ITEM #:	**39**
DATE:	**05-26-26**
DEPT:	**PW**

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: 2025/26 MULTI-MODAL ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS (WILDER BOULEVARD - MINI ROUNDABOUT CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT)

BACKGROUND:

The Multi-Modal Roadway Improvements Program is intended to improve safety and operations for multiple roadway users, including motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. **The Wilder Boulevard Mini-Roundabout Corridor project was programmed in the CIP to accomplish traffic calming improvements between Lincoln Way and Mortensen Road.**

The Wilder Boulevard corridor has been the subject of traffic calming discussions for several years following the extension of Mortensen Road and the connection of Wilder Boulevard. While the corridor has not experienced a significant crash history (seven total crashes since 2016), concerns raised by residents and observed by staff have included excessive vehicle speeds, cut-through traffic, inconsistent compliance with stop controls, and pedestrian safety along a corridor with significant neighborhood walking activity, including access to Edwards Elementary School and Daley Park.

To better understand corridor conditions, a speed study was completed in 2022, utilizing data collected in 2020 and 2021. The study reviewed average vehicle speeds, 85th percentile speeds, pace speeds, and the percentage of vehicles traveling 10 MPH or more above the posted speed limit. **The study identified notable levels of excessive speeding at multiple locations along the corridor, particularly on the northern portion of Wilder Boulevard.**

Based on those findings, all-way stop control was implemented at selected intersections as an interim traffic calming measure in 2023 while longer-term improvements continued to be evaluated through the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) process.

MINI ROUNDABOUT DESIGN DEVELOPMENT:

At its October 14, 2025 meeting, City Council approved a professional services agreement with Strand Associates, Inc. of Ames, Iowa, to complete the design of the project, including public engagement activities and at least one public information meeting. Strand has been involved in the successful deployment of mini-roundabout designs elsewhere in the Midwest.

The proposed improvements were intended to:

- Reduce excessive speeds through physical traffic calming;
- Improve consistency of driver behavior compared to stop-control noncompliance;
- Reduce conflict points at intersections*;
- Maintain traffic flow while slowing vehicle movements; and

- Improve overall corridor function as the surrounding area continues to develop.

*[FHWA-RD-00-067; Chapter 5] A conventional four-legged intersection has 32 vehicle conflict points and 24 pedestrian conflict points. By comparison, a single-lane roundabout has only 8 vehicle conflict points and 8 pedestrian conflict points. This is a 75% reduction in potential crash locations.

Following implementation of the all-way stop controls in 2023, staff continued to receive comments regarding speeding, stop sign compliance, pedestrian safety, and increasing traffic volumes associated with continued area development and future amenities such as the Daley Park splash pad.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Following the development of preliminary layouts and visual exhibits for the proposed improvements, a public information meeting was held on April 16, 2026 at Edwards Elementary School. Invitations for the meeting were mailed to 156 addresses using a minimum notification distance of approximately 400 feet, while also expanding the mailing area to include properties that require travel through one of the three proposed intersections. Social media posts and dynamic message boards displaying meeting information were also utilized prior to the meeting.

Approximately 79 attendees signed in, with estimated actual attendance around 100 people. Written comments and emails submitted before, during, and after the meeting reflected a wide range of opinions regarding both the need for improvements and the proposed use of mini-roundabouts (see attachments).

PUBLIC FEEDBACK SUMMARY:

Public feedback received generally fell into one of three categories:

- Residents opposed to mini-roundabouts or opposed to corridor changes altogether;
- Residents supportive of the proposed mini-roundabouts;
- Residents supportive of addressing traffic and safety concerns, but uncertain whether mini-roundabouts were the preferred solution.

A summary prepared following the public meeting categorized comments as approximately:

- 50% opposed to mini-roundabouts,
- 21% supportive, and
- 29% seeking additional information or alternative approaches.

While opinions differed significantly regarding the proposed solution, several themes consistently emerged during discussions and written comments:

CONTINUED CORRIDOR SAFETY CONCERNS:

Even among some residents opposed to mini-roundabouts, there was acknowledgment that issues exist along the corridor, including:

- Vehicles speeding between stop-controlled intersections

- Drivers failing to fully stop at all-way stop intersections
- Increasing cut-through traffic associated with west Ames development, and
- Concern regarding pedestrian crossings, particularly for children accessing Edwards Elementary School and Daley Park.

CONCERNS REGARDING MINI-ROUNDABOUTS:

The most common concern expressed at the meeting and in written comments related to pedestrian safety at crosswalks associated with mini-roundabouts. Many residents expressed concern that drivers may fail to yield to pedestrians because vehicles would no longer be required to stop at intersections.

Staff notes that this concern is commonly expressed during public engagement processes for roundabout projects nationally, particularly in areas where residents have limited familiarity with mini-roundabouts. Discussions with peer agencies and traffic engineering professionals indicate that concerns regarding pedestrian yielding are frequently raised prior to implementation, but do not generally manifest at the level anticipated once roundabouts are operational.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS:

Residents also expressed concerns regarding:

- Construction impacts and neighborhood access
- Potential loss of parking
- Accommodation of school buses, snowplows, and emergency vehicles
- Project cost, and
- Whether three roundabouts were necessary versus one or two locations.

Staff recognizes that the construction process brings challenges and inconveniences. However, these are typically short lived while construction activities are occurring. Staff would work with impacted residents in a manner similar to all CIP projects to minimize those impacts during construction. Additionally, the mini-roundabouts are designed to accommodate and work with larger vehicles including buses, snowplows, and emergency response vehicles. The designs may require that trailing axles of larger vehicles utilize the sloped curb in the middle of the mini-roundabout. Those areas are intentionally designed to withstand vehicular loads when necessary.

OUTREACH CONCERNS:

An additional topic at the public meeting was concern regarding the extent of mailed notification for the project. While staff mailed notices to properties directly adjacent to Wilder Boulevard, side streets requiring travel through the impacted intersections, and an area greater than 400 feet from the corridor; several residents felt a broader area should have been included in the mailing.

At the same time, staff observed that neighborhood word-of-mouth communication, social media, and the use of dynamic message boards proved highly effective, resulting in substantially higher meeting attendance than is typical for similar neighborhood infrastructure projects.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. **Conduct additional neighborhood outreach or survey efforts to a designated area.**

   Council could direct staff to perform additional outreach efforts, such as an online survey distributed to a larger neighborhood area or a greater selected buffer distance determined by Council. This outreach would provide an additional opportunity to better understand broader neighborhood perspectives regarding the proposed use of mini-roundabouts within this corridor area prior to determining whether to proceed with, delay, or modify the project.

   The purpose of the additional outreach would be to gauge broader community comfort, familiarity, and acceptance regarding the proposed traffic calming approach and corridor improvements, rather than to conduct a public selection process for specific engineering treatments or traffic control measures. Engineering evaluation, safety analysis, operational considerations, and final improvement recommendations would continue to be developed by staff utilizing established traffic engineering practices, applicable guidance, and corridor-specific conditions.

2. **Delay the project to allow additional community familiarity with mini-roundabouts through implementation at other locations in Ames, and reprogram the funds for other multi-modal improvements.**

   Council could direct staff to delay the project and revisit the corridor in the future after mini-roundabouts have been implemented at other locations within Ames. This option would allow residents time to gain additional familiarity with mini-roundabouts before reconsidering their use along Wilder Boulevard, while maintaining the current all-way stop controls in the interim. If this option is selected, future reevaluation of the corridor could occur if:

   - Speeding concerns increase
   - Stop sign compliance significantly deteriorates, or
   - Additional corridor development changes traffic conditions.

   Staff notes that if the corridor is revisited in the future due to stop sign compliance concerns, mini-roundabouts would likely remain a leading traffic calming solution because of their operational and safety benefits compared to continued all-way stop control.

3. **Proceed with all or part of the proposed mini-roundabout project.**

   Council could direct staff to proceed with final design and construction of all three proposed mini-roundabouts, or selected portions of the project. This option would continue implementation of the originally proposed traffic calming strategy intended to address speeding, stop sign compliance, and pedestrian safety concerns along the corridor.

4. **Pursue an alternative approach as directed by Council.**

   Council could direct staff to pursue alternative traffic calming measures or operational

changes, including but not limited to:

- Raised crosswalks (engineered speed hump with sidewalk integration)
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) pedestrian crossings
- Dynamic speed feedback signs
- Additional enforcement
- Modifications to existing stop controls, or
- Reevaluation of all-way stop warrants.

Staff notes that while there were several comments related to increasing enforcement of speed and stop-controlled intersections along Wilder Boulevard, police resources need to be considered before relying on sustained enforcement efforts as the primary method to maintain corridor operations and compliance. Additionally, staff believes alternatives heavily reliant on continued enforcement activities may not represent the most sustainable long-term corridor solution.

Many of the alternative traffic calming measures identified in this option can be effective when applied in appropriate roadway contexts; however, their effectiveness varies depending on corridor conditions and the specific operational concerns being addressed.

Several measures, such as raised crosswalks and RRFB pedestrian crossings, are generally most effective at midblock pedestrian crossing locations rather than at, or in close proximity to, all-way stop-controlled intersections where vehicles are already expected to slow or stop. Additionally, treatments intended to introduce or reinforce motorist yielding behavior are generally not compatible with stop-controlled intersection approaches under applicable State and Federal traffic control guidance and standards.

Implementation of traffic calming measures in locations where they are not optimally suited may result in diminished long-term effectiveness while still requiring ongoing maintenance and operational costs. Based on the combination of observed speeding patterns, cut-through traffic, inconsistent stop-control compliance, and pedestrian activity along the corridor, the mini-roundabout concept was identified through the engineering evaluation process as the most comprehensive approach for addressing the corridor's multiple operational and safety concerns.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The current all-way stop controls along Wilder Boulevard were originally implemented as an interim measure intended to reduce speeds and aid in corridor transition as development expanded in west Ames. **Public feedback received during this process indicates neighborhood support for maintaining the existing stop controls at this time.**

Staff acknowledges that all-way stop compliance may continue to decline over time due to relatively low side-street traffic volumes at several intersections. Reduced compliance with stop-controlled intersections is a known operational issue in corridors where drivers perceive low conflicting traffic demand. Several meeting attendees specifically acknowledged that rolling stops and stop sign violations already occur today.

Mini-roundabouts were selected for evaluation because they provide continuous physical traffic calming and reduce the ability for vehicles to accelerate aggressively between intersections, while also reducing the number and severity of vehicle conflict points compared to traditional intersections.

However, based on the public feedback received, staff believes there may be value in allowing residents additional time to become familiar with mini-roundabouts through implementation in other areas of the community before reconsidering their use on Wilder Boulevard. Staff notes that the design work completed through this project has already resulted in mini-roundabout templates that are being incorporated into other developments currently under design within Ames, including new proposed Auburn Trail Development west of Ada Hayden Park. Additionally, FY 2030/31 of the current CIP also includes a mini-roundabout corridor project along Hyde Avenue to help with similar traffic calming through the local neighborhood.

Staff also recognizes that additional outreach could be conducted if directed by Council. However, staff believes much of the current public concern is associated with limited local familiarity with mini-roundabouts, which may change as additional examples are constructed elsewhere within the community.

If this project is delayed, staff would recommend that the available funds for this project be reallocated to make multi-modal improvements in coordination with other active improvement projects. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 2, as noted above.

ATTACHMENT(S):
Wilder Crash Report.pdf
Speed Study Summary.pdf
Wilder Mailing Map.pdf
Wilder Blvd Meeting Comment Summary.pdf
Wilder Public Emails_05112026.pdf
Received Letters.pdf
Mini Roundabout Exhibits.pdf