

# New Rochelle's Quaker Ridge Road set for redesign



**Dan Reiner**

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NEW ROCHELLE - Quaker Ridge Road, one of the city's major byways, is due for a major upgrade.

The 1.5-mile road that connects North Avenue and Weaver Street on New Rochelle's North End will be the city's first to undergo a "Complete Streets" project, which aims to increase pedestrian and vehicle safety.

"It's the primary east-west connector in the northern half of the city, heavily used, and yet poorly engineered," said Mayor Noam Bramson. "We have an opportunity to improve safety, calm traffic, enhance the appearance and make it more friendly for pedestrians and cyclists."

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Quaker Ridge Road, with its concrete surface, is riddled with cracks and potholes. The 48-foot-wide road currently runs four lanes across with no shoulder on either side.

"It's built like a highway," Bramson said. "It's a highway to nowhere."

Preliminary proposals for the street's redesign include reducing traffic from four lanes to two, adding 5-foot-wide bike lanes and wider sidewalks on both sides, and new crosswalks and traffic signals.

In April, the city received a \$3.5 million grant through the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Alternatives Program, setting plans in motion for the Complete Streets project.

The City Council last week approved an additional \$777,000 in funding through an agreement with the Federal Highway Administration for preliminary engineering and design. About \$620,000 of the sum will be reimbursed to the city for the federal share.

Bramson noted that the project will likely require more than the preliminary funding, but money has been allocated in the city's capital budget.

The city has assembled a steering committee of nearby residents, businesses and others to help provide input for the project, Bramson said. He said design for the project will unfold in 2018, and construction could start in 2019. He added that the project will likely take a couple of years to complete.

The Quaker Ridge project isn't the only major transformation city officials are planning. Last month, the City Council authorized a \$5 million plan that would convert Main and Huguenot streets from one-way to two-way thoroughfares.

"Our goal is to improve New Rochelle's overall street network," Bramson said.

Pedestrians and cyclists could also get a boost as early as spring. City spokeswoman Kathy Gilwit said a long-awaited, citywide bike-share program will begin installation this year and will be rolled out in the spring.

Gilwit also said installation of Palo WiFi kiosks, announced last year, will take place over the winter. The kiosks will give users a place to stop to charge mobile devices, use the WiFi hotspot, or use an interactive touch screen for services such as checking the weather or navigating a city map.

"We're trying to build a city that accommodates the lifestyles of the 21st century," Bramson said.

*Twitter: @reinerwire*



**Overview:** The City of New Rochelle, with assistance from a \$3.6 million federal grant, is currently designing a major upgrade of Quaker Ridge Road. The proposed project entails reconfiguration of the existing four lane roadway to a three-lane design, including a dedicated median left-turn lane, enhanced signal technology at intersections, improved sidewalks and crossings for pedestrians, and bicycle lanes, as well as full repaving of the road. The design was presented at a Public Information meeting on February 27, 2019. The proposed design was developed in consultation with a community steering committee composed of representatives from nearby neighborhoods, schools, and houses of worship, and is intended to address public concerns and priorities, such as promoting safety, enhancing walkability, reducing excessive speeding, and providing for the efficient flow of traffic.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Are 3 lanes sufficient to handle the volume of traffic on Quaker Ridge Road?**

YES. Overall traffic volume on Quaker Ridge Road is well below the threshold at which a three-lane configuration is recommended. (The threshold is approximately 20,000 vehicles per day, while Quaker Ridge Road has about half that volume: 11,200 vehicles per day.) If Quaker Ridge Road were being newly-built today utilizing modern standards, a four-lane configuration would be rejected as excessive.

### **Will 3 lanes be sufficient during the busiest times when traffic is heaviest?**

YES. The proposed design is based on week-long traffic counts measured in fifteen-minute increments. This analysis encompasses rush hour traffic, as well as school pick-up and drop-off. Peak hour traffic volumes can easily be accommodated in one through-lane and one turning-lane per direction. In addition, at every major intersection, dedicated left-turns bays have been sized to accept peak hour vehicle queues.

### **Will intersections operate more safely and efficiently than they do today?**

YES. The separation of left-turn conflicts by delineation of left-turn lanes, the introduction of modern signal technology at intersections that adjusts to real-time traffic conditions, and the enhancement of pedestrian crosswalks will together provide a safer, less stressful, and more efficient experience for all modes of travel. All major intersections have been carefully modeled using field data and computer simulations.

### **Will the new design enhance the safety of the road as a whole?**

YES. The new design will improve safety for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Provision of a continuous median left turn lane will greatly reduce rear-end collisions caused by turning vehicles. Single lane through-traffic will curb excessive speeding, while maintaining smooth traffic flow. Bicyclists that currently use vehicular travel lanes will be separated from motor vehicle traffic. The bicycle lanes will also serve as buffers between sidewalks and vehicle lanes. Sidewalks will be designed to meet ADA requirements.

**Is a motorized vehicle lane being eliminated in order to accommodate bicycle lanes?**

NO. While the proposed design features bicycle lanes, the three-lane configuration would be recommended as optimum for motorized vehicles, regardless of whether bicycle lanes are included.

**Does the proposal include any new traffic signals?**

YES. In addition to replacing existing signals with more efficient “smart” technology, the proposal includes a new traffic signal to be added at the intersection of Van Meter Fens.

**Does the federal grant come with any conditions or requirements?**

YES. The federal grant that covers the bulk of the Quaker Ridge Road improvements requires consideration for Complete Streets elements, such as bicycle and pedestrian features, and requires inclusion of these elements when feasible.

**Can New Rochelle use the grant simply to pave Quaker Ridge Road, without making other changes?**

NO. Reconstruction of the pavement without including Complete Streets features would invalidate the grant and require the City to refund federal monies expended to date. A different revenue stream would have to be identified to pay for repaving, and this would most likely consist entirely or primarily of City funds. Therefore, in addition to losing the various benefits of the Complete Streets design, a simple repaving of the road would increase net costs to local taxpayers.

**Will the project include new pavement for Quaker Ridge Road?**

YES. As part of the project, Quaker Ridge Road will receive an entirely new surface.

**Will I receive a response to my questions and comments?**

YES. As part of the preparation of a Design Report, which is required under the New York State approval process for the project, the City’s consultant team will provide written responses to all comments received at a February 27<sup>th</sup> Public Information Meeting, as well as to any additional comments received either by email or mail by March 20<sup>th</sup>. After that date, comments and questions may still be submitted, but will not be formally included in the Design Report. Comments and questions may be sent in writing to Director of Planning & Sustainability Kevin Kain, New Rochelle City Hall, 515 North Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801 or by email to [kkain@newrochelleny.com](mailto:kkain@newrochelleny.com).

**For more information on the Quaker Ridge Road Complete Streets Project including the proposed design visit [www.newrochelleny.com/quakerridge](http://www.newrochelleny.com/quakerridge) or contact Kevin Kain, Director of Planning & Sustainability at (914) 654- 2191 and [kkain@newrochelleny.com](mailto:kkain@newrochelleny.com).**