

ITEM #: 35  
DATE: 05-09-23  
DEPT: ADMIN

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: RAGBRAI ROAD AND PARKING CLOSURES**

**BACKGROUND:**

Ames will be an overnight stop for RAGBRAI L (50) from Tuesday, July 25, through Wednesday, July 26. Approximately 20,000 registered bicycle riders, 5,500 support personnel, and several thousand additional non-registered bicyclists are expected to arrive beginning the morning of July 25 from Carroll. They will depart on the morning of July 26 for Des Moines.

Discover Ames is leading the local RAGBRAI organizing committee in preparation of RAGBRAI's arrival in Ames. Logistics relating to the entertainment are being coordinated by Ames Main Street, although RAGBRAI itself is responsible for booking and supporting the main stage entertainment this year instead of the local committees which have historically organized the entertainment.

For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of RAGBRAI, the 2023 route incorporates many of the stops that hosted riders during the first RAGBRAI in 1973, including Ames. Ames was last an overnight stop for RAGBRAI in 2018. **It is anticipated that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, combined with a shorter ride from Ames to Des Moines on Wednesday, will result in a significant increase in participants compared to a typical RAGBRAI leg.**

The proposed route will enter Ames from the southwest on July 25, following South Dakota Avenue to Mortensen Road, taking Mortensen Road to Beach Avenue, Beach Avenue to the Reiman Gardens service entrance, touring around the outside and inside of Jack Trice Stadium, and taking the East Gateway Bridge to the official welcome area east of University Boulevard.

The following day, July 26, riders will collect on University Boulevard between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and South 16<sup>th</sup> Street, then take Mortensen Road westbound in a reverse of the inbound route. Riders will continue on Mortensen to South Dakota Avenue and turn south to follow R-38 out of Ames towards Des Moines.

The volume of riders who are anticipated to participate will require the closure of many City streets to ensure safe travel through the community. The proposed route follows much of the 2018 route, which staff believes was successful at providing an enjoyable and safe ride for participants while minimizing disruption to community members. The proposed route allows residents to detour through areas to access homes and businesses.

## **INBOUND ROUTE:**

The route indicated below will be in use on Tuesday, July 25 from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Streets where the traffic lanes will be partially or completely closed to vehicle traffic are underlined. Where an intersection is indicated as “controlled,” vehicle traffic will be allowed to cross to the opposite side of the route using traffic signals or following staff/volunteer instructions.

- Riders will approach Ames from the south by riding northbound along R38/South Dakota Avenue. They will ride intermixed with vehicular traffic during this approach.
  - To reduce backups on the westbound off-ramp from U.S. 30 at S. Dakota, staff has consulted with DOT about closing this off-ramp for the day. Vehicles will instead use the University Boulevard or X Avenue exits.
- Riders will turn east on Mortensen Road. The intersection of Mortensen and Coconino Road will be controlled for vehicular access with a temporary traffic signal. Mortensen Road, from east of Pinon Drive to Ash Avenue, will be closed to vehicle traffic to provide bicyclists the full width of the road.
- Dotson Drive will be closed between Mortensen Road and the southwest parking lot of Ames Middle School. This will maintain access to the Middle School for any activities occurring that day.
- Seagrave Boulevard will be closed. Residents in this neighborhood will use Coconino Road as the single point of entry/egress to this neighborhood.
  - An information tent for riders will be placed in the Seagrave Boulevard median to address rider questions as they enter Ames.
- The intersection of State Avenue and Mortensen Road will be controlled to facilitate drivers who need to cross the route on State Avenue.
- Gateway Hills Park Drive will be blocked at Mortensen Road. Residents living along Gateway Hills Park Drive, along with those who need access to the Parks and Recreation Office and the Ames/ISU Ice Arena, will cross the route at Hayward Avenue, which will be controlled by a temporary traffic signal.
  - The Ice Arena will be closed for maintenance while RAGBRAI is occurring.
  - Residents living in the apartments at 2300 Mortensen will be provided access across the route through the ISU Towers parking lot access.
- Once riders reach the median-separated portion of Mortensen Road at Ash Avenue, they will be guided onto the eastbound portion of the boulevard. The

eastbound lanes of the boulevard will be closed to vehicle traffic between Ash Avenue and University Boulevard to provide a large, dedicated lane for RAGBRAI riders.

- The two westbound lanes of the boulevard will be used for westbound, one-way local traffic. This will allow residents to access and leave their homes. Residents will circulate clockwise the enter and exit their homes accessed off this portion of the route.
- A temporary traffic signal will be used at Big Bluestem Court and Little Bluestem Court to provide access for residents.
- RAGBRAI riders will turn north onto Beach Avenue. The northbound lane of Beach Avenue will be closed to vehicle traffic between Mortensen and Greenbriar Circle.
  - The southbound lane of Beach Avenue between Mortensen and just south of Greenbriar Circle will be a one-way access for residents who live along Beach and on Indian Grass Court. These residents will leave their homes and head southbound, and will return to their homes from the north.
  - The closure of Mortensen will continue through to University Boulevard to prevent vehicles from conflicting with riders at Mortensen and Beach.
- Riders will travel along Beach until they reach the Reiman Gardens access drive, where they will turn east and circulate counterclockwise around Jack Trice Stadium. At the north end of the stadium, the riders will enter the stadium and circulate to the East Gateway Bridge, which they will cross to access the main welcome area in the parking lots east of University Boulevard.

### **WELCOME AND CAMPING AREAS:**

- The Welcome Area will be set up east of University Boulevard in the parking lots at the end of the East Gateway Bridge. Riders will disperse north and south from the Welcome Area to their camping areas.
- Due to the volume of bicycle traffic crossing it, South 4<sup>th</sup> Street will be closed between University Boulevard and South Hazel Avenue from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on July 25. The street will reopen overnight, and then be closed again on the morning of July 26 from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. to serve as a designated drop-off location for vehicles delivering riders who are participating in the Ames to Des Moines leg of RAGBRAI.
- Because Brookside Park will be a main camping area for riders, it is anticipated many people and support vehicles will be entering and exiting this area.

Therefore, 6<sup>th</sup> Street between University Boulevard and Brookridge Avenue will be closed from 8:00 a.m. July 25 through approximately 10:00 a.m. July 26.

- Registered support vehicles will be allowed access, along with other City staff and RAGBRAI support vehicles. CyRide will be allowed access through this area to connect between east and west Ames.

## **OUTBOUND ROUTE:**

**The closures indicated below will take place on Wednesday, July 26 from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.**

- The main outbound route assembly point will be along University Boulevard between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and South 16<sup>th</sup> Street. Much of the outbound route will intermingle RAGBRAI riders with vehicle traffic, unlike the previous day's route. This is for two primary reasons:
  - Lower anticipated vehicle traffic on this portion of the route (early morning, summer traffic)
  - Shorter duration of bicycle traffic
- Staff anticipates directing riders from the Brookside camping area onto southbound University Boulevard. Staff will control the traffic signals at 6<sup>th</sup>/University, Lincoln Way/University, Jack Trice Way/University, and S. 16<sup>th</sup>/University to facilitate cross traffic access.
- Riders will turn west onto Mortensen Road. The traffic control devices used for the inbound route on Mortensen will remain in place for the outbound leg. Therefore, the bicyclists will ride in the eastbound lanes of the Mortensen Road boulevard, which will be closed to vehicle traffic. Vehicle traffic will be able to use the westbound lanes for one-way access between Beach Road and Ash Avenue.
- Temporary traffic signals at Big Bluestem Court, Hayward Avenue, and Coconino Road will be used to stop riders as necessary to provide local traffic access into and out of these neighborhoods. The traffic signal at State Avenue and Mortensen Road will also be used to manage cross-route vehicle traffic.
- Riders will turn south onto South Dakota Avenue. Both U.S. 30 off-ramps at South Dakota will be closed during the outbound ride to avoid vehicle conflicts.
- As indicated in the section above, South 4<sup>th</sup> Street between University Boulevard and Hazel Avenue will be closed to through traffic so it can serve as a gathering point for bicyclists to be dropped off from vehicles to join the ride. This location will be most accessible to vehicles driving into Ames from the north, east, or

south. A second drop-off point will be established at Latimer Lane, which will be closed to allow drivers who enter Ames from the west to drop off riders, who can then ride southbound on State Avenue to join the RAGBRAI route at Mortensen Road. This will require the closure of Latimer Lane and Tripp Street between Wilmoth Avenue and State Avenue.

### **GENERAL NOTES:**

The closures described above will require a mix of volunteers, City staff, Ames Police, ISU Police, and outside contracted law enforcement agencies to manage. Additionally, City staff anticipates using nearly the entire City inventory of temporary traffic control devices, and incurring approximately \$3,000-\$5,000 in costs to rent additional traffic control devices for this two-day period. Additionally, staff will use the City's Sign Shop to create custom directional signage to facilitate rider and motorist movements.

At various locations along the route, staff will utilize electronic message boards to warn motorists and residents about the planned closures in the week prior to the event, and will also use these signs on the day of the event to direct traffic. In addition, staff has coordinated with DOT to notify those driving to Ames on I-35 about potential detours and delays.

**Although the proposed route will minimize the number of residents who are potentially affected, there will undoubtedly be delays and disruption to some portions of the traveling community these days. Even with a substantial outreach and detour plan, City staff expects that an event of this magnitude will cause some frustration to residents!**

In June, RAGBRAI staff will ride the planned route and identify any potential hazards the City may need to address. City staff already plans to inspect the proposed route in the months and weeks prior to RAGBRAI to ensure any roadway defects are corrected, with the goal of creating a safe riding surface for the thousands of bicyclists who will participate.

Requests related to the downtown entertainment area will be presented to the City Council at a later date.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve the proposed road closures as indicated above.
2. Direct staff to work with RAGBRAI to develop an alternate route.
3. Do not approve road closures for RAGBRAI.

**CITY MANAGER’S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Hosting RAGBRAI as an overnight town is an excellent opportunity to showcase the community for a large number of visitors. It also requires a significant investment in time and materials to plan and implement the necessary closures to create a safe and minimally disruptive route. **Even with such planning, residents should expect delays and detours to access their homes and businesses on these two days!**

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby approving the proposed road closures as indicated above.

RAGBRAI Route Overview

