# Merrimon Avenue

## 4/3 Lane Conversion

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# Key Takeaways

- The NCDOT has programmed a project to resurface Merrimon Avenue during calendar year 2022 at a total anticipated cost of $2.5 million.
- The proposed project includes converting  a section of Merrimon Avenue between Midland Road and WT Weaver Boulevard from 4 lanes to 3 lanes (4/3 lane conversion).
- The purpose of the project is to improve safety and provide options for all multi-modal users.
- Align with the City's and NCDOT's complete streets goals to accommodate multi-modal users.
- The City's cost share to implement the 4/3 lane conversion is $275,000.
- The requested action is to approve an agreement between the COA and NCDOT.
- Although City and NCDOT staff fully expect the 4/3 lane conversion to be successful, the agreement includes a removal clause that establishes the criteria and conditions to evaluate if safety issues occur.

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# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Background

- City and NCDOT staff have been discussing the possibility of converting Merrimon Avenue from 4 lanes to 3 lanes (4/3 lane conversion) since 2018 as requested by Resolution # 18-37.
- The NCDOT adopted a complete streets policy during August 2019.
- When the resurfacing project was programmed in 2019, City staff asked NCDOT to explore the potential of implementing the 4/3 lane conversion as part of the resurfacing project.

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# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Background

- During December 2021, City and NCDOT staff initiated a public input process.
- The public meeting was held on February 28, 2022 (300+ attendees).
- A public survey was open for 30 days (3,000+ surveys completed).
- 59% of the survey respondents supported a 4/3 lane conversion.

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# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Background

- City and NCDOT staff agreed to move forward with a 4/3 lane conversion as a partnership opportunity.
- The 4/3 lane conversion would begin at Midland Road and end at WT Weaver Blvd.
- Although City and NCDOT staff fully expect the 4/3 lane conversion to be successful, the agreement includes a removal clause that establishes the criteria and conditions to evaluate if safety issues occur.

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# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Project Goals:

- Expected to decrease crashes
- Expected to reduce vehicle speeds
- Alignment with the City's and NCDOT's complete streets goals (multi-modal users)
- Leverage funding associated with the planned NCDOT resurfacing project

# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Other Concerns:

- Peak hour congestion (rush hour AM and PM) is expected to slightly increase delay and travel time
- Transit vehicles could cause congestion (traffic backup) when loading and unloading passengers
- Community disagreement on whether or not to implement the project

# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Charlotte Street Outcomes

- Crashes have decreased by 59%.
- Vehicle speeds have decreased by 3%.

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# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Emergency Vehicle Response Times

- The Asheville Fire Department does not anticipate any negative impacts to response times based on research and its experience with Charlotte Street.
- Due to current limited resources, the Asheville Police Department initially expressed concerns about response times for service calls but are now comfortable with the proposed project due to the potential for the street to be converted back to four lanes if safety issues occur.
- APD will closely monitor response times after project completion.

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# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Agreement

- Includes construction and maintenance responsibilities
- Includes a removal clause
- Includes total project cost and cost sharing amounts
- NCDOT and City staff will meet on a quarterly basis following implementation to review safety and operations data including response time data provided by APD to assess impacts of the 4/3 lane conversion.

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# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Fiscal Impact

- $275,000 (FY 2023)
- Maximum $300,000 (If removal clause is exercised, FY 2025)

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Maintenance

- The NCDOT will be responsible for all maintenance activities including street sweeping per standard maintenance cycles.
- The City would be responsible to perform more frequent street sweeping activities.

# Merrimon Ave - 4/3 Lane Conversion

Staff Recommendation

- Approve an agreement between the City and NCDOT to convert Merrimon Avenue from 4 lanes to 3 lanes from Midland Road to WT Weaver Blvd as a part of a resurfacing project.

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