The Cottage Grove Avenue project stretches from 1st Avenue to Forest Drive SE and includes new pavement and utilities (curb, gutter, storm sewer to improve drainage), multi-use path on the north side, and a roundabout at Cottage Grove and Forest Drive to resolve back-ups during morning and afternoon peak times. Design has not yet been finalized and the project is not set to be under construction until 2021. A second neighborhood meeting will be held this summer to unveil a new draft of the plan, following resident input. Cottage Grove Avenue from Forest Drive to 34th Street will be repaired in 2022.

Q: How does the project impact trees / greenspace?
A: Project engineers anticipate minimal tree impacts. While we are still refining the concept, we estimate at this point only approximately 7-10 trees will need to be removed, and we do not anticipate removing any trees behind the sidewalk. We recognize that trees play a large role in shaping the aesthetics of a neighborhood. After further review of design, we see no reason why the large white pine tree on the NW corner of the intersection will need to be removed. Additionally, the road will narrow slightly, so we do not anticipate losing any greenspace.

Q: Why is a multi-use path being considered on the north side of Cottage Grove?
A: Multi-use paths are safer for families and can accommodate a wide variety of users, including joggers, walkers, families with strollers, and people with disabilities. With a nearby high school cross-country team as well as a retirement community, a wide path provides a safe option in a location where sidewalk is currently lacking. We are currently reviewing the size, width, and layout of the path in order to preserve trees and respond to concerns about cyclists and walkers sharing a path. Multi-use paths also eliminates on-street bike lanes, enabling us to narrow the road and reduce pavement and construction impacts, while preserving greenspace.

Q: What does the Trails Master Plan outline for this area?
A: The Comprehensive Trails Master Plan outlines an off-street, multi-use path as the suggested trail/bike facility for this location.

Q: Will the width of the street change?
A: The road will narrow slightly, preserving greenspace and reducing construction impacts to adjacent property owners.
Q: Will the on-street parking change?
A: With the narrowing of the road, on-street parking will be eliminated on the south side, with reduced on-street parking on the north side. We will be reducing spaces near driveways to improve sight-distance for drivers.

Q: Why is a roundabout being considered?
A: A roundabout is the best solution to solve the congestion and back-ups that happen during peak morning and afternoon times. The intersection is near a school, which routinely sees high traffic volumes for short periods of time. During the rest of the day, the roundabout would enable cars to flow smoothly through the intersection without making it necessary to stop and idle. A roundabout would also be more pedestrian friendly than the current four-way stop.

Q: What is a mini roundabout?
A: A mini roundabout functions the same way as a traditional roundabout, but with a smaller footprint. School buses will still be able to drive through the roundabout; the slightly raised dome will provide an apron for other larger vehicles to drive over when making the turn. Mini roundabouts also take up a smaller footprint, resulting in less impact to the surrounding neighborhood. The mini roundabout proposed on Cottage Grove would be a single-lane roundabout.

Q: What are the safety considerations with using a roundabout near younger and older drivers?
A: Roundabouts are safe for all users. Their design means vehicles slow down while approaching the intersection. Slower speeds provide drivers with more reaction time (which is a benefit to both new drivers and older drivers). Slower speeds also mean that accidents are low-impact and less severe (instead of head-on or right-angle crashes, they are side-swipes).

Q: How will the roundabout improve safety for pedestrians and students?
A: Roundabouts, because of their circular design, decreases the number of conflict points. Pedestrians no longer have to watch for cars coming from multiple directions or making turns. The roundabout will include painted pedestrian crosswalks, flashing pedestrian beacons, and raised splitter islands: pedestrians simply walk across one lane of traffic at a time, stopping safely at the raised island before walking across the last lane of traffic. They will only need to look in one direction at a time (illustration below).
Q: What is the cost of the roundabout vs. a four-way stop?
A: The intersection pavement will need to be pulled up and completely reconstructed, regardless of whether it’s a four-way stop or a roundabout. The cost difference is negligible.

Q: What are the roundabout aesthetics?
A: The mini roundabout will include a small raised inside dome, similar in size to the middle of the already existing intersection. Brick pavers, raised splitter islands, and new street lights will also be included. We are working with private utility companies to relocate their lines underground, which would eliminate the large utility poles currently at each corner of the intersection. We are also exploring options on colored concrete for the inside raised dome.

Q: Would we consider installing a traffic signal at the intersection of Cottage Grove and Forest Drive?
A: Based on traffic volumes, a traffic signal is not warranted at this location, and there are no plans to install a signal.

Q: How can residents continue to give input?
A: Residents are encouraged to share comments and feedback by emailing us at PavingforProgress@cedar-rapids.org.

Q: When will residents receive an update on the project?
A: We are currently in the public outreach phase with a concept plan. In the weeks and months ahead, we will continue to work with our engineering teams to refine the plan based on public feedback. We anticipate having more information available sometime early summer, and will hold a follow-up meeting with residents to share an update.