



Legislation Text

File #: 78895, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

The proposed resolution directs staff to pursue an experimental closure of the 400-600 blocks of State Street to non-emergency vehicular traffic in 2024 in order to test the feasibility and success of a pedestrian mall concept. Large expenditures identified when studying the results of the 2024 experiment will be included in future Capital and Operating budgets. No additional City appropriation required in 2023.

Title

Directing staff to take the steps necessary to conduct an experimental closure of the 400-600 blocks of State Street, including notification of directly impacted stakeholders. (District 2)

Body

WHEREAS, the Metro Transit Network Redesign removed buses from the 400-600 blocks of State Street in June 2023; and

WHEREAS, the Downtown Coordinating Committee (DCC) spent several months studying the potential of closing these blocks to vehicular traffic by engaging with staff from multiple City agencies and local stakeholders, and some of the issues discussed are highlighted herein; and

WHEREAS, members of the Disability Rights Commission and Disability Rights and Services Specialist discussed the importance of keeping the mainline sidewalk open, and to consider new ways to maintain equitable access to businesses, transportation, activities and events; and

WHEREAS, Emergency Services personnel from the Police and Fire Departments emphasized the necessity to maintain a 20-foot wide path, clear of any obstructions, for required emergency access to the area at all times as there are regular calls for service to the area, especially during large events, late nights, and weekends; and

WHEREAS, staff from the Streets and Parks Divisions provided in-depth information related to the timing of cleaning, street sweeping, garbage pick-up, snow removal and other essential maintenance services that primarily takes place weekdays from 6:00 am to 2:00 pm, but occasionally other times during Saturday events, and snow emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Engineering Division and Traffic Engineering Division staff described what baseline data would be needed before an experimental closure to fully understand the complex interactions and potential conflicts among pedestrians, bicycles, skateboards, and/or limited motor vehicles in order to fully evaluate the outcomes of an experimental closure; and

WHEREAS, representatives from the Madison Central Business Improvement District, Greater State Street Business Association, and other businesses discussed the potential impact on different types of businesses, particularly related to delivery access; and

WHEREAS, Planning Division staff met with representatives from the Campus Area Neighborhood Association to understand resident and student concerns about the area and relayed those perspectives to the DCC; and

WHEREAS, a survey of businesses, property owners and residents on the 400-600 blocks of State Street showed the highest support for weekend closures of the street, with lower levels of support for weekday

closures;

WHEREAS, after reviewing survey data and comments, at its June 15, 2023 meeting, the DCC recommended pursuing a pedestrian mall experiment on the 400-600 blocks of State Street; and

WHEREAS, before any experiment begins, staff will develop a data collection and evaluation plan, collect baseline usage data such as pedestrian, bicycle, delivery counts, and business data to facilitate a comparison to usage patterns during experimental closures; and

WHEREAS, after the conclusion of any experiment, a second survey will be conducted to understand residents', business and property owners', and City agencies' experiences during the closure.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that staff of all relevant City agencies, led by the Traffic Engineering and Planning Divisions, is hereby directed to take the steps necessary to conduct an experimental closing of the 400-600 blocks of State Street sometime during 2024; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in order to fully realize the benefits of a pedestrian mall while accommodating daily needs of businesses, residents, delivery services, and property owners/managers, staff should develop a pedestrian mall design and management plan, which includes recommendations related to equity, diversity and inclusion, furniture and equipment needs, placemaking and public art, programming, signage, and ongoing staff responsibilities; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that upon the completion of the experiment, staff shall prepare a report that includes usage comparisons, survey results and recommendations for any potential future changes to the 400-600 blocks of State Street, to be submitted to the Mayor and Common Council for consideration.