



CITY OF AURORA

ACCESS TO TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT PLAN: Aurora Transportation Center and Route 59 Metra Station

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The Aurora Pedestrian Access to Transit Improvement Plan, completed through the Regional Transportation Authority's (RTA) Community Planning program, examines pedestrian access at the Aurora Transportation Center and Route 59 Station. Both stations are served by Metra Commuter Rail and Pace Suburban Bus. This plan recommends small-scale, short-term improvements that will enhance pedestrian and bicycle access in and around the two station areas.

When implemented, these improvements can help increase the pedestrian experience for those who walk or bike to the station, as well as those who arrive by auto or connecting transit.

To solicit recommendations for the plan, the RTA and City of Aurora hosted a charrette with interested agencies in a August 2015 tour, to examine, discuss and provide feedback on potential improvements. Participating agencies included representatives from the City of Aurora, RTA, Pace,

Metra, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Kane County, DuPage County, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.

The Aurora Transportation Center is located near the downtown area just east of the Fox River and Route 25, while the Route 59 Station is located in the northeastern portion of the City, on the border with the City of Naperville. Both stations are along Metra's Burlington Northern Santa Fe line.

Related Projects

In addition to this access improvement plan, the following projects are currently underway and will positively impact the station areas:

- **Aurora Station Boulevard Transit Plan Update (RTA Community Planning Project):** RTA staff is assisting the City with updating the 2009 service plan for the Station Boulevard Transit system. This system will connect residents of the Station Boulevard TOD area with the Route 59 Station. Updates will be made to the routing and scheduling, and cost estimates will be prepared. This project is expected to be completed during fall 2016.
- **A Downtown Master Plan for Aurora:** Through this project, the City of Aurora will update, complement, and enhance the 2005 Seize the Future Master Plan, with a component dedicated to developing the transportation opportunities and walkability of downtown. The new downtown master plan will provide policy direction in the areas of sustainability, economic development, open space and recreation, arts and culture, and other quality-of-life factors. The plan is expected to be completed in fall 2016.
- **City of Aurora Route 59 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Project:** This project will reconfigure the Aurora portion of the Route 59 Station. Improvements include the realignment of parking space configurations to improve circulation and traffic flow, the addition of 448 new parking spaces, a new traffic signal at the intersection of Station Boulevard and Meridian Lake Drive, a new Pace Bus staging area, new parking lot lights and landscaping, improved pedestrian access, new "pay by license plate" parking space payment option, and new security cameras. Construction is expected to begin in early 2016.
- **City of Aurora Transportation Center Expansion CMAQ Project:** This \$14.5 million project will modify the existing commuter parking lot to provide better multimodal access and improve pedestrian and traffic flow for a safe, accessible, and user friendly transit station. It will provide a bicycle/pedestrian transit connection by adding sidewalks, curb cuts, ADA ramps, bike shelters, and drive aisles. An improved Pace Bus staging area will be created. A pedestrian bridge to connect nearby residential neighborhoods and new parking to accommodate an additional 789 cars will be constructed.

AURORA TRANSPORTATION CENTER (ATC)

The Aurora Transportation Center (ATC) is located at 233 N. Broadway in downtown Aurora, along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad. Two grade-level spur tracks provide access to Metra service while Amtrak and BNSF freight service utilize an above-grade railway that is located south of the Metra track spur. The ATC is the terminus station for the Metra BNSF line. The service runs 38 miles between the ATC and Chicago's Union Station, with 2,107 average weekday boardings at the ATC (Metra, 2014).

Pace has a substantial presence at the ATC as well. There are five Pace bus routes and one Call-n-Ride service that utilize the ATC.

The main ATC station area consists of the parking lot along Broadway, the Pace Bus staging area, and a depot building which accommodates ticket windows, offices, shops, and sitting areas for commuters. This transit station building is attached to the Two Brothers Roundhouse Brewery and Restaurant. Both original limestone buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and were once part of the thriving CB&Q (Chicago Burlington and Quincy) Railroad Yards in Aurora.

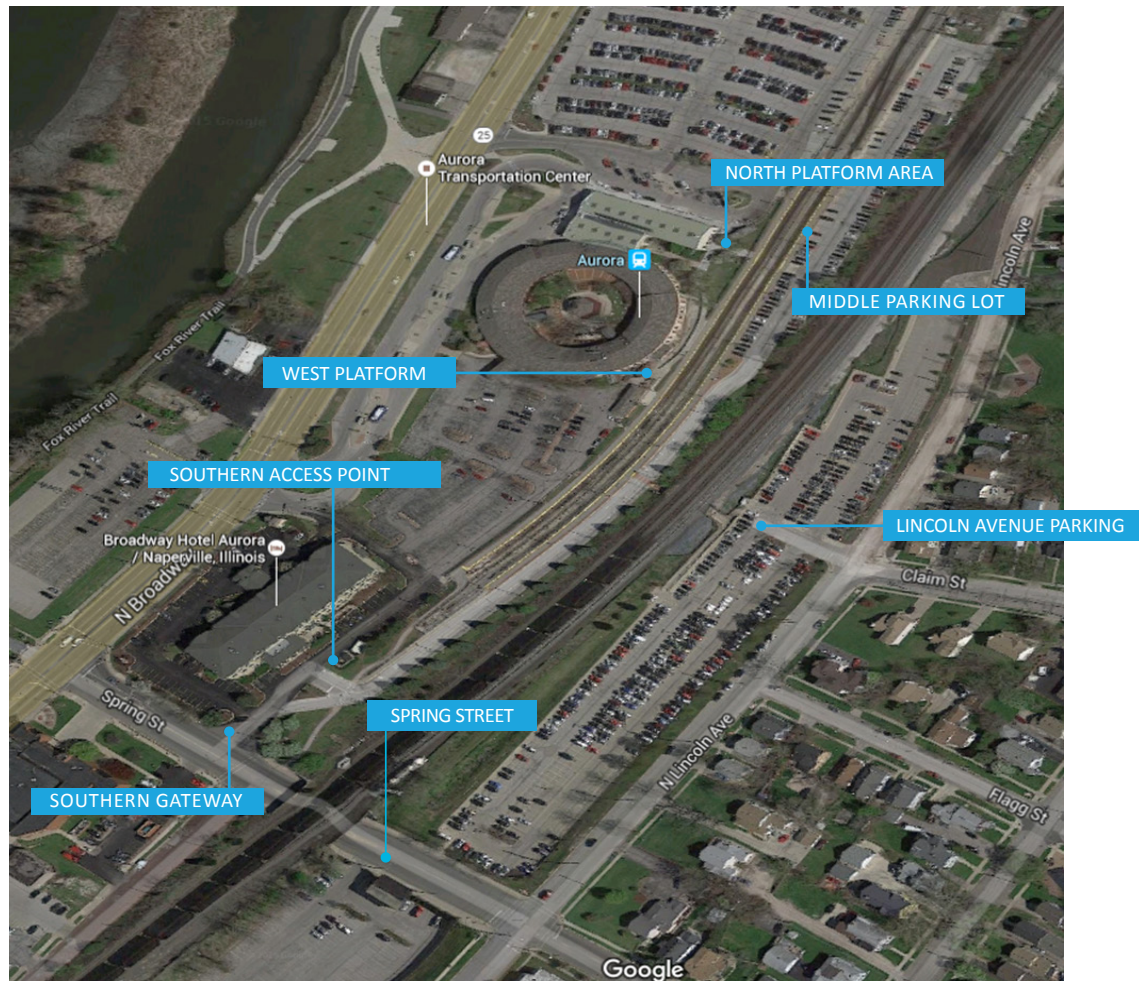
The larger station area footprint includes multiple parking lots added over the years. The parking lots can accommodate 1,633 vehicles. The majority of riders access the station by driving alone (74%), while 14% are dropped off, 6% carpool, 2% arrive by connecting bus and only 2% walked or biked (Metra Origin-Destination Survey, 2014). Recommendations of the Plan will aim to help increase the percentage of riders that walk or bike to the station.



EXISTING CONDITIONS & RECOMMENDATION

The ATC area can be divided into seven subsections. The Main Parking Lot and Pace Bus Area will be reconfigured and improved as part of the City of Aurora Transportation Center Expansion CMAQ Project and are not included in this report. Please note that many of the recommendations require coordination with Metra and BNSF staff. The individual subsections addressed in this report include:

1. North Platform Area
2. Middle Parking Lot
3. Lincoln Avenue Parking Lot
4. Spring Street
5. Southern Gateway
6. Southern Access Point
7. West Platform



1. North Platform Area

Existing Conditions

This segment can be considered the main Metra station area. It starts at the ATC building doors, and continues outside to the benched waiting area, encompasses the platforms for both Metra tracks, and continues to the edge of the Track 2 platform into the entrance to the Middle Parking Lots area. The layout of this section is complicated and can be confusing to navigate.

At the main Metra platform, there is no signage identifying track numbers or track crossing locations, nor is there wayfinding signage on how to cross the tracks to access the Track 2 platform. There is no signage identifying key destinations on either sides of the tracks, such as the transit station building, Pace Bus staging area, downtown Aurora attractions, or navigation to the various parking lots. There is a lack of signals, bells, gates or other devices at the pedestrian track crossing area. Signage consists of one yield sign to alert pedestrians of possible oncoming trains. There are no signs indicating Track 2.

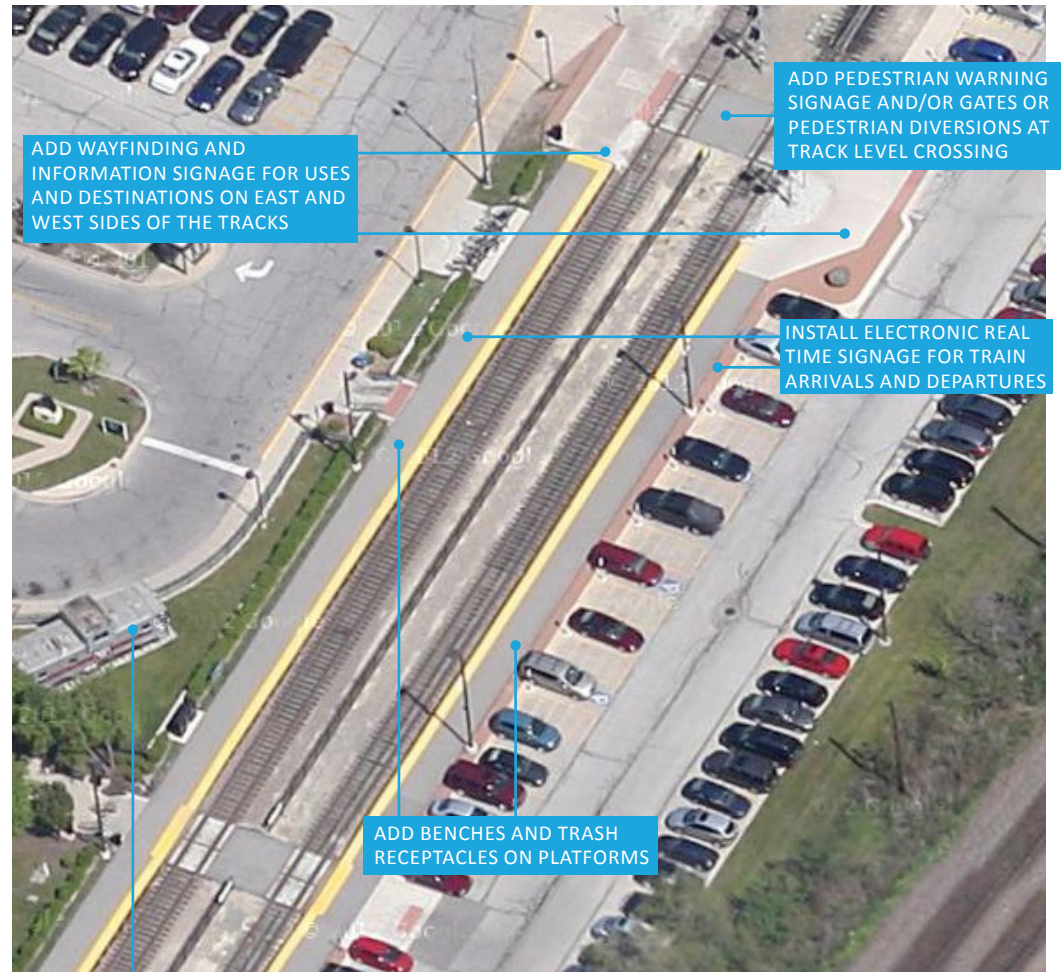
There are no electronic signs identifying train departure times and track numbers, which can contribute to confusing situations when a Metra train is present on each track, and riders are not sure which train to board or what platform to wait on. Additionally, there are no amenities for waiting passengers on the platforms.



Photo Captions (Top to Bottom): existing pedestrian track crossing; ATC building and track access; decorative caboose outside the ATC (Photo Credit: Flickr user David Wilson).

Recommendations for the North Platform Subarea:

- Add high visibility wayfinding and informational signage at the platform level on the west side of the tracks pertaining to uses on the east side of the tracks, including Metra Track 2, Middle Parking Lots, bicycle parking (proposed), pedestrian underpass, Lincoln Avenue Parking Lots, and the southern Spring Street area
- Add high visibility wayfinding and informational signage at the platform level on the east side of the tracks pertaining to uses the west side of the tracks such as Metra Track 1, transit station building, Pace bus staging area and downtown Aurora attractions
- Install electronic real time signage at the platform level at both track platforms that indicates platform number, train number and departure times for each train
- Improve existing pedestrian crossing by adding warning signage and potentially pedestrian gates or diversions
- Utilize an audio system to verbally announce train departure times and departing track number
- Add benches and trash receptacles along the landscape buffer behind the platforms on both tracks
- Add bike parking inside the ATC building in location of vacant news stand, which will provide a covered, secure location for bicycle parking.
- Relocate decorative caboose from main station area to improve site lines to platforms and increase footprint of pedestrian plaza; this area can also accommodate covered bicycle parking



2. Middle Parking Lot

Existing Conditions

This section is located between the at-grade Metra tracks/platform and the above-grade BNSF freight tracks. The parking lot is accessed by a vehicle access road from Spring Street and a pedestrian underpass (under the elevated freight tracks) to the west. The parking lot area, with capacity for 115 vehicles, is well-lit, but lacks detailed wayfinding signage for pedestrians. The pedestrian underpass is in good condition and is clean though dimly lit.

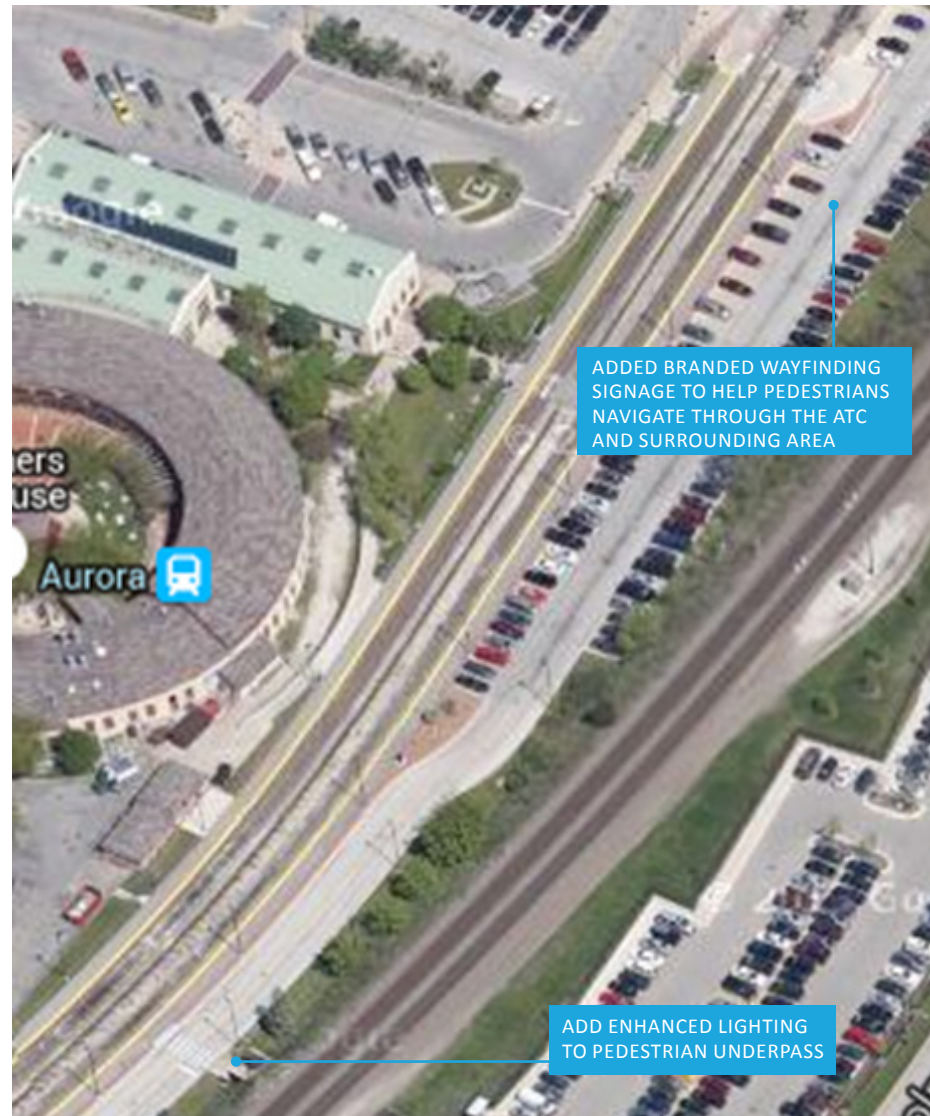
The underpass serves as an access point to the Lincoln Avenue parking area connecting pedestrians from Lincoln Avenue and Spring Street to the Metra platform area. There is a limited sidewalk network to allow pedestrians separate walking areas through the parking lot.



Photo Captions (Top to Bottom): above grade freight / Amtrak tracks; pedestrian underpass; entrance to pedestrian underpass

Recommendations for the Middle Parking Lot subarea:

- Add wayfinding signage to allow users to better navigate the parking area and provide information on access points to the east and west of the lot. This includes western points such as the Metra tracks and platforms, the transit station building, Pace Bus staging area, and downtown Aurora attractions. Eastern points include the Lincoln Avenue parking lot, Lincoln Avenue, and Spring Street
- Replace current signage with more visible informational and directional signage at Spring Street, which is the only entrance to the parking lot
- Add enhanced lighting to the pedestrian underpass



3. Lincoln Avenue Parking Lot

Existing Conditions

This subarea is spatially disconnected from the Metra tracks and main station area by the elevated BNSF freight tracks. The parking lot (bounded by Spring Street to the south, west of Lincoln Avenue and east of the tracks) provide parking for 401 vehicles, and there is no designated motorcycle or bicycle parking. Bicycle parking is not recommended in this area, as most bicyclists will continue closer to the platforms to park their bicycles, as opposed to parking here and walking. However, motorcycle parking is appropriate here, as space allows. The parking lot provides sidewalk segments leading to the pedestrian underpass, though the underpass itself is difficult to locate.

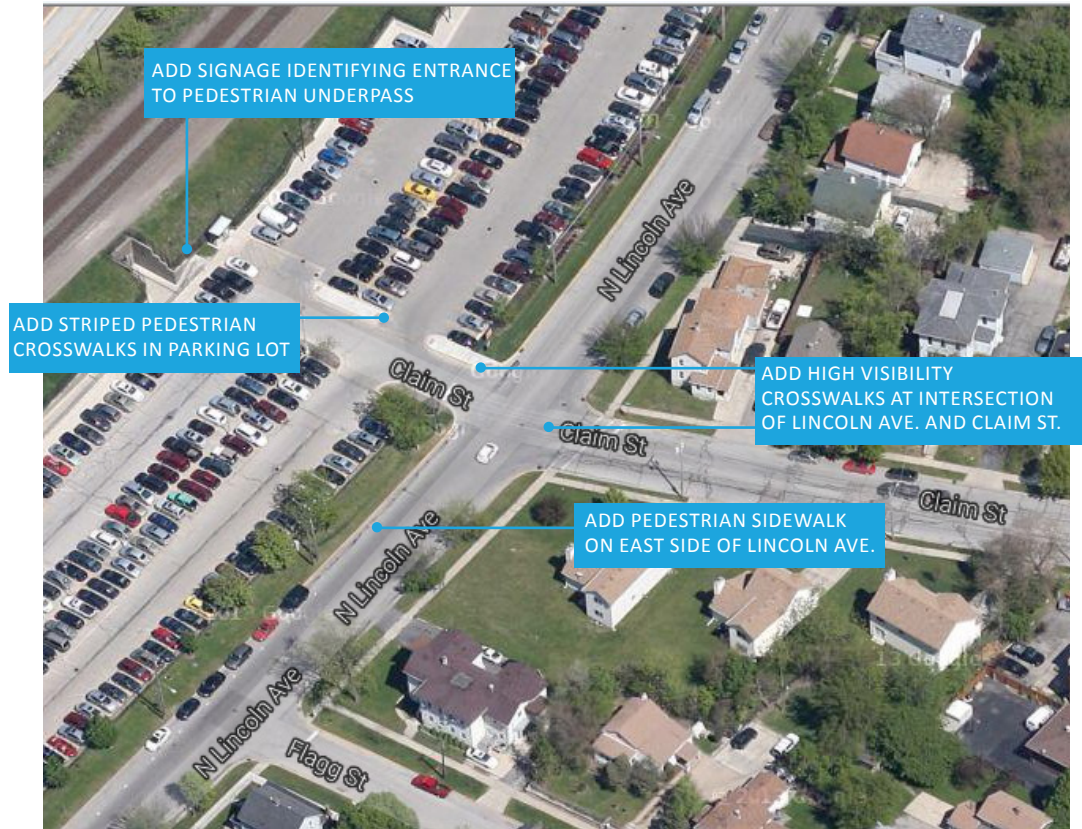
The east side of the parking lot borders Lincoln Avenue and a residential neighborhood, while the east end of the parking lot borders the BNSF freight tracks. This section is physically connected to the Metra station area by the pedestrian underpass that leads to the Middle Parking subarea and by Spring Street, which runs east-west on the south end of the parking lot. However, it is not clear that these connections exist. Outside of the parking lots, there is no signage along Lincoln Avenue or Spring Street to guide pedestrians either to the pedestrian underpass or west along Spring Street to the ATC.



Photo captions (top to bottom): Existing pedestrian walkway on Claim Street through the parking lot; Entrance to pedestrian underpass hidden behind parking; Lack of sidewalks on west side of Lincoln Avenue

Recommendations for the Lincoln Avenue Parking Lot subarea:

- Install signage identifying the pedestrian underpass that leads to the Metra platforms, transit station building, and Pace Bus staging area
- Add high visibility pedestrian crosswalks at Lincoln Avenue and Claim Street
- Add pedestrian crosswalks through the parking lot between the entrance at Claim Street and Lincoln Avenue and the pedestrian underpass where walkways already exist
- Add sidewalks on the west side of Lincoln Avenue
- Add motorcycle / moped parking at North end of lot, either by converting existing vehicle spaces or newly paved area
- Add signage along Spring Street and Lincoln Avenue directing users to parking lot entrance and pedestrian underpass



4. Spring Street

Existing Conditions

This segment consists of Spring Street from Lincoln Avenue to west of the railroad viaduct at N. LaSalle Street. It serves as a connection way for pedestrians, bicycles, and motor vehicles and is a designated bicycle route. The corner of Lincoln Avenue and Spring Street can be seen as the eastern entrance to the ATC transit district, but it is not clear that a major transit center is nearby.

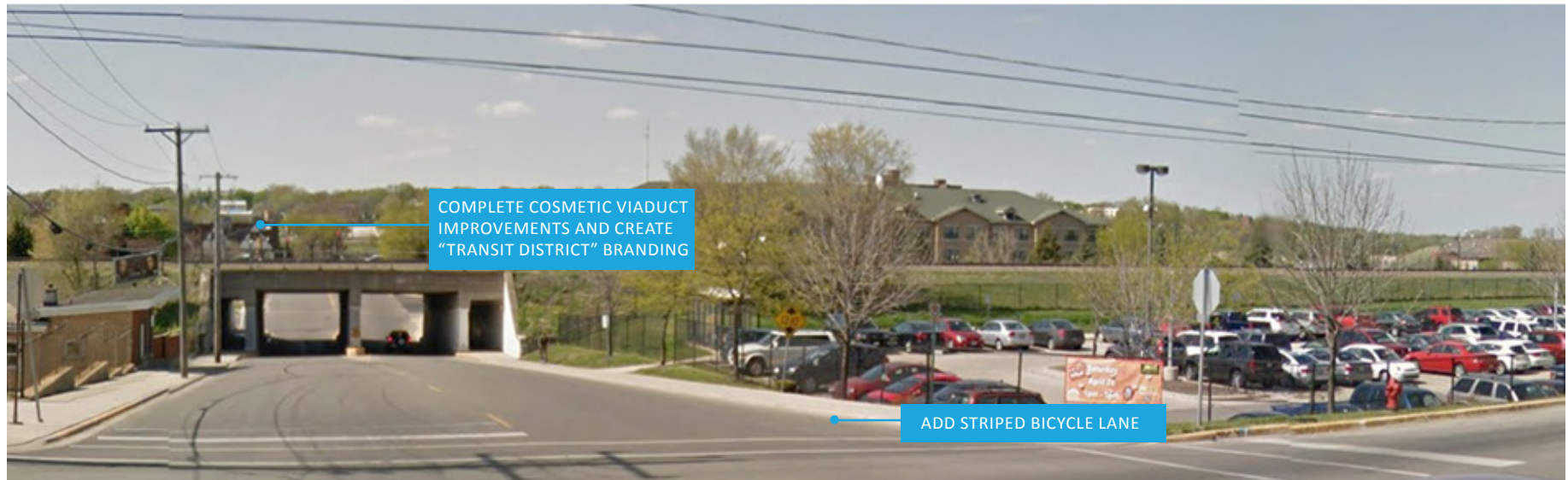
A vehicular underpass at the railroad viaduct along Spring Street physically connects the east and west sides of the transit district; however, the viaduct would benefit from minor aesthetic improvements, including improved lighting and fresh paint.



Photo Captions (top to bottom): Spring Street Viaduct adjacent to the Lincoln Ave. parking lot; sidewalk leading to underpass; pedestrian underpass at the Spring Street viaduct

Recommendations for the Spring Street Subarea:

- Create a “Transit District” designation and entrance through painting / signage on the railroad viaduct. Branding can be used through the ATC on all wayfinding and directional signage
- Make minor improvements to the viaduct / underpass through brighter lighting and new paint and / or railroad or transportation themed murals along the walls
- Add striped bike lanes on Spring Street to improve bicycle connections to the ATC from the west; marked lanes will help alert motorists to the presence of bicyclists while providing a dedicated space for bicyclists



5. Southern Gateway

Existing Conditions

This section starts on Spring Street just west of the viaduct at North LaSalle Street and continues west to the entrance to the Middle Parking Lot area. This area is the main southern access point to the station area for bicyclists and pedestrians. Through minor signage and pedestrian access improvements, this area can be designated a gateway area to the transit district.

Recommendations for the Southern Gateway Entrance Subarea:

- Install a decorative monument sign at the entrance to the transit district, with similar branding to the transit district signage on the viaduct and all wayfinding signage
- Install wayfinding signage for pedestrians to access the Metra platforms to the north of this area and for vehicles to access the Middle Parking Area and Spring Street parking lots
- Replace current pedestrian crosswalk with high visibility paint and pattern and midblock pedestrian refuge
- Realign existing sidewalk to extend north from crosswalk to platform area and pedestrian crosswalk on the access road
- Replace current small trees and bushes that currently limit visibility to the platforms from Spring Street with landscaping that does not impede sightlines
- Extend existing sidewalk on north side of Spring Street west to the access road and install crosswalk at the access road
- Install pedestrian scale lighting along sidewalk and walkways

See Southern Gateway and Southern Access Point Improvements Illustrations on pages 16 and 17



Landscaped area at the Spring Street entrance to the Middle Parking Area



Spring Street underpass and pedestrian access to the Middle Parking Area and Metra platforms

6. Southern Access Point

Existing Conditions

This area includes separate sidewalks leading to the two platform areas and the access road to the Middle Parking Lot area. This section contains a crucial decision point regarding track access that is not well marked. Each side of the fence provides access to a different Metra track and platform. Metra riders should be provided with information regarding correct train track information, as riders are forced to backtrack at this point to access a different platform because of the separations.

Recommendations for the Southern Access Point:

- In the short-term, provide signage designating which path to take to access the separate platforms / tracks at the decision point north of the crosswalk
- In the long-term, add real-time electronic signs for each track announcing train departure information (track / platform)
- Provide pedestrian scale lighting along the paths
- Remove a portion of the barrier fence, from the crosswalk to the track, reducing the distance needed to walk between the two platforms, combining the walkway up to the split and eliminating an unnecessary barrier
- Install raised crosswalk at existing striped crosswalk

See Southern Gateway and Southern Access Point Improvements Illustrations on pages 16 and 17



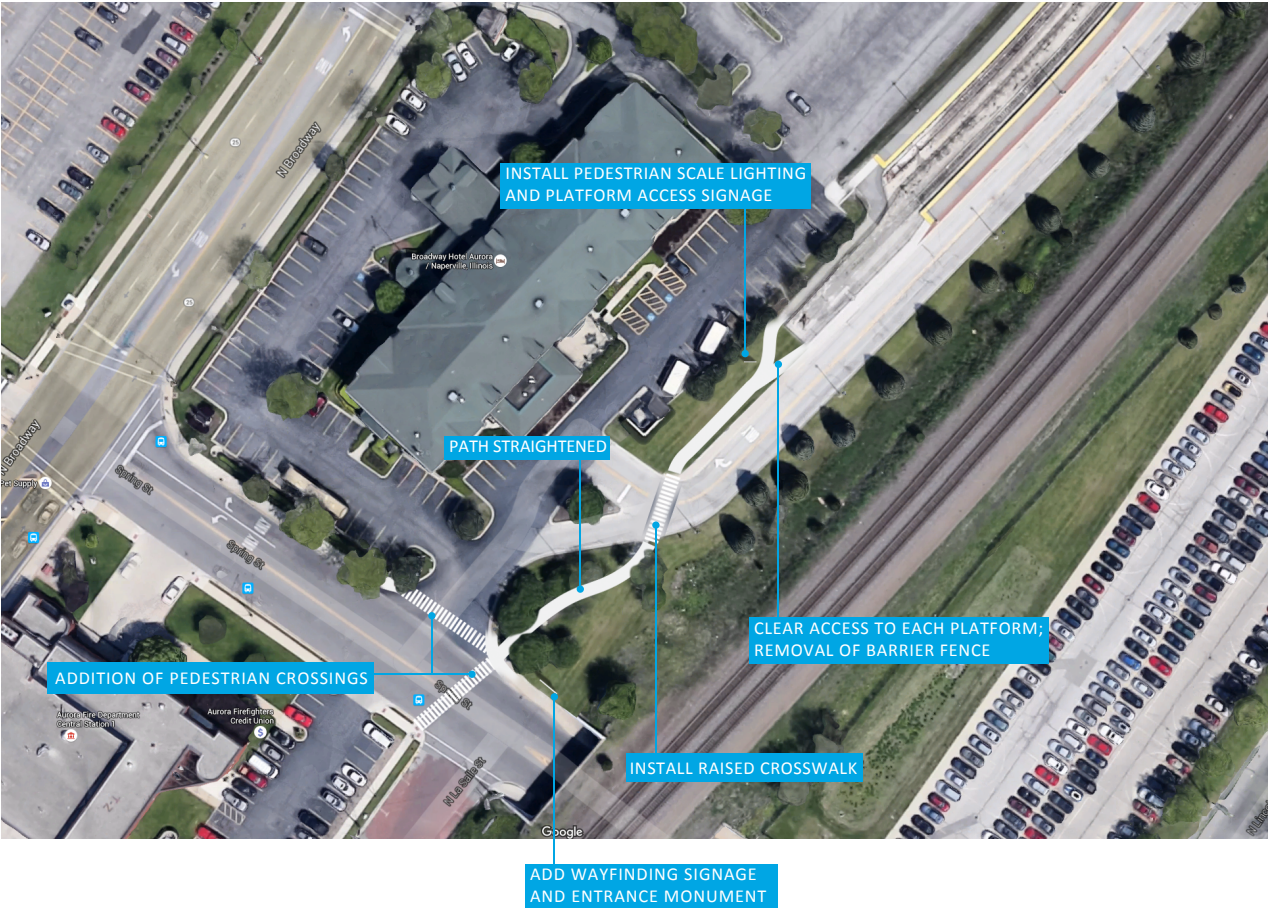
Photo Captions (top to bottom): Existing path leading from Spring Street; Separate paths lead to different platforms; Fence separating the paths and platforms

Southern Gateway and Southern Access Point Improvements

Current layout and pedestrian access to boarding platform

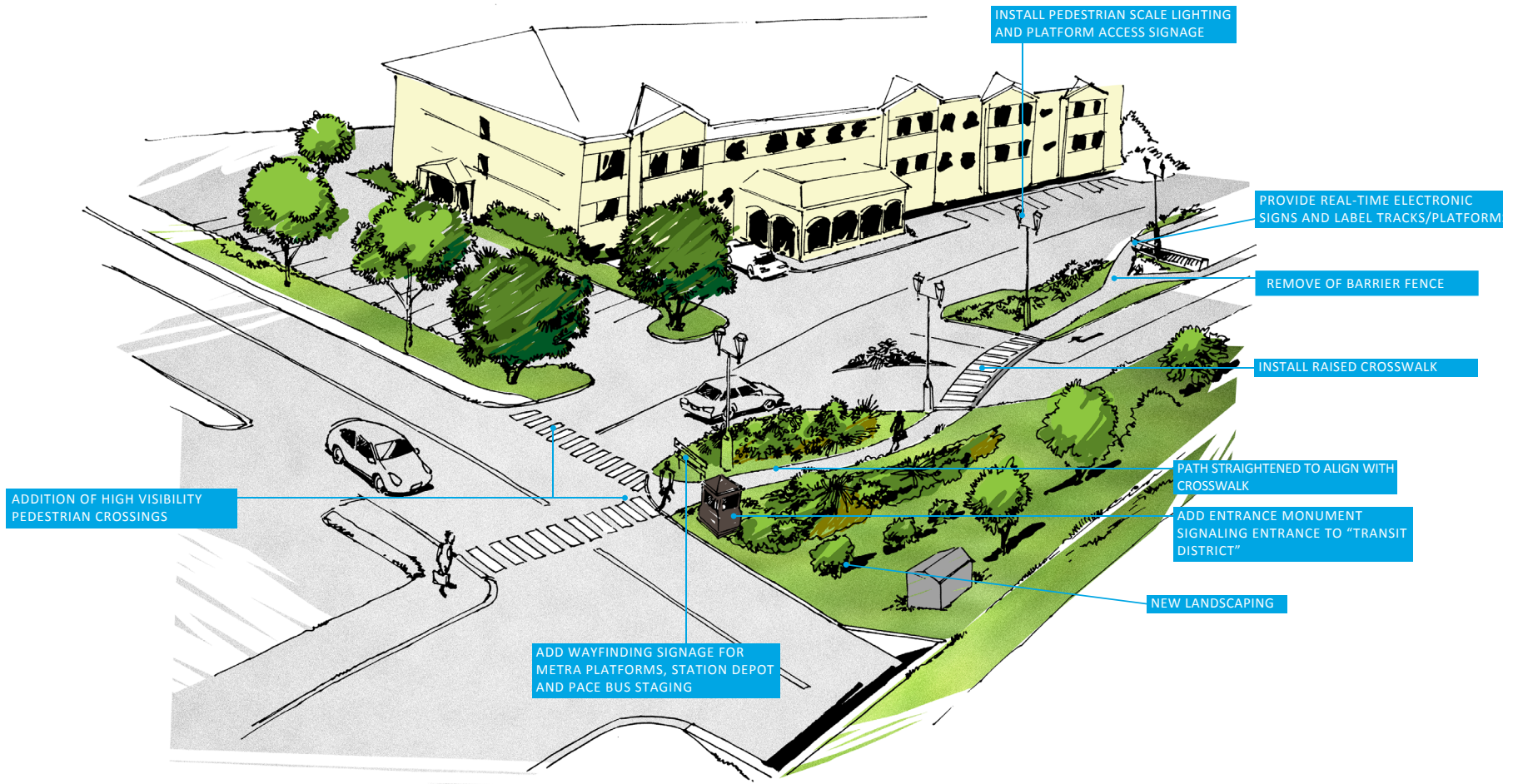


Proposed improvements



Southern Gateway and Southern Access Point Improvements

Proposed improvements; Artist's Impression



7. West Platform

Existing Conditions

This section includes the western portion of the main Metra platform area and provides direct access to station activities from the western part of the greater transit district area. The west platform is adjacent to the roundhouse and ATC buildings and provides connections to both buildings and the Pace bus staging area. There are several access options for the west platform.

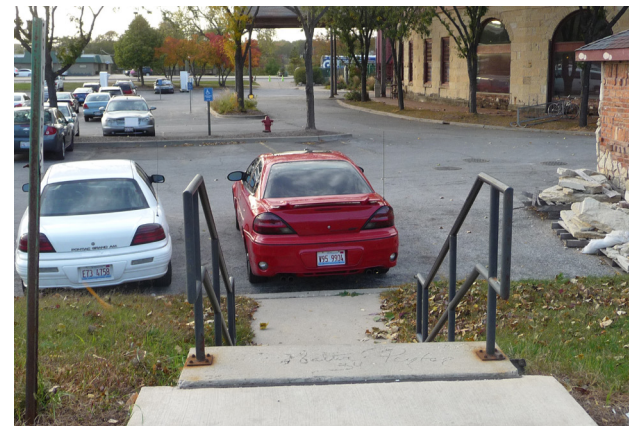
Recommendations for the West Platform:

- Work with the Roundhouse to provide screening—either a fence, landscaping or a combination—between the west platform and the garbage storage area
- Add benches and trash receptacles in the landscape buffer area adjacent to the platforms
- Create new pedestrian plaza in area between the Roundhouse and ATC building, including new landscaping, pedestrian amenities and signage, highlighting the Roundhouse entrance at this location

See Southern Roundhouse Entrance Area Beautification and Northern Roundhouse and ATC Entrance Area Beautification Illustrations on pages 19 and 20



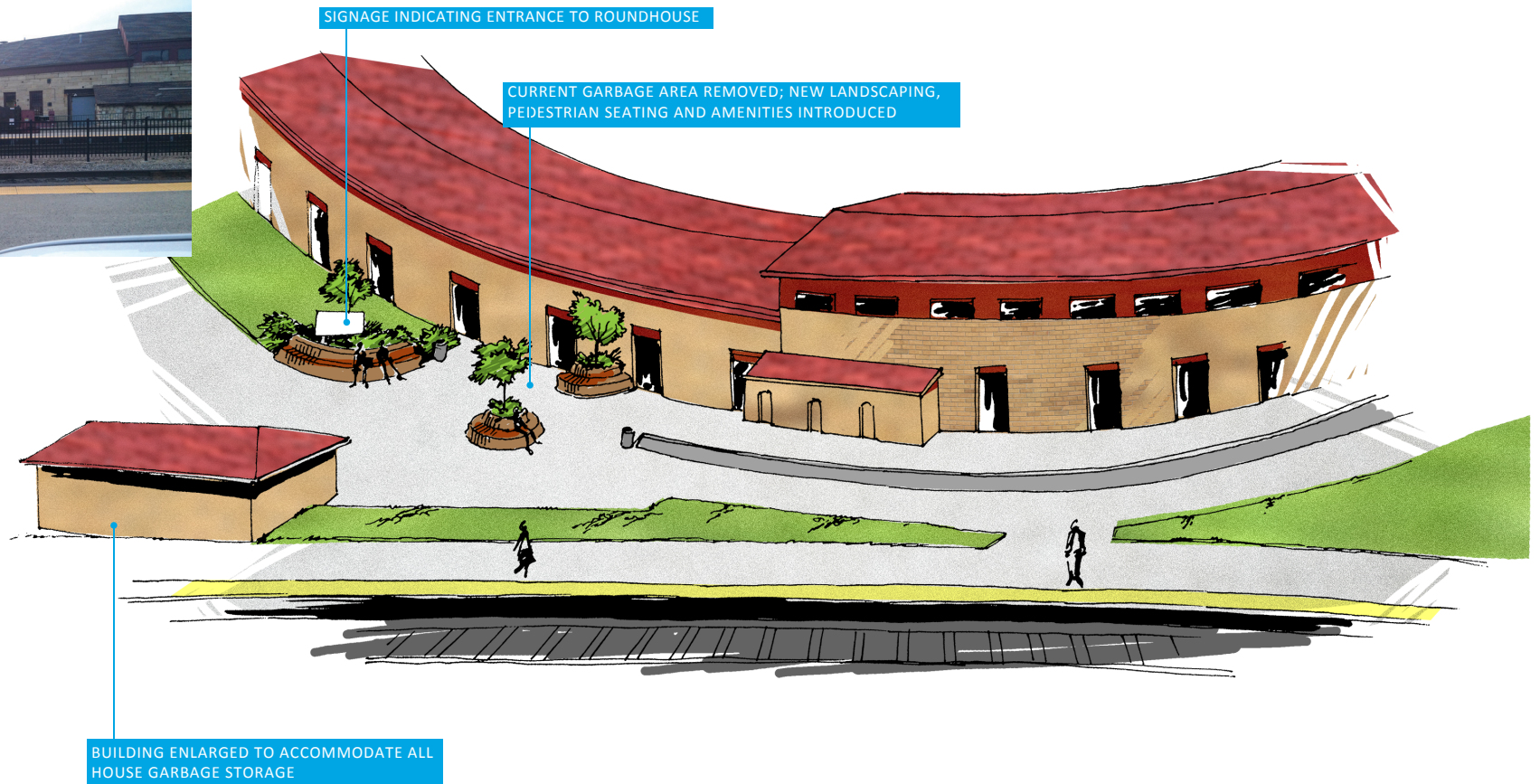
Garbage storage area for the Roundhouse immediately behind the Metra platforms.



Stairs provide entrance to the platforms from the Roundhouse parking lot.

Southern Roundhouse Entrance Area Beautification

Current layout

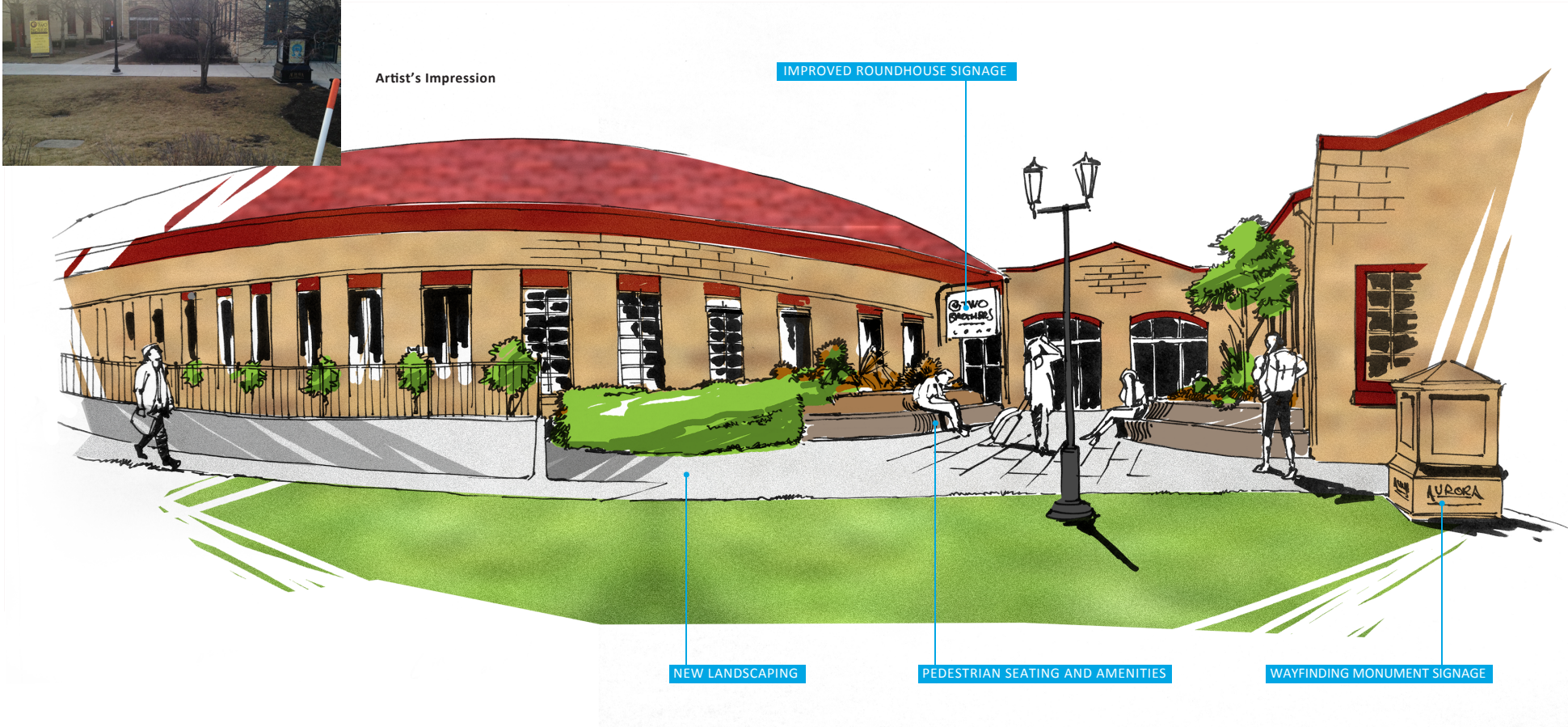


Northern Roundhouse and ATC Entrance Area Beautification

Current layout



Artist's Impression



NEW LANDSCAPING

IMPROVED ROUNDHOUSE SIGNAGE

PEDESTRIAN SEATING AND AMENITIES

WAYFINDING MONUMENT SIGNAGE

ROUTE 59 STATION

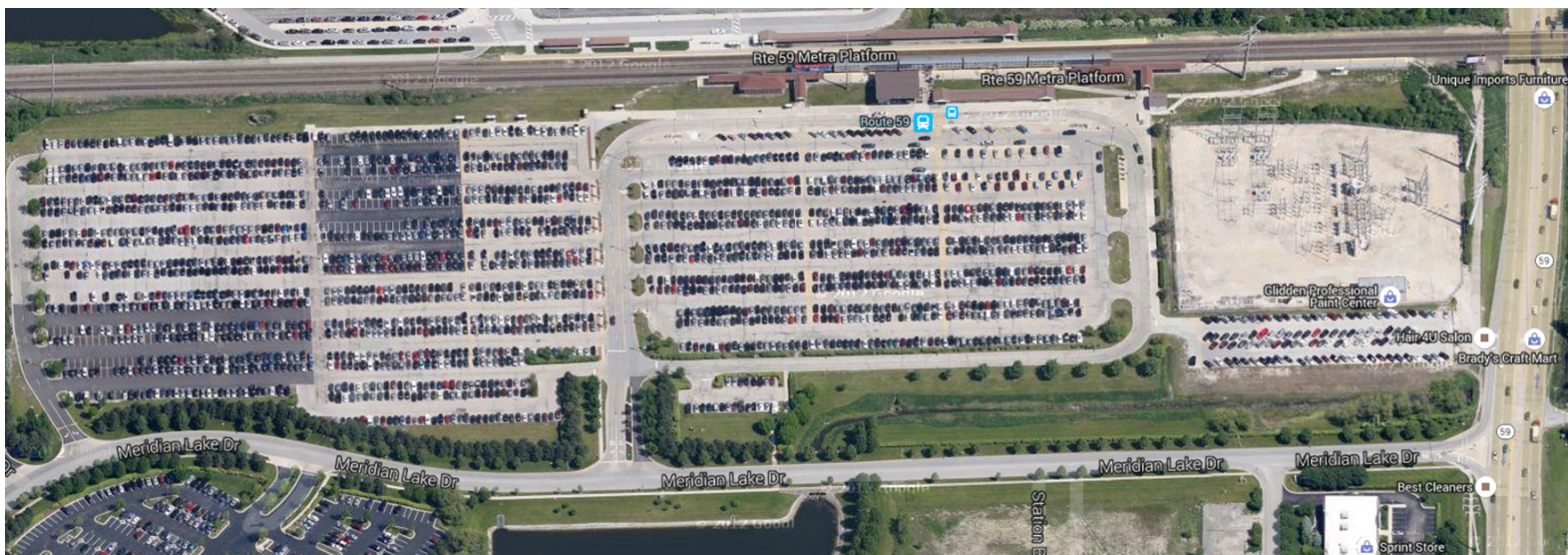


ROUTE 59 STATION

The Route 59 Station is located on the west side of Route 59, straddling the Cities of Naperville (north of the tracks) and Aurora (south of the tracks). In addition to accommodating Metra commuter service, these tracks are also utilized by BNSF freight and Amtrak passenger trains. The Route 59 Station is located at milepost 31.6, and has an express train travel time of around 40 -45 minutes and a local train travel time of approximately 80 minutes. There were 5,874 typical weekday boardings at the station in 2014 (Metra).

The Aurora portion of the station consists of the area between the railroad tracks south to Meridian Lake Drive. This area encompasses motorcycle and bicycle parking, as well as parking for 2,302 vehicles (Metra, 2015). A recently updated station building houses a ticket window, a sitting area, shops and offices. The majority of riders access the station by driving alone (72%), while 10% are dropped off, 6% walk, 6% arrive by bus, 4% carpool and 1% bike (Metra Origin-Destination Survey, 2014). Three Pace bus routes serve the Route 59 station. As part of the the Pace Fox Valley Services Restructuring Project, additional service will be implemented in mid-2016, including a Pace Call-n-Ride demand response route.

While one of the main access issues at this station is vehicular ingress, egress and circulation, the recommendations in this report focus on small scale pedestrian access improvements. The City's CMAQ project (described in the introduction) will address the vehicular access issues. These recommendations aim to help increase the percentage of riders that walk or bike to the station, but also to improve the pedestrian connections for those who drive to the station and are pedestrians as they walk to the platform. Several of the recommendations are based on the future CMAQ project improvements.

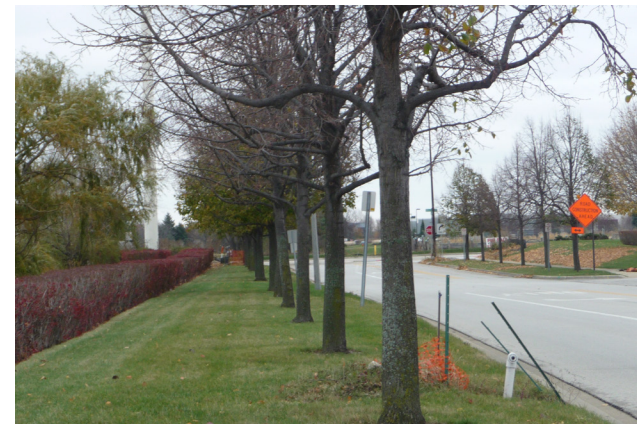


RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide weather protection along the walkway from the Pace Bus Staging area to the platform to protect riders from inclement weather
- Consider installing heated sidewalks, particularly on the walkway to the Pace Bus Staging Area, to reduce need for snow removal on walkway
- Install pedestrian-scaled lighting along the walkway
- Provide heated, covered waiting areas at the new Pace Bus Staging Area
- Add covered bicycle parking near the new Pace Bus staging area for Pace riders to utilize
- Add additional or alternative covered bicycle parking north of the power substation (north of the Pace Bus staging area), just west of the walkway from the Pace Bus staging area
- Add sidewalk on the north side of Meridian Lake Drive west from Route 59 to Station Boulevard
- Provide branded wayfinding signage to direct pedestrians to / from the Pace Bus Staging Area, bicycle parking areas, platforms and nearby destinations and major roads
- Additional signage that alerts drivers to the presence of pedestrians, including pedestrian crossing signs, should be installed



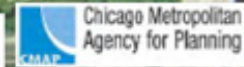
Existing walkway from future Pace Bus staging area to Metra platforms.



North side of Meridian Lake Drive currently lacks pedestrian sidewalks.

City of Aurora
Coming Enhancements to IL. Rte. 59 Commuter Station
Summer of 2015

STATE OF ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
PLANS FOR PROPOSED
FEDERAL AID HIGHWAY
IL ROUTE 59 COMMUTER PARKING LOT MODIFICATIONS
CMAG IMPROVEMENTS SECTION NO. 13-0000-004K
PROJECT NO. CMR-003 (R17)
CITY OF AURORA
DUPAGE COUNTY
C-81-233-14



ADD BICYCLE PARKING

INSTALL CANOPY TO PROVIDE WEATHER PROTECTION ALONG WALKWAY AS WELL AS PEDESTRIAN SCALED LIGHTING AND HEATED SIDEWALKS

ADD COVERED BICYCLE PARKING

PROVIDE HEATED SHELTERS FOR PACE RIDERS

Comments or Questions: Please call
City of Aurora, Public Works/
Engineering Division
630/255-3200

- Proposed Improvements
- New traffic signal at Station Blvd. and Meridian Lake Dr.
 - Additional exit/entrance lanes
 - Add 448 new parking stalls
 - New Pace bus staging area
 - New parking lot lights & landscaping
 - Improved pedestrian access with addition west platform ramp
 - New Pay-by-License Plate daily parking machines
 - New security cameras



City of Aurora
Planning and Zoning Division
44 E. Downer Place
Aurora, IL 60505

(630) 256-3080
COAPlanning@aurora-il.org
aurora-il.org

Regional Transportation Authority
175 W. Jackson Blvd. Suite 1650
Chicago, IL 60640

RTAChicago.org