

# Two Big Projects, No New Taxes

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# Introduction

Ralston Road and W. 72nd Avenue are major east-west corridors each serving more than 20,000 vehicles a day. Both provide access to north-south routes including three State highways. Both provide access to major destinations including retail areas, recreation and schools. The 2014 update to the Comprehensive Plan generated transportation models indicating that the congestion, operation, and safety of Ralston Road and W. 72nd Avenue will deteriorate with the build-out of the City, and roadways will perform at the lowest levels of service.

### In this ebook, you can:

- Find out more about the conditions that make these projects important
- Learn about how the projects are being financed
- Learn about the phases of complex construction projects
- Read frequently asked questions about the projects
- Find out where to get project updates



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# W. 72nd Avenue Bond Project

### Project Information

In the November 6, 2018 election, Arvada residents approved Ballot Issue 3F for a bond issue to fund improvements to Ralston Road and W. 72nd Avenue. On February 13, 2019 bonds were issued to provide funding for the 72nd Avenue and Ralston Road projects.

Shortly after the bond measure passed, the City's consultant team began performing field work including topographic and right-of-way surveys, geo-technical drilling, environmental investigations and utility locating. Coordination efforts continue with stakeholders, including the Union Pacific Railroad, Xcel Energy, etc.

### What Makes the W. 72nd Avenue Project Important?

W. 72nd Avenue is an arterial parkway and a major east-west corridor for Arvada's transportation network, serving 21,000 vehicle trips each day. It provides connectivity to major north-south corridors including three State Highways (SH-95/Sheridan Blvd., SH-121/Wadsworth Blvd., and SH-72/Indiana St). This regional corridor not only serves all of Arvada, it provides access to Westminster and Golden/Jefferson County. Major destinations served by W. 72nd Avenue include the Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities, the Apex Center, West Woods Golf Club, Majestic View Nature Center,

and regional shopping. Several schools are also accessed via this corridor, including Oberon and North Arvada Middle Schools; Lincoln Academy; and Campbell, Van Arsdale, and West Woods Elementary Schools.

The [Citizens' Capital Improvement Plan Committee \(CCIPC\)](#) twice ranked improvements to W. 72nd Avenue as a high priority. The project also meets concerns expressed in recent [Arvada Community Surveys](#). And the [2014 Comprehensive Plan](#) generated transportation models indicating that the congestion, operation, and safety of W. 72nd Avenue will deteriorate with the build-out of the City and roadways will perform at the lowest levels of service.

To follow project status, please visit [arvada.org/w-72nd-avenue-project](http://arvada.org/w-72nd-avenue-project)

# W. 72nd Ave Current Conditions



- West of Kipling Street, W. 72nd Avenue reduces from four lanes to two, creating a bottleneck.
- The at-grade Union Pacific Railroad crossing near Oak Street creates major traffic backups when a train passes through.
- The intermittent or absent sidewalks create unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.



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# Ralston Road: A Project in Two Phases

### What Makes the Ralston Road Project Important?

Ralston Road is an arterial roadway and a major east-west corridor for Arvada's transportation network, serving 23,000 vehicle trips each day. It provides connectivity to major north-south corridors including three State Highways (SH-95/Sheridan Blvd., SH-121/Wadsworth Blvd., and SH-72/Ward Road). The Regional Transportation District (RTD) operates five bus lines using portions of Ralston Road. Major destinations served by Ralston Road include Olde Town, Stenger/Lutz Sports Complex, City Hall, Ralston Central Park, and the Ralston Creek North shopping area.

The [Citizens Capital Improvement Plan Committee \(CCIPC\)](#) has twice ranked Ralston Road improvements as the number one transportation priority and recommended it for funding to the City Council. The project also addresses concerns expressed in recent [Arvada Community Surveys](#). And the [2014 Comprehensive Plan](#) generated transportation models indicating that the congestion, operation, and safety of Ralston Road will deteriorate with the build-out of the City, and roadways will perform at the lowest levels of service.

### Phase One: Upham to Yukon Street

This project will reconstruct roadway pavement, widen traffic lanes and provide wider sidewalks to improve traffic flow and safety for drivers and pedestrians. This phase is funded by a grant and local funds.

### Phase Two: Yukon to Garrison Street

In addition to widening the road, the \$15.3 million project cost includes streetlights and streetscape features to enhance the visual character of the historic roadway, and the purchase of right-of-way from adjacent property owners to widen sidewalks. These improvements will create a safer and improved transportation corridor and a pedestrian/cyclist friendly environment to access the destinations on the north and south sides of the roadway. This phase is funded by the 3F Bond Measure.

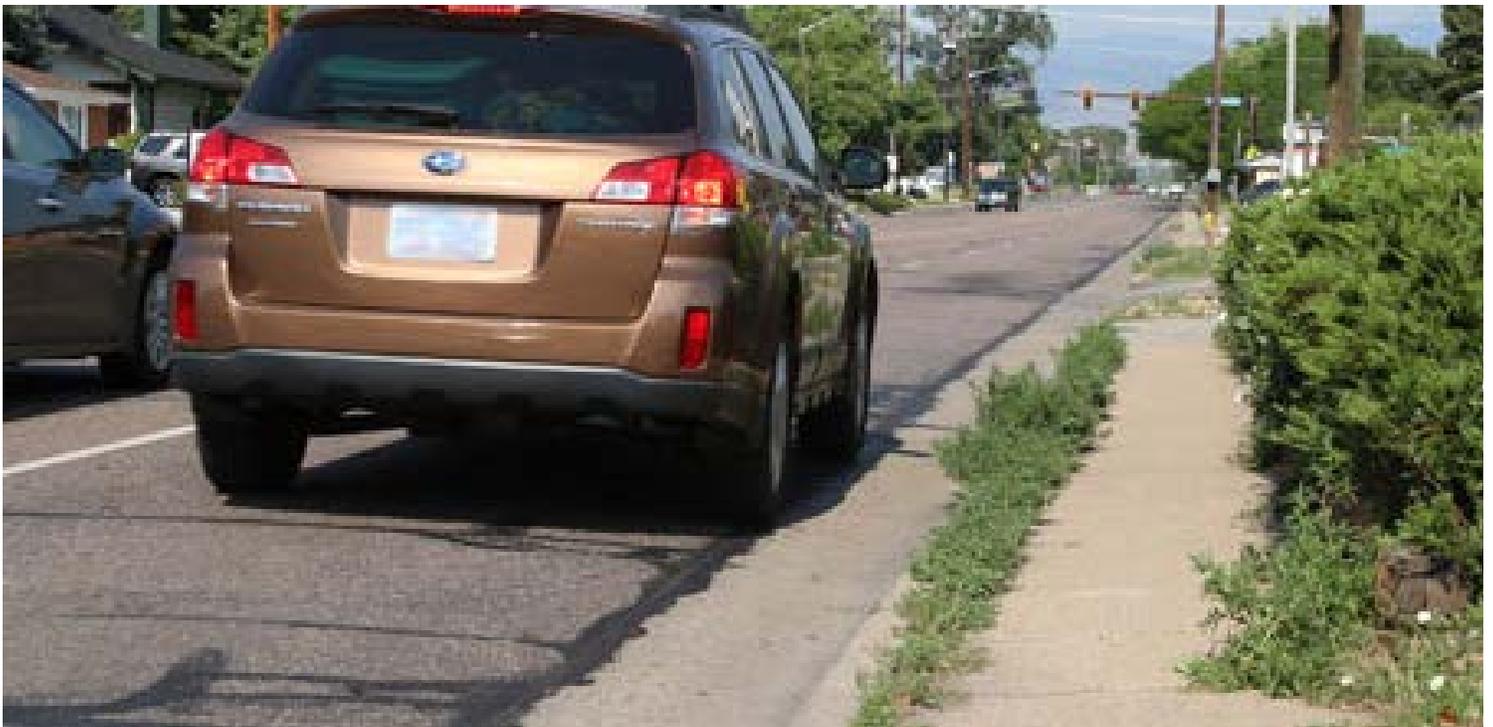
To follow project status, please visit [arvada.org/ralston-road-project](http://arvada.org/ralston-road-project)

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# Ralston Road Current Conditions



- Vehicle lanes are narrow
- Rate of side-swipe and intersection crashes is high compared to similar roadways.
- Unsafe pedestrian conditions
- Bicycling is unsafe and prohibited along the corridor.
- Drivers experience apprehension when stopped in the center two-way-left-turn lane when attempting to access driveways and side-streets.
- Winter weather conditions are particularly hazardous on this corridor.



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# Financing for 3F Bond Authorization Projects

### 2018 Ballot Measure

In the November 6, 2018 election, Arvada residents approved Ballot Issue 3F for a bond issue to fund improvements to Ralston Road and W. 72nd Avenue

The Colorado Constitutional provision known as TABOR (Taxpayer's Bill of Rights) requires that voters must approve whether local government can issue debt--essentially borrow money. On August 27, 2018, City Council voted unanimously (7 - 0) to place an issue on the November ballot asking citizens to allow bonding to fund two capital improvement projects. Municipal bonds are commonly used by cities to fund capital improvement projects.

### How Can the Projects be Funded with No New Taxes?

In 2018, the City finished paying off a previously issued bond, freeing up \$4.5 million in annual payments already accounted for in the City's

current budget. "Debt re-authorization" means voters agree to allow the money from the previous bond to be applied to a new bond whose funds would be used for the new capital improvement projects.

These two major transportation projects will require \$79.8 million to complete:

- Ralston Road between Yukon and Garrison St.: \$15.3 million
- W. 72nd Avenue between Kipling St. and Simms St.: \$64.5 million

The cost of the bond repayment would be \$5.5 million per year. Because \$4.5 million per year is already in the budget, and the source for the additional \$1 million per year has already been identified, no new taxes were required to complete these two big projects. Ralston Road (Upham to Yukon Street) is being funded through a grant and local funds.

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# Financing for 3F Bond Authorization Projects

### Benefits of Funding Now

#### Time Saved

Once the bond is issued, the projects will be completed in five years. Building up the necessary funds to cash finance the projects would take approximately two decades.

#### Money Saved

Funding the projects now allows the City to borrow money at less than 3.5%, a much lower rate than ongoing inflation of road construction costs. In fact, if the City were to wait to cash finance these two projects, because of the time it would take to do so and accounting for

inflation, the total projects cost would go from \$79.8 million to \$130 million.

### Arvada's Commitment to Capital Projects

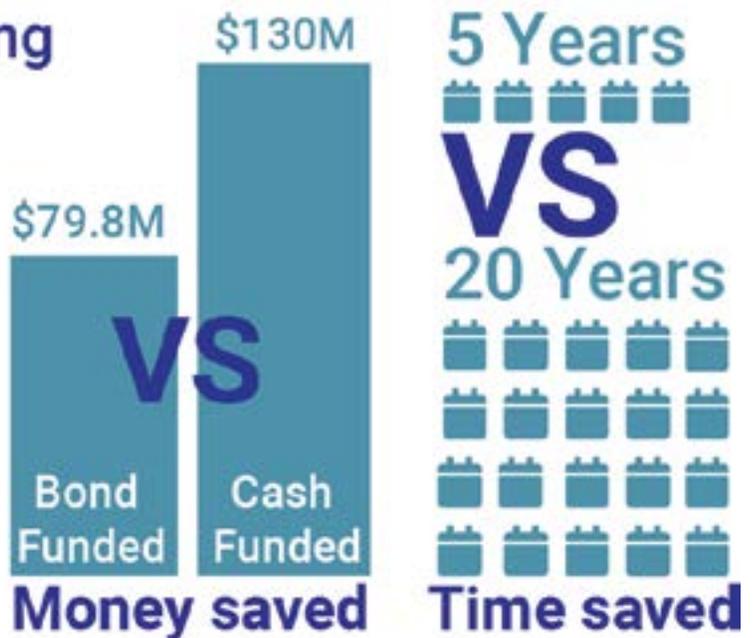
By charter, the City of Arvada is required to spend 60% of each \$.01 of sales tax revenues on capital improvements (or toward the repayment of debt related to capital improvements). The \$5.5 million directed annually to the repayment of funding these projects would contribute toward satisfying that requirement.

## Benefits of Bond Funding Versus Cash Funding

2 Big Projects



3F Bond Measure approved by voters November 6, 2018



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# Phases of Complex Construction Projects

Before a shovel breaks ground for a construction project, there is a lot of work that takes place. First, the City needs to understand the problem. There are many routes to gathering information: Community Surveys, community meetings, Citizen Boards and Commissions and City Council priorities.

Once the problem has been defined, the project can move into the initial design phases. In these phases, the design is developed in more detail. Cost estimates can be developed.

Right of way (ROW) acquisition can begin once the project design reaches 30%. The City strives to complete projects within our current ROW but it is not always possible. You can learn

more about the ROW acquisition process in the Frequently asked questions of this ebook.

During the final design phase, construction documents are produced and bids are accepted for construction. During this time, private utility companies begin the process of relocating their facilities as needed.

Finally, construction begins. There are workers active in the construction zone. There may be new traffic patterns, police providing traffic control, or other changes to the roadway. It is important that all drivers maintain reduced speeds and watch for flaggers and other workers while traveling through the work zone.





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# Frequently Asked Questions

### **How do these projects figure into the City Council priority areas?**

Projects align and contribute to all priority areas identified in the [City Council Strategic Plan](#): Growth and Economic Development, Infrastructure, Vibrant Community and Neighborhoods, Organizational and Service Effectiveness, and Safe Community.

### **How long have you known about these project needs?**

The City of Arvada has known about the need to complete these projects for approximately 20 years. In the 1980s, the City initiated a long-range planning process called the [Comprehensive Plan](#) to forecast, plan, and manage growth. These long-range forecasts are adjusted every 10 years based on updated population (census) data, economic trends,

and public input. In the early 2000s, engineering consultants reviewed the City's transportation plan and completed technical work to study property impacts as a result of various roadway widening projects identified in previous plans. In 2004, the Comprehensive Plan was updated and confirmed the transportation improvement needs for W 72nd Avenue and Ralston Road. The latest 2014 update to the [Comprehensive Plan](#) (forecasting conditions for 2045) generated transportation models indicating that the congestion, operation, and safety of W 72nd Avenue and Ralston Road will be deteriorating in the near term with the build-out of the City, and the roadways will be performing at the lowest levels of service.

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# Frequently Asked Questions

### **Are there studies that prove these project improvements will decrease traffic congestion in Arvada?**

Yes. In an effort to properly manage growth, the City of Arvada conducts major citywide technical studies every 10 years to evaluate land-use patterns, transportation infrastructure, and public amenities and services through a coordinated plan known as the Comprehensive Plan. In 2014, the [Comprehensive Plan](#) studied transportation conditions and generated updated information based on new (census) demographic data, regional employment trends, and transportation information. The transportation models in the 2014 update of the Comprehensive Plan (similar to the previous 2004 update) showed that several major arterial corridors including W. 72nd Avenue and Ralston Road are congested and require capacity and operational enhancements to support the City's mobility needs. The study results show that increasing the number of roadway lanes, adding turn lanes at intersections, updating traffic signals, and creating safe roadside environments for pedestrians and cyclists will improve the operation of the roadways and decrease traffic congestion. Additionally, improvements to W. 72nd Avenue and Ralston Road will help keep regional traffic on the regional roads and reduce cut-through traffic on neighborhood

collector roadways and local residential streets.

### **What would happen to traffic during construction on these and other roads?**

The City of Arvada requires construction activity on roadways to be limited to off-peak hours (8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.) to avoid rush-hour traffic. Additionally, the City prohibits the full closure of roadways unless an emergency condition requires it. That being said, construction activity on streets can create traffic congestion. To ensure that the construction disruption is minimal, contractors are required to work within the City's traffic control parameters by supplying off-duty officers at major intersections and certified flaggers within construction zones.

### **When would projects begin and be completed?**

Designing and engineering the projects will take approximately two years. The right-of-way acquisition process is anticipated to take about a year, working with affected property owners to negotiate fair market value for the property needed. Once the projects are ready to begin construction, a contractor will be selected and construction will begin. In total, we plan on completing the projects within a five-year time period.

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# Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why do you need to issue debt?**

In 2018, the City finished payment on a previously issued bond, freeing up \$4.5 million annually. Since, by charter, the City of Arvada is required to spend 60% of each \$.01 of sales tax revenues on capital improvements (or toward the repayment of debt related to capital improvements), and the \$4.5 million is included in that, this money must be spent on capital projects. The previously issued bond was utilized for capital projects. Debt re-authorization means voters agree to allow the money from the previous bond to be applied to a new bond and the funds used for the new capital improvement projects.

### **How many years would it take to cash fund the projects?**

It is estimated it would take over two decades to build up enough funding to complete the projects, and they would be more expensive due to inflation.

### **How much more will the projects cost if you wait until you have the money to cash fund them?**

Funded now, the City could borrow money at less than 3.5%, a much lower rate than ongoing inflation of road construction costs. If the City were to wait to cash finance these two projects, because of the time it would take to do so and

accounting for inflation, the total projects cost would go from \$79.8 million to \$130 million.

### **What other sources of funding do you have for these projects?**

Grant funds will continue to be pursued for both projects. This includes Federal Railroad funds and transportation grants.

### **What other projects were at the top of the CCIPC list? And why did you choose these two?**

The 2014-15 the [Citizens Capital Improvement Plan Committee \(CCIPC\)](#) was directed by Arvada City Council to prioritize capital projects such as transportation infrastructure, City utilities, public buildings, parks and other capital infrastructure needs from a citizen perspective. The CCIPC developed evaluation criteria and discussed funding strategies to recommend to the Arvada City Council. A list of 19 priority projects was created and is available on the first page of the report linked on the webpage above.

The CCIPC identified transportation assets as the most critical needs and set transportation improvements as the highest priorities from their overall priority list. The top priority project identified was the Ralston Road Corridor plan, and given that W. 72nd Avenue is considered an important transportation corridor,

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# Frequently Asked Questions

improvements at two key locations on W 72nd Avenue were identified as high priority.

### **Why don't you widen W. 80th Avenue instead?**

W. 80th Avenue was considered as a possible widening project; however, it was not selected for several reasons:

- Along significant sections of W. 80th Avenue, there is no existing public right-of-way to accommodate a widened road. Acquisition of the right of way would be extensive both in terms of time and cost.
- Many sections of W. 80th Avenue are in unincorporated Jefferson County. In contrast, all of the sections of W. 72nd Avenue being considered for widening are within City limits.
- W. 72nd Avenue is more centrally located than W. 80th Avenue, and therefore is a more viable travel choice for people traversing the City.
- W. 86th Avenue is only  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile away from W. 80th Avenue, providing a reasonable alternative for cross-town travel to W. 80th Avenue

### **Why don't you widen Indiana Street?**

Indiana Street is a State Highway (SH 72) and therefore falls under the authority of the

Colorado Department of transportation (CDOT). Furthermore, Indiana Street has significant geometric problems that would require extensive reconstruction, thereby limiting the amount of actual widening that could happen.

However, the City of Arvada is by no means ignoring Indiana Street. In 2019, the City completed an intersection improvement project at W. 72nd Avenue and Indiana Street that added capacity and eliminated one of Arvada's major bottlenecks. In 2017, the City applied for Federal funding to improve Indiana Street with an emphasis on widening the underpass beneath the Union Pacific railroad bridge. While we were not successful in that grant application we will continue to pursue other opportunities and believe grant funding will be available in the future.

### **Why can't you improve W. 72nd Avenue all the way to Indiana Street rather than stopping at Simms Street?**

The cost to increase the W. 72nd Avenue project to go from Kipling Street to Indiana Street (rather than to Simms Street as proposed) would be \$98.5 million as opposed to \$64.5 million. The City simply does not have the bonding capacity to fund the entire project.

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# Frequently Asked Questions

### **How will residents who live on the W. 70th Drive cul de sac (just west of Kipling Street) access their neighborhood during and after improvements to W. 72nd Avenue?**

The final lane configuration for W. 72nd Avenue will include a left turn lane for turns into W. 70th Drive and full movement access from W. 70th Drive to W. 72nd Avenue.

Access to the neighborhood from W. 72nd Avenue will absolutely be maintained during construction. Prior to beginning work the contractor will need to design a traffic control plan that must be approved by the City showing how they will maintain access. It is possible that access would on occasion be limited to right turn in/right turn out only during construction, but every effort will be made to keep this to a minimum. Emergency responders will be kept up to date as traffic lanes shift.

### **Will businesses along Ralston Road be open during construction?**

The City will work with the selected contractor to design a traffic control plan that maintains business access during construction.

### **Why would you have to take people's land?**

The City strives to design and build its projects and improvements within its own right-of-way (ROW), property that the City owns

or has rights to; however, some projects or improvements simply cannot be constructed within the City's existing ROW. In these circumstances, a purchase or acquisition of land or other property rights from private property owners is needed.

Private property rights are protected by both the Colorado and United States Constitutions. To provide uniform and equitable treatment for those whose property is acquired and for persons displaced by such acquisitions, Congress passed the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 ("Uniform Act"). When acquiring ROW for a project the City follows the fundamental principles of the Uniform Act and is committed to treating all persons with fairness and respect. For instance, an approved appraisal will be relied on as the basis for the amount of just compensation to be offered for the real property that the City needs for a project. This amount will never be less than the fair market value established by the approved appraisal.

City representatives have already been in contact with property owners where it is anticipated that their properties will be acquired in order to construct the underpass at the Union Pacific Railroad and W. 72nd Avenue

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# Frequently Asked Questions

### **Will the train run during construction?**

Yes, the train will run during construction. In order to facilitate this, we will construct a temporary track alignment known as a “shoefly.” The train will run on this temporary alignment until the final structure and track system is constructed.

### **Why an underpass (grade separation) - why not simply add lanes (at-grade improvement)?**

Expanding the at-grade crossing was discussed with UPRR; however, UPRR informed City staff that they have an unwritten policy that in order to expand a crossing, TWO existing crossings must be eliminated. Arvada does not have two existing crossings of the UPRR that could be eliminated.

Staff also consulted with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (PUC) which is the ultimate authority associated with regulations for at-grade crossings. Based on PUC rules a crossing qualifies for grade separation (underpass) when the “exposure” threshold is 75,000 (exposure threshold is calculated by the number of trains multiplied by the annual average daily traffic (ADT) on the roadway).

The number of trains per day at 72nd Avenue is 18. The ADT at 72nd Avenue is 18,586. That multiplies to an “exposure” of 334,548, 4.46

times greater than the “exposure” threshold of 75,000. Build-out traffic projections nearly double that amount. (This information may be found beginning on [page 14 of this PUC document](#).)

Finally, the existing condition is an obstacle for emergency responders. With population growth west of the railroad crossing and average daily trips increasing, the need for emergency responders to have uninterrupted access in order to respond to accidents, police calls for service and similar incidents is very apparent. Safety for motorists, pedestrians, cyclists and emergency responders is paramount.

City staff and the City Council firmly conclude that expanding W. 72nd Avenue should include a grade separation (underpass).

### **How accurate is the \$53 million estimate that includes the underpass?**

The \$53M estimate is as accurate as can be provided at this stage of the project. The City contracted with Muller Engineering to complete a preliminary design for the section of W. 72nd Avenue from Kipling Street to Quail Street that included a preliminary structural design for the railroad bridge. That project was completed in 2017 and included a cost estimate as part of the scope of work. The plans were also reviewed by Union Pacific Railroad so the

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# Frequently Asked Questions

City has a relatively high level of confidence that the plans provided put us on the right track with the railroad. Staff has met with the railroad and understands their requirements. The estimate also includes some assumptions of costs that are difficult to determine up front. Most relate to design costs, property acquisition costs, environmental compliance costs, etc. Ultimately the \$53 million is a solid effort to estimate the costs based on past experiences with these types of projects.

### **Why so much for this one project? Why has the 72nd Avenue RR crossing become the top road improvement priority for the city?**

That is a big price; however, the roadway could not function at the most efficient levels if the underpass was not included. W. 72nd Avenue is an arterial parkway and currently, and at build-out, carries more traffic east-west across the City than W. 80th and is close to Ralston Road. The project was highly ranked by the [Citizens Capital Improvements Plan Committee](#) as one that should be studied at the estimated cost of \$400,000. The City Council elected not expend \$400,000 for this project until such time that it was prioritized as an improvement the City was serious about completing. Completing improvements without the underpass would be inefficient and require a future project at a far higher cost.

### **What if the project goes over budget?**

In December 2017, the City's design consultant completed preliminary design of W. 72nd Avenue from Kipling Street to Quail Street. This preliminary design incorporates all of the major elements that are a part of the W. 72nd Avenue project. This includes the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) bridge over W. 72nd Avenue, reconstruction and widening the road to arterial roadway standards, railroad shoofly, roadway shoofly, utility relocations, storm sewer construction, etc. The overall project budget was based on the detailed cost estimate that was prepared with the preliminary design and also included costs for final design, right-of-way acquisition, construction and a minimum of 15% contingencies.

City staff will be interviewing qualified and experienced design consultants and will choose a firm that can deliver a quality, timely and cost effective final design. Throughout the final design, staff plans to work closely with its consultant to identify areas for cost savings, i.e. reducing retaining wall heights by using slope paving or considering top-down wall construction. Also as a cost saving measure, the team will investigate the possibility of other funding sources including with the UPRR through the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

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# Frequently Asked Questions

Considering all of these factors, staff is confident that the project will stay within budget. However, if the City encounters unforeseen condition(s) during construction and it appears that the project will go over budget, the City has some options to take. First, the City will review the most cost effective solutions to resolve the unforeseen condition and determine if the costs can be covered with project contingencies. If it is unavoidable that the project will still go over budget, the City will review elements of the project that could be removed from the contract or revised. As an example, the City could consider removing the sidewalk on one side of the street and defer the construction of the sidewalk to a later date. If removing or revising items in the contract is not a possibility, the City can find funding by delaying other projects, tapping one-time funds, or using fund balance reserves.

**If Federal funds reduce the cost to the taxpayers, or if the PUC requires UPRR to pay up to half the cost, what happens to the resulting surplus money?**

Staff tracks availability of Federal funds, and we have determined that it is not likely that we will receive such funding from a grant. W. 72nd Avenue is not on the [Denver Regional Council of Governments \(DRCOG\)](#) constrained plan which is a plan that prioritizes funding for

capital projects on a regional level. The PUC may require the UPRR to pay up to 50% of the cost to build the grade separation only, and staff will submit the application for these funds to the PUC as part of the project once all plans are completed. If the PUC were to require the UPRR to participate, it is typical for the railroad to do annual reimbursements of the cost, so Arvada would need to pay for all the work before any railroad money would be contributed. The reimbursements could be used to pay down the balance more quickly, thus saving interest costs for our taxpayers. However, we cannot assume that we will receive these funds and therefore have not factored them into the resources available for the project. Final determination of how these funds would impact the project would be considered by the City Council during business meetings that would allow citizens to be part of the process. Additionally, the ballot language required by TABOR requires public financing measures to assume the maximum expenditures for bond projects. The ballot language for this measure reflected this requirement.

**Are the UPRR trains really causing significant automobile traffic problems on W. 72nd Avenue, Kipling, or Oak streets?**

UPRR has stated that rail traffic on the rail line that crosses W. 72nd Avenue averages 18

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# Frequently Asked Questions

trains per day. Build-out traffic projections for W. 72nd Avenue is 32,000 average daily traffic. As previously stated, the combination of the number of daily trains and vehicle trips shows W. 72nd Avenue to be a highly traveled arterial roadway. The City believes that this improvement is necessary to ensure safety for motorists, pedestrians, cyclists and emergency responders which is the foundation of the final decision by the City Council to place this measure on the ballot and allow the voters to ultimately determine the outcome.

### **Will the work on W. 72nd Avenue fix flooding problems?**

During major rain and snow events, areas along W. 72nd Avenue experience significant flooding issues. The improvements to W. 72nd Avenue between Kipling St. and Simms St. will also include drainage improvements to eliminate these flooding issues.

### **What will the impact be to properties along Ralston Road and will sidewalks be expanded on both sides of the road to accommodate cyclists?**

After an extensive planning process with members of the public, the City of Arvada completed a conceptual layout of the roadway and met with each property owner along Ralston Road to discuss the widening impacts. As a result of the one-on-one meetings, the City has modified its roadway plans to ensure that no buildings are impacted and each property can function with reduced parking lots/frontages in exchange for wide sidewalks. The majority of the property owners have been in favor of the safety enhancements to Ralston Road and the sidewalks when presented with the conceptual engineering drawings during the one-on-one meetings. The plan calls for sidewalk improvements on both sides of Ralston Road will be similar to a 8' to 10' trail that can accommodate cyclists.





# Keep Informed

Sign up for project update emails

W 72nd Ave website: [arvada.org/w-72nd-avenue-project](https://arvada.org/w-72nd-avenue-project)

Ralston Road website: [arvada.org/ralston-road-project](https://arvada.org/ralston-road-project)

City Communication Channels: [arvada.org/find-us-online](https://arvada.org/find-us-online)

Sign up for emails



[arvada.org/public-improvement-projects](https://arvada.org/public-improvement-projects)