

## Information Page for the North Elm Street Corridor Improvements Project

### Introduction

The City has hired Fuss and O'Neill to design corridor improvements on North Elm Street (Route 9) by the Northampton High School. Proposed improvements include two signalized intersections (North Elm Street at Elm Street and North Elm Street at Woodlawn Avenue) with pedestrian signals, buffered bike lanes on North Elm Street between Woodlawn Avenue and Elm Street, relocating a bus stop, and reconstructed concrete sidewalks at select locations. The City is looking to bid this project in February 2026.

### History

- A cyclist was fatally struck by the intersection of Woodlawn Avenue and Elm Street on October 8, 2021.
- This corridor has been discussed at several TPC meetings: November 2021, December 2021, February 2022, January 2023, June 2023, and December 2024.
  - After the November 2021 meeting, the DPW temporarily prohibited 5 parking spaces by Childs Park to allow for continuous bike lanes.
  - At the December 2021 meeting, a U-turn prohibition was proposed at the intersection of North Elm and Elm Street to reduce conflicts with pedestrians, bicyclists, and other vehicles. This ordinance was approved in January 2022.
  - At the February 2022 meeting, DPW announced the plan to hire a consultant to study traffic in the vicinity of the high school and provide recommended safety improvements.
  - At the January 2023 meeting, DPW presented study findings and recommendations from the traffic study by Fuss and O'Neill. TPC voted on the following:
    - Authorization of signalized intersection (instead of a roundabout) at two intersections on Route 9;
    - A positive recommendation to remove five parking spaces by Childs Park; and
    - A positive recommendation to establish a school zone. School Zone Flashing Beacons were provided to the City by MassDOT and installed later in the year
  - At the June 2023 meeting, the DPW announced Fuss and O'Neill was hired to develop the roadway design.
  - At the December 2024 meeting, a rendering was shown of the project and the proposed improvements were presented. Comments and questions were heard from the Commission and the public.
- In 2025, DPW temporarily prohibited 6 parking spaces on the west side (high school side) of Route 9 to allow for continuous bike lanes. The concrete barriers will remain in place through the winter.

### Documents

[North Elm Street Area Traffic Study – December 5, 2022 \(pdf\)](#)

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are traffic signals proposed instead of a roundabout?
  - a. Roundabouts at the intersections of North Elm Street with Elm Street and Woodlawn Avenue are not a viable option due to protected land associated with Childs Park. A modern roundabout is unable to fit within the existing right-of-way. Mini roundabouts are a traffic calming measure considered for minor intersections of residential streets, but are not appropriate to accommodate the high volume of vehicular traffic on Route 9, especially the number of large trucks. Route 9 is part of the National Highway System of roads and important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility and must have adequate geometry to accommodate large truck movements.
  - b. Traffic signals will substantially improve the intersection operations. Signalizing the two intersections significantly increases the safety of pedestrians crossing the road due to the exclusive pedestrian phase included in the signal timings. The signals also allow for safe turning movements from Elm Street and Woodlawn Avenue on to Route 9 and vice versa. Safety of vulnerable road users is a primary goal of these improvements and traffic control provides the maximum level of safety for pedestrian crossings through regulating protected right of way by stopping vehicular traffic.
2. Will traffic be stopped on all approaches for pedestrians to cross?
  - a. Yes, the two signalized intersections will have exclusive phasing, meaning traffic is stopped on all approaches to allow pedestrians to cross any leg of the intersection. More information about pedestrian signals is available [here](#).
3. Can you install a raised intersection or raised crosswalks instead of the traffic signals? There is speeding throughout the corridor through the crosswalks.
  - a. Vertical features such as raised intersections or raised crosswalks can reduce speeds, but do not provide the level of protection of a signal where traffic from all approaches is stopped while pedestrians cross.
4. I am still worried about high speeds! This project does not improve safety, but allows for cars to drive through quickly.
  - a. **Signalization is the highest form of traffic control.** The current conditions allow free flow traffic on Route 9 eastbound and westbound. With the proposed signal, traffic will come to a full stop when there is a red signal. The City has tried less restrictive measures such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons, school zone flashing beacons, and the use of crossing guards. A traffic study was conducted and it was recommended to install a traffic control signal. As noted in 1.b., there are many safety benefits of traffic control signals.
  - b. In addition, the through travel lane width will be reduced to 11 feet with the installation of bike lanes and buffers in both directions between Elm Street and Woodlawn Avenue. The existing raised medians will be reconstructed with new granite curbing to more clearly define the traveled way, which will create a tunnel effect with the intent to slow traffic down.
5. Will there be No Right Turn on Red at the traffic signal?
  - a. A No Turn on Red restriction is proposed for Elm Street due to poor sight distance. This will further improve pedestrian and vehicle safety.
6. Will there be any on-street parking?

- a. Yes. On-street parking will be available on Route 9 north of Elm Street and south of Woodlawn Avenue. Signs will be posted at locations where parking is prohibited.
7. Where will parents drop off and pick up students?
  - a. Parents can pick up and drop off students where on-street parking is allowed.
8. Will work be done within the upper parking lot or bus loop?
  - a. No, the scope of this project is limited to Route 9 and the approaches of Woodlawn Avenue and Elm Street.
9. Can you reopen the road in front of the school?
  - a. The access road will not be reopened as the scope of this project is limited to Route 9 and the approaches of Woodlawn Avenue and Elm Street.
10. Can you install delineator posts by the bike lane?
  - a. Yes, removable posts are proposed within the buffer between the bike lane and travel lane. Additionally, the buffer will be scored concrete, which can alert inattentive drivers through vibration and sound that their vehicles have left the travel lane.
11. Are there any improvements to the intersection of Milton Street, Riverside Drive, and Elm Street?
  - a. No, the scope of this project is limited to Route 9 and the approaches of Woodlawn Avenue and Elm Street.
12. Why are 11-foot travel lanes proposed instead of 10-foot travel lanes?
  - a. The standard for National Highway System highways is 12-foot. The intersections are currently used by over 30 trucks per hour. Reduction of lane width to 11-foot allows the creation of the buffered bike lanes without significant widening while allowing sufficient width to safely accommodate higher truck activity without intruding on bicycle space.
13. Has there been consideration for one-way traffic flow on Woodlawn Avenue?
  - a. The magnitude of additional demand on Woodlawn Avenue due to allowing left turns from Woodlawn Avenue to Elm Street is expected to be small and will mostly benefit Woodlawn Avenue residents. Converting Woodlawn Avenue to one-way will have wider network impacts by diverting flow to alternate routes and potentially increasing demand on Locust Street at Prospect Street.
14. Will any ordinance changes be necessary to complete this project?
  - a. Yes. Several ordinance changes will be necessary, including parking restrictions on Route 9, relocating the bus stop, and removal of the left turn restriction on Woodlawn Avenue.
15. Why has it taken so long to get this project moving?
  - a. Over the course of the design, the City has heard numerous comments from various advocacy groups. We have worked diligently to incorporate the concerns of all roadway users given our budget and logistical constraints. Our focus for the 2026 construction season is reconstructing Route 9 and the approaches of Woodlawn Avenue and Elm Street, to allow for students to cross the street safely and to provide bike lanes between Woodlawn Avenue and Elm Street.