

Engineering Division of the Public Works Department

To: Chairperson Davis and Public Safety & Welfare Committee

From: Andrew M. Beyer, P.E., Director of Public Works/City Engineer

Date: August 28, 2024

Subject: Public Safety & Welfare Committee Meeting of September 4, 2024

Background

Agenda Item:

Review and take possible action: Repeal § 500-5 One-Way Streets and Alleys – Third and Fourth Streets

BACKGROUND:

In 2022, the Downtown Main Street Reconstruction Task Force recommended bump outs be placed in Downtown Main Street at several Main Street intersections, including Third Street & Fourth Street, during the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) 2028 Main Street Reconstruction Project. The Downtown Main Street Reconstruction Task Force also made a recommendation in 2022 that a traffic study be conducted in the downtown area to study one-way streets and explore the viability of converting them to two-way streets.

As part of WisDOT design process of Main Street, WisDOT ran an analysis on the viability of bump outs at Main Street and Third Street and Main Street and Fourth Street if the current one-way streets were made two-way. The results found that if Third & Fourth Streets were converted to two-way traffic at Main Street, the proposed bump outs would not be feasible as both streets are "truck routes" and there would be insufficient turning radius for trucks. If these two streets remain one-way, then the bump outs would work at both Third and Fourth Streets at Main Street.

The City of Watertown placed money in the 2024 budget to conduct the downtown traffic study, a request for proposals was advertised and using Qualification Based Selection, raSmith was selected to conduct the study. The City has held a kickoff meeting with raSmith and their representatives shared the following comments:

- They agreed with WisDOT that if Third & Fourth Streets were converted to two-way traffic, the bump outs would be removed.

- If Third & Fourth Streets were converted to two-way traffic parking on Main Street between Second & Third Streets may be impacted as a designated turn lane may be needed (a designated left turn lane currently exist between Third & Fourth Streets). The need for a designated turn lane will be assessed as part of raSmith's traffic study once field traffic data is collected.
- Engineering Division received preliminary analysis from raSmith this week and their research did confirm that if Third and Fourth Streets were converted to two-way traffic, the proposed bump outs would need to be removed at both intersections. The preliminary study results indicated that if these two streets were converted to two-way traffic, the intersections at Main Street would likely continue to operate acceptably for traffic flows. They also noted that if converted to two-way traffic, national studies concluded there are economic and safety benefits of the conversion from one-way to two-way traffic.

The preliminary analysis is attached. Key takeaways of the abbreviated study are:

- Historic daily traffic counts show a steady decline in volumes along Main Street/3rd Street/4th Street. Existing traffic levels are about one-half of the peak conditions of the early 1990s.
- The Third Street/Fourth Street intersections are expected to operate acceptably under two-way configuration.
- The intersections are expected to have surplus capacity to accommodate future traffic growth.

Bump out review, and the conversion of both Third and Fourth Streets from one-way to two-way traffic was presented before both the Downtown Main Street Reconstruction Task Force and Public Works Commission on August 27, 2024. The Task Force made a positive recommendation to Public Works Commission to remove bump outs at the intersections of Main Street & Third Street and Main Street and Fourth Street to allow for conversion of Third Street & Fourth Street to two-way as part of the 2028 WisDOT Main Street Reconstruction Project. Public Works Commission approved removing bump outs proposed at both intersections to potentially allow for two-way traffic on both streets. The Commission was informed that if they approved converting Third & Fourth Streets to allow for two-way traffic, this item would move onto Public Safety & Welfare Committee for ordinance revision. It should be noted that if Public Safety & Welfare repeals sections of Chapter 500, the conversion from one-way to two-way traffic would not occur until WisDOT's reconstruction of Main Street in 2028.

Attachments:

- Site Map
- Detail Sheets
- RA Smith Draft Preliminary Analysis
- Draft Ordinance

Budget Goal

2024 Operations Goal #5.

Financial Impact

No financial impact until 2028. Any costs can be added to the 2028 City Budget.

Recommendation

Engineering Division recommends the conversion of Third and Fourth Streets from one-way to two-way traffic during the WisDOT reconstruction of Main Street in 2028. To move forward to Common Council would require Committee approval to repeal §500-5 One-way streets and alleys of the following streets:

Name of Street	Location	Direction of Travel
Fourth Street {Amended by Ord. No. 72-36}	From Western Ave. to Madison St.	North
Third Street {Amended by Ord. No. 72-36}	From Madison St. to Western Ave.	South

2024 Operational Goals

1. Proactively maintains and improves our parks and infrastructure in an effort to ensure quality, safety and compliance
2. Supports employee retention and growth, and also works to address critical staffing areas
3. Invests in the assessment, strategic planning and maintenance of our city buildings
4. Promotes and fosters innovative approaches for community development and growth
5. Maintains a safe and healthy community, and expands community education on safety and health