
WHEN WILL THE CONVERSION TAKE PLACE?

The two way traffic change will start on June 23rd, 2022 at 6AM.

WILL THERE BE SOME GUIDANCE FOR DRIVERS DURING THE FIRST FEW DAYS ON THE CONVERSION?

Yes. Before the conversion takes effect, signage and pavement markings will be installed to provide guidance to drivers and pedestrians.

A police detail was also budgeted into the project to help the public with the transition. FPD will be on-hand throughout the first week of the transition.

WILL ALL OF MAIN STREET AND BOULDER DRIVE BECOME A TWO-WAY STREET?

All of Boulder Drive will be converted to two-way traffic through this change. On Main Street, the conversion will encompass the area from the eastern intersection at Main/Boulder—just east of the Water Street Bridge—to the western intersection, between Central and Academy Streets. Main Street will remain one-way on both sides of the Upper Common.

AFTER THIS CONVERSION, WHERE CAN I PARK?

You can continue to park on Main Street adjacent side streets and existing parking garages and parking lots. A small number of Main Street parking spots were lost through this project, and on-street Boulder Drive parking was removed altogether. This will allow the project to better accommodate emergency vehicles and bicycles. Public parking will now be allowed on the Boulder Drive entrance of the Mill Street garage, (formerly permit parking only) to accommodate that lost parking (photo of Mill Street lot, Boulder Drive entrance). The City will also be removing the coin meters and creating free (time-limited) parking on Main Street. In the next year, the City will also be creating a parking lot at the intersection of Oliver and Elm Street, creating an additional 25 parking spots.

IS CUSHING STREET PART OF THIS TRAFFIC CHANGE?

Yes. As part of the Main/Boulder conversion, Cushing Street will be permanently closed to vehicle traffic, and turned into a pedestrian plaza. The two-way conversion made this road obsolete, and the closure is also expected to enhance driver and pedestrian safety at the Main/Blossom intersection.

WHAT'S GOING ON AT PUTNAM STREET AND OLIVER STREET?

As part of the Main/Boulder conversion, Putnam Street and Oliver Street will be converted to two-way traffic. New traffic signals on Putnam at its intersections with Main and Boulder will allow for this change to proceed.

WHAT OTHER CHANGES ARE INCLUDED IN THIS WORK?

Throughout the project area, pedestrian safety enhancements have been developed to enhance the pedestrian experience, including new crosswalks, sidewalks and wheelchair ramps. Bike lanes have been added to Boulder Drive. In addition to Cushing Street, the project includes significant enhancements to Mill Street, including new lighting (delayed to Fall 2022 due to supply-chain issues). Lighting throughout the project area will also enhance the driver and pedestrian experience

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS TWO-WAY CONVERSION AND THE ONE-WAY/ONE-LANE CONVERSION THAT HAPPENED IN 2017?

The one-way experiment reduced the number of westbound traffic lanes on Main Street. With this project, there will still be 2 lanes of traffic eastbound, and 2 westbound. They will simply be distributed more efficiently for drivers.

WHY IS THE CITY IMPLEMENTING THIS CHANGE?

This change has been recommended in City planning efforts for decades, and for good reason.

(1/3) For one, it provides flexibility. Drivers will have the same number of travel lanes—2 eastbound, 2 westbound—but they will be distributed more efficiently. For large events like Civic Days, this also gives the City the ability to close off Main Street or Boulder Drive for pedestrian-only traffic without creating traffic logjams.

WHY IS THE CITY IMPLEMENTING THIS CHANGE?

(2/3) This also works also aligns with several planned construction projects. There is also over \$20m in utility upgrades on Main Street and Boulder Drive over the next five years. This change will allow that work to take place while still maintaining east and westbound traffic through downtown. This work also aligns with the Water Street bridge replacement, set to commence in 2024. The City has been coordinating with MassDOT to get an additional (northbound) lane on the bridge, for westbound traffic on Boulder Drive. This will reduce traffic at that light. While the bridge is being replaced, it will also provide alternatives (e.g. Putnam Street) for north and southbound traffic.

WHY IS THE CITY IMPLEMENTING THIS CHANGE?

(3/3) Finally, the project improves pedestrian safety. One-way, two-lane roads encourage high-speed traffic. There is a clear link between pedestrian safety and vehicle speeds, which is why many downtowns have moved back to two-way streets.



HOW IS THIS PROJECT BEING FUNDED?

The project was made available through state grants through the MassWorks (\$3m) and Complete Streets (\$399k) programs, along with the City of Fitchburg (\$600k). In addition, funds through the State's Shared Streets and Spaces program (\$199k) were used to convert Cushing Street into a pedestrian plaza. These grants were designated for these specific purposes, and could not be used for other purposes (e.g. paving the roads).

WILL MAIN STREET AND BOULDER DRIVE BE PAVED AS PART OF THIS PROJECT?

No, not as part of this project, with the exception of certain focused areas. Additional work in the roads will continue in the next 2-3 years, including extensive gas, water, and sewer separation. We cannot pave until these projects are complete; otherwise, the City and Unutil would have had to tear up the newly-paved roads to complete those projects.

WHAT ABOUT EMERGENCY VEHICLES?

An important lesson learned during the one-lane Main experiment was that emergency vehicles needed a safe and efficient way to travel in and out of the downtown. Two-way Main and Boulder will continue to provide 2 east and westbound lanes of vehicle traffic, but will provide more flexibility in the case of emergency. Furthermore, the bicycle lanes on Boulder Drive will serve a dual-purpose, allowing a buffer for vehicles to move over if emergency vehicles need to get through the downtown.

WHY WAS CUSHING STREET CLOSED? HOW WILL I GET FROM BOULDER DRIVE TO MAIN STREET?

Cushing Street was closed due to safety concerns at the Cushing/Main/Blossom intersection. With the conversion of both streets to two-way traffic, there will now be a number of streets that will allow connections between Main Street and Boulder Drive, such as Newton Place and Putnam Street. Putnam Street, for example, is a signalized intersection, and so will present a much safer alternative than Cushing Street.

WHAT ELSE IS THE CITY DOING DOWNTOWN?

We know that this project is one of many things the City needs to do downtown. We are working on it. Below are a few of the things underway downtown.

Policy Changes | [Smart Growth Zoning](#), [Parking Improvements](#), [New Urban Renewal Plan \(adopted 2022\)](#), [2021 Comprehensive Zoning Rewrite w/ reduced roadblocks for downtown development](#)

Economic Changes | [Funding partnerships with ReImagine North of Main](#) . [Comprehensive Suite of Development Assistance Resources](#) | [New Business Growth](#) | [New Restaurants](#), [The Urban Fork](#), [TDI District Designation](#).

Housing | [62-unit Fitchburg Arts Community](#), [44-unit Moran Square Redevelopment](#), [409 Main Street](#), [759 Main Street](#).

Arts and Culture | [Creative Catalyst Designation](#), [Commonwealth Magazine Feature on Partnership Approach](#), [Activate Mill Street](#), [Riverfront Park Stage](#), [Community Mural Institute](#).