

Updated March 15, 2024

Mountain Avenue Express Bus Lane and Multi-Use Trail

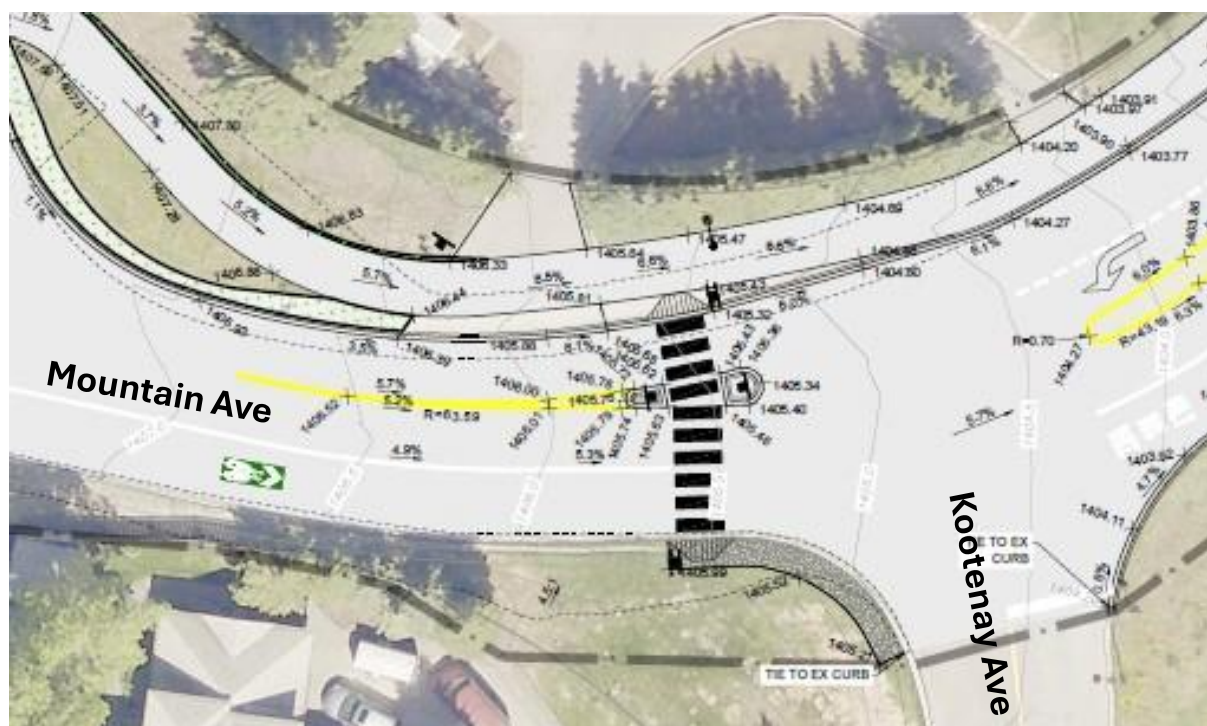
What We are Doing – Responding to What We Heard

A summary “What We Heard” report was presented to Town Council in August 2023. After reviewing public feedback about the project, as well as considering environmental, financial, and safety factors, Council directed Administration to move ahead with the detailed design and construction of an Express Bus Lane on Mountain Avenue and separated multi-use trail.

Resident engagement in 2023 focused on providing information about the project and providing opportunities for residents to provide feedback.

Below are the main topics identified in our “What We Heard” report that was reviewed by Banff Town Council and in **red** are the follow up comments from the Town about key concerns identified.

- Where is the final location of the additional crosswalk proposed in the plan?
 - The new crosswalk will be located at Kootenay Avenue on the south side (uphill side) to provide best line-of-sight to drivers moving up or down the hill, with consideration for curves in the road reducing sight lines.
 - This location is also closest to Valleyview residents, who are the majority of the pedestrians using a crossing.
 - To enhance pedestrian safety, all crosswalks will be pedestrian activated with flashing lights.



- What is the final route for the trail at Rainbow Ave – through the wooded area or on street?
 - The main multi-use path will continue onto Rainbow Avenue rather than requiring tree removal and path widening in the hilly wooded area. The existing wooded trail will be left as-is. The trail route will be marked with painted lines on the right side going uphill (housing side).
 - No parking will be removed on either side of Rainbow Avenue.
- Will there be more Roam Transit capacity added? Will Roam have more bus stops added southbound on Mountain Avenue?
 - Roam Transit will add service capacity (additional buses and services) in 2026.
 - Roam is adjusting services in the network to increase services on this top route (Route 1) in 2024-25, to reduce the times buses are at full capacity.
 - Roam is considering innovative routing to redeploy existing buses to add more service to the Gondola-Downtown section of Route 1.
 - In 2024, Pursuit is increasing their shuttle service for visitors and the Rimrock Hotel is adding two buses for free service, to reduce pressure on Roam transit.
 - Bus stop locations for downhill bus service are limited due to space constraints. Roam will continue to monitor ridership and make recommendations for stop and schedule changes.
- Will the project keep the left-turning lane southbound at Nahanni Drive into Valleyview, and at Kootenay Avenue?
 - A left-hand turn lane is being retained at Kootenay Avenue due to the existing road width allowing for the additional bus lane, while narrowing on the uphill side of Kootenay Avenue, to allow or greater safety for the new crosswalk.
 - A left-turning lane is not being retained at the entrance to the Valleyview neighbourhood. This option was examined by the engineering consultants, but was discouraged due to goals for the project, pedestrian safety, and cost factors. This turning lane was created before the Town's 1990 incorporation when driving speed limits on Mountain Ave were faster.
 - A left-hand turning lane would have the effect of allowing faster drivers to move uphill, when the goal is to reduce driving speeds. The removal of the left-turn lane at Nahanni Drive will help slow traffic, to improve safety for all road users, especially the crosswalk users.
 - The population counts for the Valleyview area determined the traffic volume turning onto Nahanni Drive did not warrant a turning lane. It is anticipated that the frequency of left-turns into Valleyview will not produce many traffic backups for uphill vehicles, and the new reduced speed limit makes the left-turn safer and with less wait time for safe space to turn.
 - The existing asphalt space allows adding a transit lane with limited need for roadway widening at this location if the left-turn lane is removed. Further expansion of asphalt into the wooded area on either side of the road to include a left-turning lane would also require retaining walls to address the elevation changes, which would add significant cost.

- Can you restrict personal vehicles travelling on Mountain Ave to only residents and hotel guests?
 - Restricting access on public roads within the townsite is not permissible under current Provincial legislation. The town boundary is just south of Middle Springs Drive with the Sulphur Mountain attractions being outside the Town limits. The Town cannot restrict vehicle movement in and out of the townsite, unless in emergency situations.
 - Banff Town Council advocates to Parks Canada to consider disincentives to driving by implementing traffic management and parking management solutions at Sulphur Mountain Gondola and Upper Hot Springs, at the earliest opportunity.
 - Additional measures include signage on streets on the north side leading to the bridge, that encourage drivers to park and take transit, and alert drivers when the parking lots are full on Sulphur Mountain. The Town also partners in a marketing campaign in the Calgary region (the highest volume of day-trip visitors) to avoid driving to the south side attractions.
 - The Town is supportive of measures to reduce personal vehicles driving through town to the Sulphur Mountain attractions. The most effective tactics to do so are incentives to using alternative modes (such as better transit service and reliability through projects like this), disincentives to driving (such as paid parking or removal of parking lots at Sulphur Mountain), and intercept parking (to park visitor vehicles associated with these attractions before they enter the townsite).
- Can the bus lane and trail be extended all the way to the gondola and hot springs?
 - The town boundary is just south of Middle Springs Drive with the Sulphur Mountain attractions being outside the Town limits.
 - The Town would support extension of the express bus lane and pedestrian / cycling trail continuing out of town to the Sulphur Mountain parking area. The Town supports pedestrian, cycling and transit connections beyond the Town's boundaries, such as with Roam Transit service, Legacy Trail connections, St. Julien Road trail to Tunnel Mountain Trailhead and Cave Avenue trails to Cave & Basin and beyond.
 - However, the decision to extend active transportation and a transit express lane on Mountain Avenue outside the town lies exclusively with Parks Canada.
- Intersection at Spray Avenue – how will the bus not be stuck in traffic, and won't a bus advance be bad for residents in vehicles?
 - An advance light for about 10 seconds will allow buses to proceed ahead of personal vehicles. If the roadway on Spray Avenue, between Mountain Avenue and Banff Avenue is full of vehicles and not moving, buses will not proceed until safe to do so.
 - Manual green light overrides will continue on traffic signals in peak busy seasons to move more vehicles through intersections at Spray/Banff Avenue and Buffalo/Banff Avenue. The manual process monitors concurrent backups on other streets to ensure that the intervention balances impact on all directions.

- Once implemented, the impact of the express bus lane advance at Spray will be monitored and normal light sequencing and green overrides will be adjusted to maximize traffic flow in all directions, with a focus on reducing backups.
- The advance at the Spray Avenue intersection will favour transit and provide a disincentive for vehicle drivers. The continued increase in transit ridership – and the resultant reduction in visitor vehicle volume - will continue to improve travel times for drivers who must use their personal vehicles.
- The project adds a separated multi use trail for pedestrians, e-bikes and cyclists to encourage more people to shift away from personal vehicles. The Town also supports free transit for residents to remove the need for many residents to drive.
- How will the construction impact be managed?
 - The project is being tendered (awarded in early April) with favourable weighting to proposals that minimize vehicle traffic disruption in July and August. Every effort will be made to focus work that disrupts traffic at times of lowest traffic. That includes examining options for adjusting construction work at time of day as well as time of week to minimize impact on peak traffic times.
 - An updated schedule of phasing of work for the road expansion and trail expansion will be provided in early spring.
- How will you address speed/safety issues on the trail, especially as it relates to e-bikes?
 - Municipal Enforcement will monitor complaints and observed activity on the multi-use trail and assess if specific restrictions, such as posted speed limits would be required.
 - The project team expects e-bikes and many cyclists will use the express bus lane to travel downhill, and the trail for uphill travel. Experiences on other trails in town with the rapid increase in e-bike users is being monitored for a town-wide approach.
- Since the traffic is caused by the attractions – gondola and hot springs mainly – what are they doing to help pay for the project's express lane and what are they doing to reduce traffic to the parking lots, close the parking lots or reduce southside traffic?
 - Banff Town Council asked Administration to request that Parks Canada consider disincentives to driving by implementing traffic management and parking management solutions at Sulphur Mountain Gondola and Upper Hot Springs, at the earliest opportunity. Town administration continues to recommend solutions for Parks Canada consideration to minimize traffic to the parking lots on Sulphur Mountain, which are managed by Banff National Park.
 - The operator of the main attraction – the gondola – is adding more free transit shuttles to decrease their customers' use of personal vehicles and the parking lot. The operator also continues to financially support Roam transit, covering all costs of visitors with valid gondola tickets.
 - The Rimrock Resort is also adding a transit shuttle to help their guests and staff avoid using personal vehicles.

- This project will benefit residents through the creation of the separated multi-use trail and through enabling an increase in the proportion of visitor trips on transit (and a resultant decrease in vehicle volume and associated congestion).
- Can you stop people from driving up Mountain Avenue – except residents and guests of the hotel, and cancel the need for this bus lane project?
 - Restricting access on public roads within the townsite is not permissible under current Provincial legislation. The town boundary is just south of Middle Springs Drive with the Sulphur Mountain attractions being outside the Town limits. The Town cannot restrict vehicle movement in and out of the townsite, unless in emergency situations.
 - Banff Town Council advocates to Parks Canada to consider disincentives to driving by implementing traffic management and parking management solutions at Sulphur Mountain Gondola and Upper Hot Springs, at the earliest opportunity.
 - The Town is supportive of measures to reduce personal vehicles driving through town to the Sulphur Mountain attractions. This project is a measure to reduce visitor vehicles.
 - Additional measures include signage on streets on the north side leading to the bridge, that encourage drivers to park and take transit, and alert drivers when the parking lots are full on Sulphur Mountain. The Town also partners in a marketing campaign in the Calgary region (the highest volume of day-trip visitors) to avoid driving to the south side attractions.
- How will you make sure drivers don't drive in the bus lane? How can enforcement pull over illegal drivers if there is nowhere to turn off?
 - The transit lane will be appropriately signed to encourage voluntary compliance.
 - Municipal Enforcement will monitor compliance and enforce as necessary, with a priority to maintain safety for drivers, staff and pedestrians at all times.
- Isn't the cause of traffic backups on Mountain Ave and Spray Avenue the fact that only one lane of traffic goes north on the Bow River Bridge?
 - The Town of Banff experiences traffic delays and congestion whenever there are more than 24,000 vehicle movements counted at the entrances of town. In summer for the past few years, this occurs every day in June, July, and August. The town has too many vehicles for the finite streets in a community of less than 4 square kilometres in area.
 - Mitigation measures for traffic management are limited to selecting where to have the most congestion at peak periods, and duration of delays at traffic lights, but there are no mechanisms to prevent traffic jams. Mitigation moves congestion to different locations.
 - Adding another lane to the bridge, would shift the congestion to the Buffalo Street intersection, where there are left, right and straight directions of traffic, in a pedestrian centric area. Converting one of the southbound lanes of traffic on the bridge to northbound has proven to not have a beneficial effect for northbound traffic, while causing significant delays for southbound traffic, especially on Bear/Lynx and Norquay Road.
 - The concept of an additional lane on the bridge was modeled as a part of the Transportation Master Plan. Unfortunately, the model showed it would have limited effect. While two northbound lanes may provide additional queuing storage, the limited

capacity of Banff Ave/Buffalo St intersection will continue to cause backups. And we can't tear down the buildings on the corner to build capacity.

- The addition of a fourth lane would require the sidewalks on the bridge to be narrowed on both sides by one metre. This would negatively impact pedestrians and is contrary to council's strategic priority of promoting sustainable modes of transportation. Also, a crash barrier between the sidewalk and driving lanes would likely be required with four driving lanes on the bridge leading to a further reduction in sidewalk width on a designated heritage structure.
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- Will the increase in visitors coming by vehicle to Banff eliminate any benefits of bus prioritization on Mountain Ave.?
 - The continued increase in visitation to Banff will expand the duration of traffic congestion unless other measures are implemented to shift visitors away from using personal vehicles to arrive in Banff.
 - The Town of Banff is advocating for mass transit service from Calgary and the Calgary airport, to provide frequent, affordable and daily service to reduce vehicle traffic in Banff. The Town supports bus service or passenger rail, or both. Additional measures must be in place to ensure mass transit does not just add to visitation, but reduces vehicle drivers as well.
 - A number of strategies were presented by Parks Canada's Expert Panel on Sustainable Transportation, including park pass pricing that favours preferred transportation, large parking hubs outside the destination, pay parking strategies to disincentivize driving, and other concepts. These were endorsed by the Town of Banff.

Q&A above were generated from feedback summarized in the What We Heard Report at <https://banffviewpoints.ca/mountainexpress>