



# Memo on Grand/Hubbard Corridor Improvements

UPP565 COMPLETE STREETS

AUSTIN BUSCH

# Summary

Under guidance from the local aldermen, staff are asking CDOT to prepare a Request for Proposals for Phase 1 design work on a corridor of parallel roadways, comprising of Grand Avenue and Hubbard Street, stretching from their intersection with Marshfield Avenue through Jefferson Street.

The work is timely in nature, as the ongoing CDOT project replacing the Chicago Avenue river bridge through 2026 is likely to increase travel demand on this parallel corridor. Aldermen are seeking a temporary installation during this immediate time period to trial street changes, before making them permanent following completed engineering and construction phasing.

The community concept, following on existing plans and future opportunities, is for Grand to prioritize commercial traffic and local bus travelers, while Hubbard will be improved as a bike boulevard and arts promenade.

- To prioritize transit on Grand, we are recommending detailed consideration of transit signal priority measures, bus stop bump outs, and narrowed pedestrian crossings. In particular, pedestrian safety around the Grand Blue Line station is a priority.
- Work on Hubbard will be a more significant reconfiguration, changing the south portion of the roadway to a raised bikeway and installing a new sidewalk and landscaping.
- Closing through traffic from union avenue onto the complex Hubbard/Milwaukee intersection will be studied as a potential congestion and safety improvement.

We request that you review the existing current conditions and draft proposal that follows, and prepare the necessary documentation to release a RFP this spring.



## Current Conditions

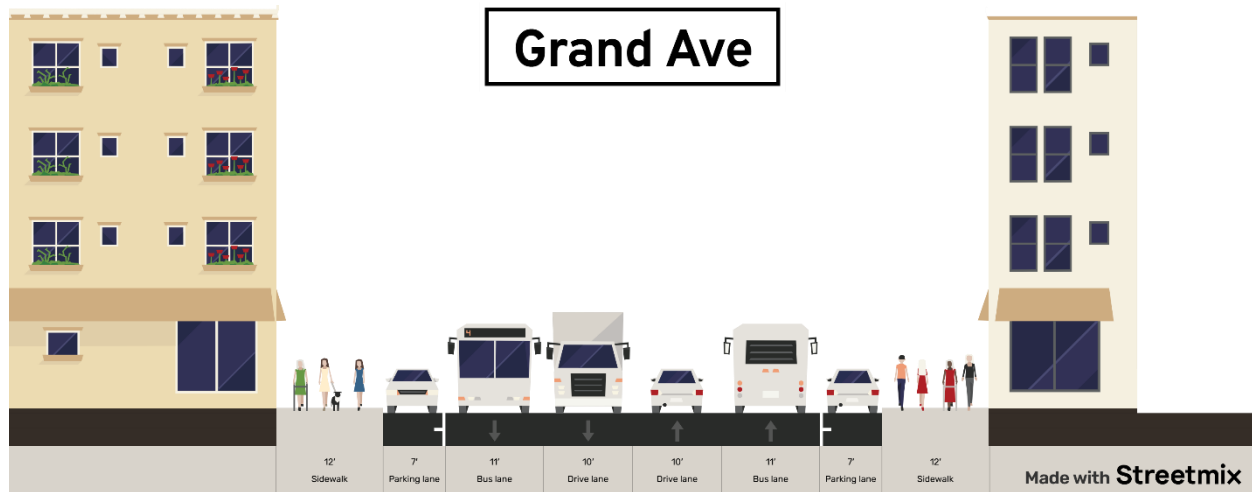


Grand Avenue has an existing bus route with important connections to the Blue Line at Milwaukee, and a continuation to the Red Line in River North. It is also populated by numerous small storefronts with customer-facing functions, with a large number of restaurants along the corridor.

Hubbard Street has been used for partially-buffered bi-directional bike lanes for the past, and is considered to be a calmer alternative for bikes than parallel corridors, and is a vital connection around several obstacles that adjacent neighborhood roads do not bridge. The street does have a few small businesses, but the majority of non-residential property is on larger industrial footprints, and many have off-street parking lots. In particular, the corridor is adjacent to the Union Pacific West elevated railroad between Ogden and Jefferson, and contains no addresses on the south portion of the road in this segment.

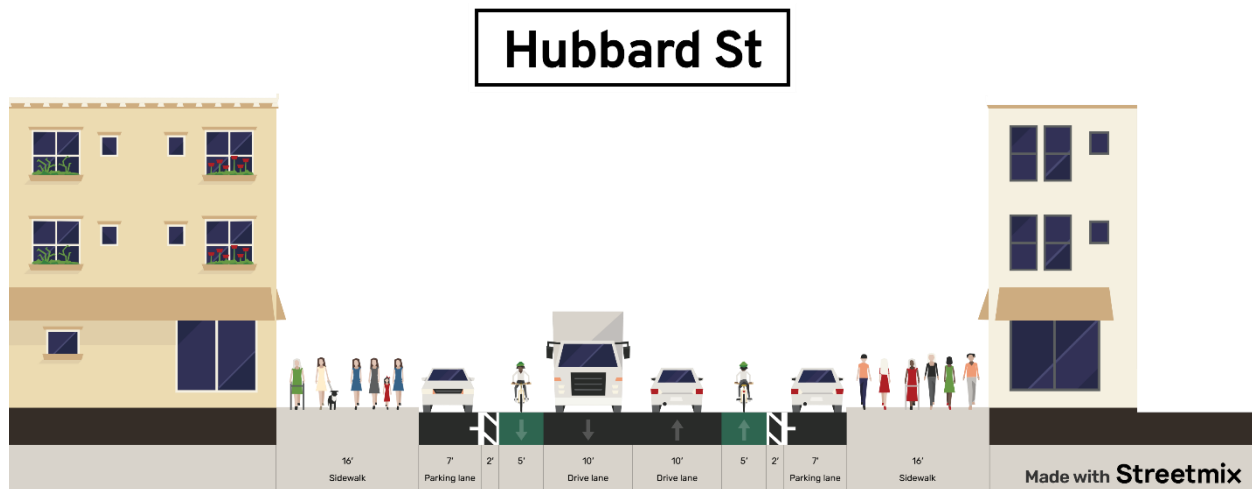
## Road Width and Lane Markings

Grand is 55 ft. from curb to curb, and 80 ft. from property line to property line.



Review at: <https://www.streetmix.net/-/2868714>

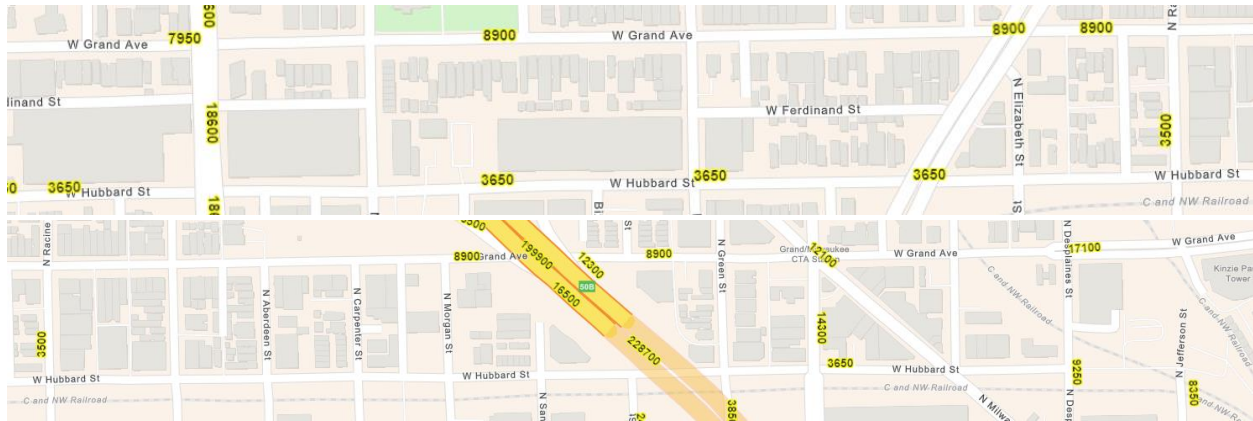
Hubbard Street is 45 ft. from curb to curb, 80 ft. from property line to property line.



Review at: <https://www.streetmix.net/-/2868711>

*Sidewalks for illustrative purposes, not continuous throughout full corridor.*

# Travel Volumes

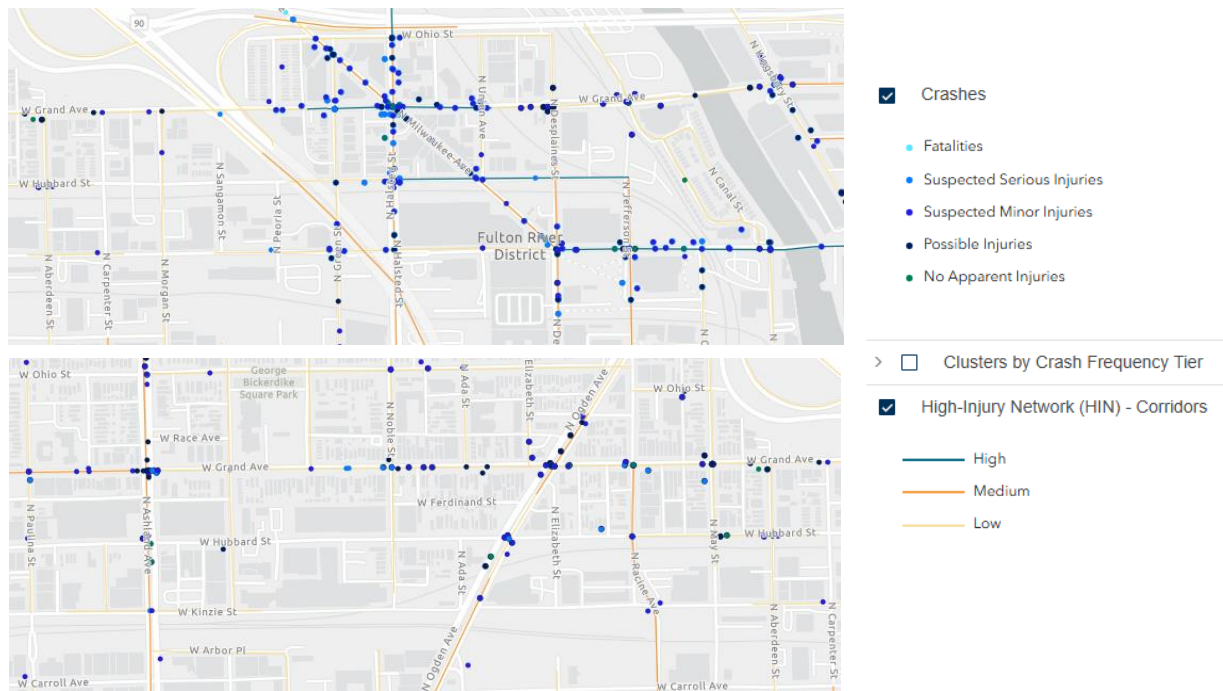


IDOT's [estimate of average annual daily traffic](#) puts Hubbard at 3,650 vehicles and Grand at 8,900 vehicles over this segment. Grand sees nearly twice as much traffic over the river bridge just east of the corridor segment, likely turning onto Milwaukee Avenue instead of continuing on Grand.



Bus riders constitute over a quarter of all throughput on Grand Avenue, according to data in the [Better Streets for Buses Plan](#). Ridership data shows it has recovered to around 75% of its pre-pandemic ridership, in line or better with the wider system.

## Crashes and Safety



[IDOT's Vulnerable Road User Assessment](#) categorizes the majority of Grand and Hubbard as a low-priority corridor, but the blocks intersecting Milwaukee are a high-priority corridor. Ogden and Ashland also have minor clusters, with the other crashes mostly spread along Grand.

Current injuries recorded along the corridor are roughly clustered around the bus stop intervals along Grand, where crossings are more likely. In particular, the area around the Blue Line interchange is difficult to navigate for all users, and sees a high volume of pedestrian interchange.

On-site review of pedestrian and bike experience detailed that there is currently no signalized intersection at Ashland along Hubbard. During low-traffic periods this presents a considerable safety risk for vulnerable road users, while during high-traffic volumes it may contribute to unsafe driver maneuvers.

## Connectivity

### Bike Network



The [Mellow Bike Map project](#) notes Hubbard as a connector to the Kinzie street bridge. There is a disconnect at Ashland due to the lack of a traffic signal, with the recommended re-route to less-mellow Grand Avenue.

In particular, the Ohio Street Feeder ramp presents a significant obstacle to east-west travel directly north of Grand Avenue, and the intersecting Ogden Avenue is a further barrier for vulnerable road users. Most intersecting streets have a viaduct under the elevated rail corridor, though the middle section of the corridor segment also has grade crossings that are frequently blocked for Milwaukee District and Hiawatha passenger trains.

### Transit Network

Bus service on the parallel Chicago Avenue one half mile north is providing the main arterial service in this area. The #66 Chicago route has 24-hour bus lanes and sees a significantly higher frequency and ridership.

The #65 Grand does not transfer to a CTA Rail stop west of Halsted, making this a significant transfer point for riders traveling west to West Town through Belmont Cragin.



# Proposed Changes

The design is recommended to pair the roads together as a complement of functions. Grand will operate as a transit-priority commercial street, while Hubbard will act as a neighborhood greenway.

## Grand Avenue

No significant reconstructive work is being proposed for Grand avenue, to prevent the higher cost of utility relocation and extensive drainage work. The majority of the corridor will simply see fresh line markings and surface repair work.

Design work should prioritize the angled intersections with Milwaukee and with Ogden. Narrowing crossing distances with neckdowns that prevent fast right turns are a likely solution in most cases.



Intersections and bus stops will see recast permanent curbs, though preliminary work is to utilize paint, planters, and temporary plastic bus platforms to test the design before more expensive work commences. Aldermen will monitor community feedback to the design and address business and constituent concerns before permanent work begins.

Transit Signal Priority will begin installation upon the determination of whether traffic signals will be moved for the project. Signal priority and in-lane bus stops will ensure traffic along the corridor is traveling at a safe speed and consistent, while improving bus performance metrics.

These minimal interventions are meant to improve safety and transit outcomes without generating significant community opposition or incurring exorbitant project costs.

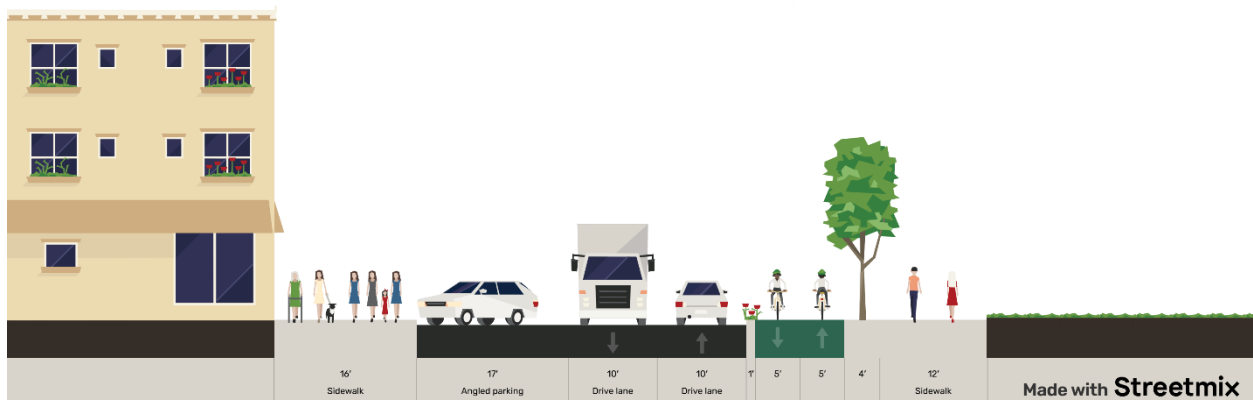


## Hubbard Street



As outlined in the [Fulton Market Innovation District Update plan](#), Hubbard Street is proposed for a raised bikeway and activated green space along the railbank, known as the 'B.Line'. This will require a significant amount of construction work, though there are fewer properties requiring access on the south side of the roadway due to the railway embankment.

### Hubbard St



- The bi-directional bikeway will begin at Ogden, with the Ogden-Ashland section upgrading the single-direction bike lanes with added protection. Signals for crossing Ogden will be partially complicated by this.
- Wayfinding guidance for bike to Kinzie Street from the Hubbard/Green intersection will allow limited interaction with arterial streets, given the underpass of Halsted and the configuration at the start of Milwaukee Avenue. A potential study on utilizing Green Street north of Hubbard to connect with Milwaukee Avenue may also be recommended.
- The bi-directional bikeway will end at Milwaukee Avenue, with future consideration of a continuation to the North Branch Transitway at Jefferson.

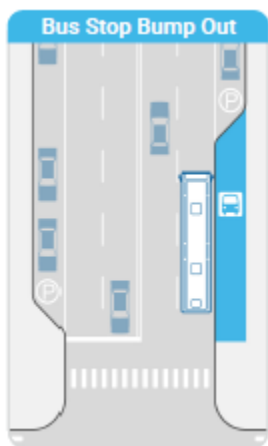
Along this central segment of the corridor, bike lanes and buffer space will be consolidated to the south lanes of the roadway, and the south parking will be removed. The north parking will become angled parking, increasing the spaces available on this side of the street to offset the loss. Bioswales on the corner angles will help reduce pedestrian crossing distance while adding greenery and community space. An expansive pedestrian promenade along the railbank will encourage strolling and viewing the art, with ample benches, trees, and landscaping. The bikeway will be raised to sidewalk level, with landscaping separating the pedestrian and cycling space.

Intersections near viaducts will require careful treatment due to reduced visibility around corners. Neckdowns on intersecting streets, raised crosswalks, or traffic circles may reduce this impact. The raised bikeway and paint will also signify to approaching driver that caution ahead is required. Improved lighting has also been recommended in the Update plan.

Two intersecting roadways will be considered for cul-de-sac treatment or removal: Union at the intersection of Hubbard/Milwaukee, and Loomis at the intersection of Hubbard/Ogden. Loomis has only one business entrance and should be simple to reconfigure, but Union is a more complex closure requiring study. Union is potentially impeding traffic flow on Milwaukee due to signal timing, though, so we consider this a potentially worthwhile trade-off.

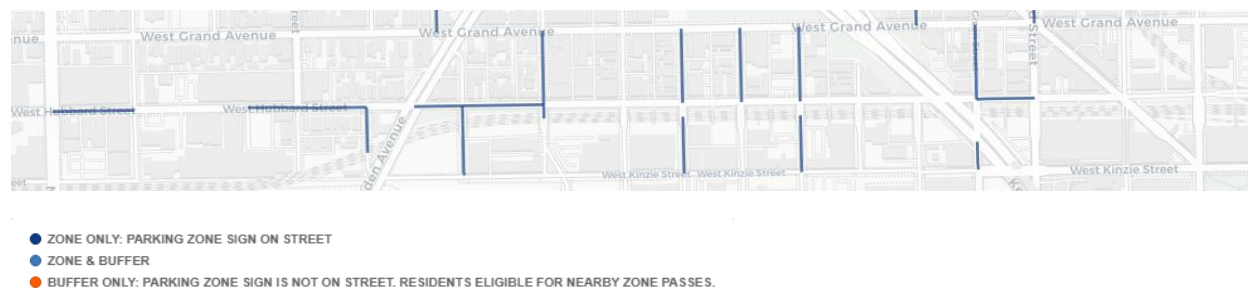
## Parking

Overall, proposed street design changes will allocate slightly more parking on Grand Avenue, and remove about a third of the parking on Hubbard Street.



As noted in the [Better Streets for Buses plan](#), bump outs increase the amount of space for vehicle parking adjacent to a bus stop.

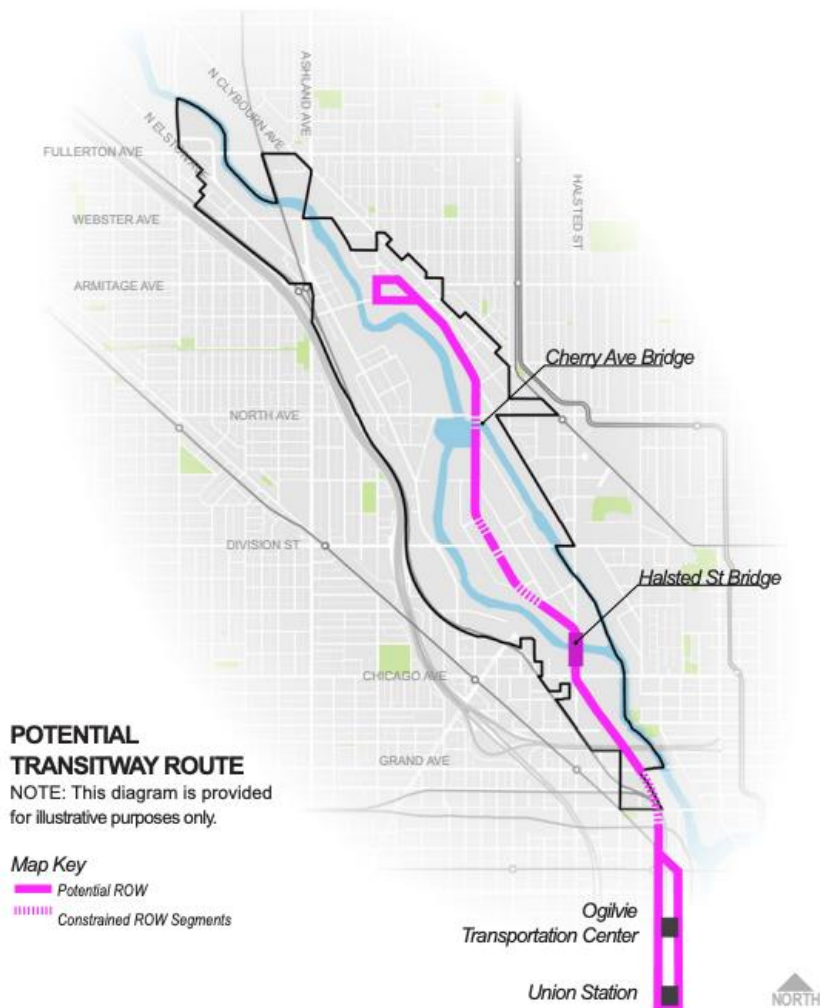
Bus stop bump-outs on Grand will enable buses to load from the travel lane, allowing the space previously allocated for merging into traffic to be used for additional parallel parking. This will increase the total available parking along the street with heavier retail usage, including a net increase in parking meter spaces. These spaces can be used to offset revenue loss from other removed spaces or neighborhood festival closures.



Hubbard has multiple segments of permit parking, per [City of Chicago data](#).

Hubbard does not have metered parking, and sees less turnover as it is primarily used as excess residential parking. The existing permit parking covers slightly less than half of the corridor segment, and may need to be extended to the full corridor to account for the reduction of spaces on one side of the street. Records should be reviewed to determine whether these restrictions are still appropriate for the area based on prior permit applications.

## Coordination with Other Plans



The corridor should be designed with a future-proofed connection to the potential transitway north and south of the eastern terminus at Jefferson, as outlined in the [North Branch Framework plan](#). This has previously been proposed as a busway accessing Union Station and western Lincoln Park, although recent development near the proposed terminus may result in a rails-to-trails project utilizing the corridor instead. Each of these outcomes could utilize a connection to this project, and should be readily adaptable to future designs.

This design should also coordinate with the CTA's ongoing [Bus Vision Project](#) planning, which may shift the #65 Grand bus from a through to a localized feeder service.

Lastly, the design work should be conducive with CDOT's [Chicago Cycling Strategy](#) as a low-stress connection between Wood Street and the Kinzie river bridge.



# Draft work request

An RFP for design work is sought to cover the following:

## Design

- Transit Signal Priority implementation along Grand Avenue, and coordination with state and county agencies to do so.
- Pedestrian crossings and bus stop placement along Grand Avenue.
- Drainage, street regrading, and landscaping on the south half of Hubbard Street, as well as structural stability of the adjacent viaduct.
- Navigation and wayfinding markings for bike routing.

## Data Analysis and Modeling

- Undergo traffic modeling to determine the benefits of closing Union Avenue at the intersection of Hubbard and Milwaukee.
- Review permit parking zone applications, in comparison with average utilization, enforcement, and available space.

## Outreach

- Include direct outreach to industrial locations along Hubbard, to determine the access points, delivery locations, and turning radius required for their continued operation.
- Coordination with long range planning efforts for the North Branch Transitway.