

Warrensville/Van Aken Project Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is it necessary to change the intersection?

- A. The intersection is confusing, congested and unsafe. 45,000 vehicles travel through it per day. It is #1 in accidents in Shaker Heights and #11 in Cuyahoga County. Drivers wait up to 3 minutes at the light and there are left turn restrictions. This results in congestion, and in drivers avoiding the intersection and cutting through the neighborhood. It is also difficult for pedestrians to cross the street. Reconfiguring the intersection is the first step in redeveloping the area into a walkable, mixed-use district.

Q. How will the roads change?

- A. The intersection will go from six streets entering the intersection to 4 streets. To accomplish this, Van Aken will end at Farnsleigh and Northfield Road will be relocated to the south. The new Northfield will make a left turn and intersect with Warrensville Center Road just north of the Post Office. Where Van Aken ends at Farnsleigh, drivers may turn right to continue on Chagrin or left to turn onto Warrensville.

Q. When will construction begin?

- A. The first sign of construction will begin in April 2014.

Q. How long will the area be under construction?

- A. We anticipate that construction will last 2 years. The construction will be phased. In the first phase, the new Northfield Road will be constructed and work at Farnsleigh and Chagrin will be done. The next phase will be work at the intersection of Warrensville and Chagrin. During this phase, Van Aken will be closed between Farnsleigh and Warrensville. The details of timing and lane closures will be determined once a contractor is hired.

Q. How will I get to the businesses in the area during construction?

- A. Businesses will be open during construction. Access will be maintained and signs will be posted. During the first phase, access to businesses at Shaker Plaza and Van Aken Plaza will not be changed. In the second phase, Van Aken is closed and Van Aken Plaza will have access from Farnsleigh; Shaker Plaza will maintain access from Chagrin and from Farnsleigh; stores on the south side of Chagrin including MotoPhoto and Lucy's will retain access from Lomond; and businesses on Farnsleigh such as Key Bank and Ohio Savings will have access from Farnsleigh Road.

Q. What will happen to Starbucks?

- A. Starbucks will *temporarily* close December 27, 2013. Starbucks is located on a section of Van Aken Boulevard (between Warrensville and Farnsleigh) that will be closed as part of the road reconstruction. **But they'll be back!** The company is discussing several locations -- all within the Van Aken district -- and hopes to return in 2015. Remember the other coffee and gathering options in Shaker: [J. Pistone](#), [Gimme Java](#), [Juma Gallery](#) and [Lucy's Sweet Surrender](#).

Q. How do you know the traffic will be improved?

- A. The 2008 study included a detailed traffic study, done by an engineering firm, URS. This study modeled future traffic and road changes. A computer simulation was also done. The intersection improvements at Chagrin and Warrensville will create an intersection where instead of waiting at the light for 3 minutes, the light cycle will be 90 seconds. Traffic will be reduced from 45,000 cars/day today to 37,000 at the intersection. There will no longer be turn restrictions, so left turns will be allowed in all directions. These improvements will make the intersection easier to navigate.

Q. What about pedestrians and bicyclists?

- A. Conditions for pedestrians will be much improved with distinctive, new crosswalks throughout the area. Roads will be narrowed, reducing crossing distances and the amount of time it takes to walk from one side to the other. Pedestrian countdown signals will also be installed. The primary bicycle route through the district will be on Farnsleigh Road; the City will evaluate ways to accommodate bicyclists as part of a Farnsleigh streetscape study in 2014.

Q. Will there be cut through traffic in the neighborhood?

- A. Due to the ease of traversing the new intersection, there should be less cut through traffic in the neighborhood. The Farnsleigh/Chagrin intersection improvements will offset Farnsleigh from Lomond, so it won't be a straight shot into the neighborhood. The intersection will be offset, so a left and then a right is required to enter the Sussex neighborhood. This intersection will have 2 lights, but will work as one signal, as not to cause backups. The cut through traffic was discussed at several public meetings on the project.

Q. How will I gain access to Scottsdale Boulevard?

- A. Currently, left turns from Warrensville onto Scottsdale are restricted. Many residents loop around by the Post Office in order to make a right turn into Scottsdale Boulevard. There will still be a way to access the University Hospitals lot and come down Warrensville to make a right turn into Scottsdale. After all road work is complete, the city will study if any turning restrictions in the Sussex neighborhood need to be changed.

Q. Who came up with this plan?

A. The idea to improve the Warrensville/Van Aken/Chagrin intersection has been around since the 1960s! In both 2000 and 2008 the city hosted public meetings where hundreds of residents participated and helped shape the vision for the Van Aken District. The 2000 Strategic Investment Plan recommended improving the area to reflect the character of Shaker Heights and create a mixed use downtown. Input opportunities included meetings, charrettes and workshops. In 2008, the Warrensville Van Aken Transit Oriented Development Plan suggested the road reconfiguration proposed today. Several public meetings took place where residents helped draw out the future of the district.

Q. Why is it taking so long? We've been talking about this for years.

A. A federal transportation project takes time for many reasons. Amassing grants and funding takes several years. Acquisition of right of way (for the new Northfield Road and temporary easements for construction) also takes time. A one year period is required to negotiate with owners and acquire the right of way. All government agencies involved in the project review the final construction documents and plans. As our project partner, Cuyahoga County is managing the bidding process and construction work due to their expertise in constructing roads. Bidding took place this fall, and we expect to award the project to a contractor in the first quarter of 2014.

Q. Who is providing funding for the project?

A. Funding for the project comes from seven (7) different federal, state, county and local sources. The Cuyahoga County Public Works Department, NOACA and ODOT have been the City's partners in bringing the project funding together and have been tremendously supportive. The support of our elected representatives in Columbus and Washington has also been instrumental in funding the project.

Q. Will the RTA tracks be extended as part of this project?

A. The RTA tracks will not be extended during this phase of the project. RTA is currently seeking federal funding to pay for the rapid transit track extension. As part of the funding application process, RTA is analyzing the alternatives and impacts for extending the Blue Line rapid transit tracks through the Warrensville /Van Aken intersection to various endpoints. For more information, visit the [RTA website](#).