

University Place Bike Boulevard

Frequently Asked Questions

August 2021

The New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) is currently developing a proposal to redesign University Place as a Bike Boulevard. This process builds on community requests to redesign University Place, including the resolution passed by Community Board 2 in September 2020 that asked NYC DOT to look at making it a Shared Street.

Bike Boulevards are streets that prioritize bike and pedestrian traffic. They incorporate many of the same design elements as Shared Streets to encourage slow vehicular speeds and ensure pedestrian and cyclist safety.

DESIGN

1. Why make changes to University Place?

Community Board 2 requested that DOT explore public space improvements along University Place. University Place is an important neighborhood street that connects two iconic open spaces. The roadway is wider than it needs to be for the existing traffic volumes, meaning that there is space available that can be used to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. University Place is essentially an extension of the Broadway corridor that connects a series of plazas and parks between Columbus Circle and Union Square, where NYC DOT has actively been making pedestrian, bike, and public space improvements for over a decade. This project builds on those efforts.

2. What will the Bike Boulevard connect to?

The Bike Boulevard on University Place will connect to existing bike facilities on Broadway, 12th and 13th Streets, 8th and 9th Streets, and around Washington Square Park.

3. Will the street be closed to cars and trucks?

NYC DOT does not plan to close University Place to cars or trucks.

4. What design treatments are being considered?

NYC DOT is considering a range of traffic calming measures that benefit both pedestrians and cyclists. These potential design elements include designs such as chicanes and chokers that visually narrow the roadway to slow traffic, as well as diverters, such as diagonal diverters and traffic circles, which break up through traffic. NYC DOT is looking examples from other cities across the country and internationally to inform potential design proposals.

5. Are changes to the direction of traffic being considered?

NYC DOT previously proposed extending the southbound section of University Place to 12th Street in order to alleviate congestion on 13th Street and provide a more direct eastbound route for eastbound vehicles coming from 14th Street. NYC DOT is

continuing to evaluate this option as it considers potential improvements to traffic flow in the neighborhood in response to community concerns. NYC DOT is not considering converting University Place to two-way flow.

6. How are traffic impacts being taken into consideration as part of this proposal?

All NYC DOT street redesign proposals are developed in close coordination with traffic engineers. While University Place will remain open to motor vehicles and therefore no significant impacts to traffic are anticipated, NYC DOT is looking to incorporate changes to ameliorate congestion on 12th Street and 13th Street, per community requests.

7. Will parking, loading, and pick-up/drop-off be permitted on the street?

NYC DOT is currently evaluating the parking, loading, and pick-up/drop-off needs on University Place and will develop a plan to update curb regulations along the corridor as part of its proposal.

8. Are there plans to plant more trees?

NYC DOT's interim toolkit does not include in-ground plantings but NYC DOT is working with the BID and local stakeholders to incorporate planters and other landscaping.

9. Has an environmental impact assessment been performed to assess the impact of the proposed changes?

NYC DOT has not yet developed a proposal. Should the proposal warrant an environmental impact assessment, a study will be conducted.

ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY

1. How will the proposed new design of University Place be enforced?

NYC DOT will continue to work with the Police Department on enforcement in the area. Like any street, a Bike Boulevard requires that all street users, including cyclists, obey traffic laws. The proposed design will incorporate self-enforcing elements such as bump-outs, chicanes, or blockbusters. Green wave signal timing may be used to slow traffic down to 15 miles per hour and to encourage cyclist compliance.

2. Are electric bikes and scooters permitted on bike boulevards?

Recent State legislation made electric bikes and electric scooters legal modes of transportation allowed on City streets including University Place. They are required to follow all relevant traffic safety laws.

3. Has NYC DOT analyzed bike crashes throughout the city?

The Police Department collects data on crashes and traffic-related injuries throughout the city, including incidents involving cyclists. NYC DOT regularly reviews and analyzes this data.

4. How will this project impact public safety and homelessness issues around Washington Square Park?

NYC DOT is aware of the on-going issues around Washington Square Park and is in close contact with the BID, which is working closely with the Police Department and other sister agencies to address these issues. NYC DOT will work with all of these partners to ensure that any new pedestrian space on University Place is managed in a way that supports public safety. As a street, University Place is a transportation asset that is more open, has clearer sight lines, and more foot traffic than parkland.

RULES AND MANAGEMENT

1. What are the hours of operation for a Shared Street or Bike Boulevard?

Shared Streets and Bike Boulevards are still part of the public right of way; they are open to the public at all times.

2. Will street fairs, performances, or other events be permitted on University Place?

Permitted events are currently allowed on University Place and will continue to be allowed. All on-street events are permitted through the Street Activity Permit Office at the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management.

3. Who will be responsible for maintaining and cleaning University Place?

The Department of Sanitation will continue to sweep the roadway. NYC DOT will work local maintenance partners, including the BID, to maintain new pedestrian space including sweeping, litter removal, setting up and taking down any movable furniture, snow removal in winter and horticultural maintenance.

PROCESS AND COMMUNITY INPUT

1. How are you reaching out to neighborhood residents to get their input on any proposals?

NYC DOT hosted two on-street outreach events this spring and conducted an online survey. Prior to these events NYC DOT sent email blasts to stakeholders, including the boards of the adjacent coops, and posted flyers in the neighborhood. NYC DOT will continue to advise residents of any upcoming opportunities to make their voices heard and appreciates the Community Board's assistance with this effort.

2. Have you reached out to the businesses along the corridor?

NYC DOT will conduct a merchant survey to assess loading and access needs.

3. How is DOT using the feedback it's already received through its online survey, on street outreach, and interactions with the public through the Community Board?

NYC DOT is still reviewing and compiling the data that has been collected. Public input will be used to inform design proposals. Outreach findings will be presented to the Community Board along with a proposed design.