move forward with the installation.