

Is the roadway being widened, and if yes, why? The actual roadway width will be decreasing in some areas and increasing slightly or shifting in others. The roadway will remain one lane of traffic, north and south, with a center turn lane being added only in the mid-section of the project. All of the proposed improvements were designed to improve safety and mobility. Specifically:

- Village Center (Willow to Mt. Pleasant) the roadway will be narrowed, from its current 48' feet in width to between 26' and 29' feet. This is being done to eliminate unnecessary lanes and make it easier and safer for pedestrians to cross.
- Residential Section (Mt. Pleasant to Harding) the pavement will be widened from the current varied 26'-30' width (including the gravel shoulder) to a 32' width. This is being done to provide a center turn lane for safer movements into driveways and roadways; add curb and gutters and storm water improvements to reduce flooding; and improve fire and emergency vehicle access.
- Southern Section (Harding to Winnetka) the pavement on Happ north of Winnetka will remain the same width. On the west leg of the Winnetka Avenue intersection, the pavement will be widened 11' to expand the length of the designated left turn lane. On the south leg of Happ, the pavement will be widened 7' to expand the right turn lane.

Happ Road looks great, why do we need to do this project? The roadway base (sub-structure) is past its useful life and has started to deteriorate. The 2017 resurfacing work was only a temporary measure implemented to bridge the time before a new roadway could be constructed.

How does this project fit in with the plans for our business district? The Village's 2040 Vision Plan includes visions for a vibrant business district with walkable areas, small shops, and gathering places for residents. One component of this plan is the Skokie Valley Trail which will be located in the ComEd right-of-way near the Post Office. When the path is built, Northfield will be the only town in which the path crosses through the business district. The vision is to harness the activity of the Skokie Valley Trail in a way that supports and promotes local businesses. Providing a safe connection between the west and east sides of Happ Road will further benefit those businesses that are not on the trail side of Happ Road by providing a safe and attractive connection.

What started all of this "Happ Improvement Project" stuff? The deteriorated condition of the Cook County roadway prompted both the County and Village to work together to assess the roadway relative to current roadway standards, safety and mobility issues, the Village's 2040 Vision Plan, and community input. Through that process, the following goals and objectives were developed to guide the design:



- Improve safety for ALL users
- Simplify vehicular movements at intersections
- Minimize vehicular points of conflict
- Increase awareness of pedestrians
- Enhance bicycle accommodations within the corridor
- Creating a central place, supportive of local businesses, community gatherings, and walkable access

What is wrong with the Happ/Orchard/Walnut intersection? The engineering assessment identified the following issues:

- **Level of Service.** (A=ideal and F=failure). During the peak AM hours, the intersection functions at a grade level C & D and in the PM peak hours at D & F. The roundabout would improve this to an A at all times.
- **Configuration.** Happ and Orchard meet in a skewed direction and Walnut Street intersects very close to this area. The intersection is also very close to Willow Road. That makes other more traditional options, like a 4-way stop light or 4-way stop signs, unable to be utilized. They were determined to cause backups and other safety issues on Willow.
- **Conflict Points.** At the existing intersection, there are 30 vehicular and 20 pedestrian conflict points. These conflicts increase the risk of accidents. Under the roundabout solution, these are reduced to 10 vehicular and 10 pedestrian conflict points.
- **Emergency Access.** This intersection is a primary route to the Edens Expressway for our larger Fire Rescue equipment. Due to the angle of Happ and Willow, our emergency response teams must use Walnut to respond to the Edens Expressway.
- **Parking.** The majority of our public parking spaces are west of Happ Road, while many local businesses are on the east side. Providing an easy and safe walking route between the parking and businesses is desired.

Can't traffic signals work at Happ and Orchard? This option was studied and excluded because the Illinois Department of Transportation determined the Orchard intersection to be too close to the Willow Road intersection to function safely.

Who asked for a roundabout and why was this alternative selected? The roundabout was chosen following a 2-year public engagement process and an engineering assessment of all of the options including: (1) No Build – leave as is, (2) install a 4-way stop light (3) install 4-way stop signs (4) install a 4-leg roundabout (Orchard and Happ) and (5) install a 5-leg roundabout (Orchard/Happ/ Walnut). The planned 5-leg roundabout was selected after it was determined to be the only option that met the safety improvement goals established at the start of the project. Specifically:



- Roundabouts Are Safer. It will reduce speed to 15-20 mph which results in 40% fewer crashes, 75% fewer injury crashes, 89% fewer fatal crashes, and 30%-40% fewer pedestrian crashes. For pedestrians - at 20mph 90% of pedestrians hit will live and at 40mph – 90% of pedestrians hit will die. In addition, it will reduce the number of conflict points at these intersections from the current 30 to 10.
- Roundabouts Save Time. 56% fewer vehicle stops and 89% fewer delays
- Roundabouts Save Money and are “Green”. 30% reduction in fuel consumption, \$5,000 less per year to maintain, and 89% fewer delays which reduces emissions.
- Meets Village 2040 Vision Plan. *“make the Village Center the heart of the community- a walkable, pedestrian-oriented area with a wide variety of local shops, restaurants, community facilities, and gathering places”. “The installation of a roundabout at Happ Road and Orchard Lane will create a new focal point within the Village Center”, and “Improving active transportation options within the Village Center is a community priority. Currently, the east and west sides of the Village Center are not well connected to each other or to the surrounding neighborhoods”*

What work is planned at Winnetka and Happ? A permanent traffic signal will be installed with designated crosswalks and countdown pedestrian signal heads. The new signal will help improve pedestrian safety; create gaps along Winnetka to make it easier to turn onto Winnetka Avenue; reduce vehicular accidents and injuries; improve the level of service of the intersection and reduce delays; and provide for safer turn movements.

Is Happ Road owned by the Village? No, Happ Road is owned and maintained by Cook County through its Department of Transportation and Highways group.

If Happ Road is owned by Cook County, why is the Village involved? When Happ Road was due to be reconstructed, the County partnered with the Village to study the corridor to determine what, if any, improvements were needed to meet current standards, improve safety, and reduce backups. The Village’s involvement opens the project to federal funding that will cover 70% of the project cost with the County covering the remaining portion. The Village will only be responsible for upgrades such as ornamental street lights, traffic signals, and landscaping features.

How much will this project cost the Village? If we are successful in receiving a grant for aesthetic enhancements, the Village’s cost will be approximately \$685,000. The Village is only responsible for aesthetic upgrades, such as trees, benches, decorative lighting, plaza spaces, and the center of the roundabout. 100% of the roadway work is funded by Cook County (30%) in conjunction with IDOT’s Surface Transportation Funds (70%) grant.



Why did I not hear about this project sooner? There has been plenty of outreach over the years the project has been planned. The Happ Road planning process started in 2016 and since then the Village has actively worked to educate and engage the community in the roadway's design. The special outreach efforts and public meetings included:

- 2016-2024 A project website provides all of the project materials and details.
- 2016-2018 The Happ Road Steering Committee led the process, gathered public input, and directed the work of the engineers. They held 5 public meetings on the project.
- 11/9/2017 An Open House/Public Informational Meeting was held to provide information on existing conditions, identify transportation problems, show some potential solutions, outline the public involvement program, and solicit early public comment. Notice of this meeting was placed in the paper, postcards were mailed to stakeholders and residents along the Happ Road corridor, and invitations were sent to state and local elected officials.
- 2/20/2020 A second Open House/Public Hearing was held to get input on the preferred design alternative before filing the Phase I plan with IDOT. Notice of this meeting was placed in the paper, postcards were mailed to stakeholders and residents along the Happ Road corridor; invitation letters were sent to state and local elected officials, and certified letters were mailed to property owners that were projected to be directly impacted.
- 2017-2023 Special presentations were made at Committee of the Whole, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Garden Clubs, and Homeowner Association meetings.
- 2016 -2024 12 press releases/special articles were shared with the press and sent to residents through the Village's newsletter.

Why is a center turn lane proposed on Happ Road? A center turn lane is proposed, in the middle/residential section, to improve safety at the roadway curve, to provide a safe refuge area to turn in and out of driveways and roadways, and to accommodate a mid-block crossing to the park and the west side businesses. From a width standpoint, a center turn lane option is not much wider than a standard two-lane roadway. The center turn lane options consist of curb and gutter with then an 11' drive lane, 10' center turn lane, and 11' drive lane – for a total pavement width of 32'. A two-lane configuration consists of a 3' paved shoulder, two 12' wide drive lanes, and another 3' paved shoulder – for a total pavement width of 30'

Why not close Walnut at Orchard so you don't need a roundabout? Our fire-rescue and law enforcement teams need Walnut Lane to access the Edens Expressway. In addition, it provides municipal parking and important access to our downtown businesses and police station. The option was explored and determined to not be viable.



What are you planning to put in the center of the roundabout? Two alternatives are under consideration. The first is a berm with landscaping, decorative lighting, rustic rock outcroppings, and a Northfield sign. The second option is a limestone walled structure with a Northfield sign and center fountain along with landscaping and decorative lighting. Both options will be competitively bid and a final selection will be made once actual costs are known.

What is the Village going to do about the lost parking spaces? The Village is negotiating with the Illinois Department of Transportation to utilize a section of unused land behind Stormy's Tavern for a parking area that will connect to the alley beside Metamorphosis. The new lot would provide 22-23 parking spaces in close proximity to Orchard Lane.

What are the next steps? The project is planned to be bid out by IDOT in the second half of 2025 with construction taking place in 2026.

Will there be access to local businesses and homes during construction? Yes, the Happ Road work is being phased to ensure that the roadway remains open, one-way northbound, throughout construction. All of the improvements are expected to be completed in one construction season and access will be maintained to all of the homes and businesses in the area while work takes place.

