

Orchard Hills Class IV Protected Bike Lanes

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did the City install the Class IV protected bikeway on Orchard Hills Drive?

- The City Council adopted the Sustainable Mobility Plan in March 2024, establishing a framework for improving bicycle mobility throughout Irvine. The plan prioritized protected bikeways, identified their benefits and design considerations, and established an implementation framework. As part of that framework, the Culver Drive/Orchard Hills Drive segment north of Portola Parkway was identified for immediate improvements, with projects prioritized for completion through the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), including as part of street rehabilitation projects.

When was the Sustainable Mobility Plan adopted?

- The City Council adopted the Sustainable Mobility Plan in March 2024, before Councilmember Liu came into office. The plan established a citywide framework for improving bicycle mobility, prioritized protected bikeways, and identified the Culver Drive/Orchard Hills Drive segment north of Portola Parkway for immediate bikeway improvements. Projects were prioritized for implementation through the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), including in conjunction with street rehabilitation projects.

Was the Orchard Hills project part of the City's adopted CIP?

- Yes. The project was implemented through the City's adopted Capital Improvement Program, which is part of the City's adopted budget. The Public Works & Sustainability Department is responsible for implementing the adopted CIP, and the Orchard Hills bikeway was incorporated into a street rehabilitation project as contemplated by the Sustainable Mobility Plan.

Was the project specifically approved by the City Council as a Class IV bikeway?

- The March 2024 Sustainable Mobility Plan identified the Culver Drive/Orchard Hills segment north of Portola Parkway for immediate bikeway improvements and prioritized projects that could be completed through the CIP. City records later identified the segment specifically as a Class IV Protected Bike Lane. A remaining question is when and through what approval process the facility transitioned from the Class II+ designation shown in the March 2024 plan to the current Class IV configuration.

Why was a protected bikeway selected for Orchard Hills?

- The Sustainable Mobility Plan identified protected bikeways as a priority because physical separation can provide additional safety and comfort for bicyclists, particularly students, families, and less-experienced riders. Residents have questioned why Orchard Hills was selected over corridors such as Portola Parkway and have requested bicycle-count, collision, traffic, and other data supporting the City's prioritization of this corridor.

How wide are the vehicle lanes?

- Lane widths typically range from 10 to 12 feet, depending on the lane, roadway type, and characteristics. For bicycle facilities installed on existing roadways, such as this Class IV protected bikeway, the minimum lane width is 10 feet. The painted vehicle lanes for this installation are approximately 11 feet wide, exceeding the minimum allowed lane width. Residents have nevertheless raised concerns about how the narrower lanes may affect traffic operations, driver comfort, emergency access, and evacuation.

Did Orange County Fire Authority review the design?

- Yes. As part of the design process, the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) reviewed and approved the design. Residents have specifically raised questions about emergency vehicle access and wildfire evacuation, and the City should continue to evaluate emergency access under actual operating conditions, particularly during school congestion or an emergency evacuation.

What are the concerns about emergency access and wildfire evacuation?

- Emergency access and wildfire evacuation were among the primary concerns raised by residents. Residents questioned whether fire engines, ambulances, and evacuation traffic can safely navigate the roadway, particularly at its narrowest points, and requested additional information regarding OCFA's review. The City's ongoing monitoring should include emergency response and evacuation considerations.

Why weren't residents notified before construction?

- Residents expressed significant frustration that there was insufficient public notification and community outreach before construction. They stated that many concerns—including emergency access, school traffic, maintenance, and roadway design—could potentially have been identified before installation. Public Works acknowledged that the notification process was inadequate and committed to reviewing what occurred.

Will the project affect school traffic?

- Residents expressed significant concern about traffic around Orchard Hills School and Northwood High School, particularly during drop-off and pickup. Residents

anticipate that vehicles previously able to queue along the shoulder may now block or interfere with the protected bikeway and expressed concern about additional cut-through traffic into nearby HOA communities. IPD will monitor traffic conditions as schools reopen and increase enforcement as needed.

How will the protected bikeway be maintained?

- Residents reported debris accumulating within the protected bikeway and questioned whether conventional street sweepers can access the facility. Public Works stated that the City has a smaller street sweeper designed to service protected bike facilities and that street sweeping will begin as part of the ongoing maintenance program. Staff will also address landscaping and irrigation issues that could affect access and maintenance.

What is being done to improve visibility?

- The orange delineators currently in place are temporary. Permanent white delineators will be installed along the route to improve visibility, while the green traditional bike-lane delineators have been delayed and will be installed when available. Public Works will also evaluate additional warning signs, reflective delineators, and other visibility improvements requested by residents.

Will the City consider additional safety measures?

- Residents requested additional warning signs, radar feedback signs, reflective delineators, a review of speed limits, roadway visibility improvements, traffic-calming measures, and reconsideration of the most constrained portions of the project. Public Works committed to evaluating additional signage, visibility improvements, and traffic-calming measures.

Was a traffic or safety study conducted before installation?

- Residents questioned whether a separate traffic or safety study was conducted before installation and requested baseline data. The City has explained that the project was implemented within the existing roadway and through the adopted CIP process. The City should establish baseline and post-installation data on vehicle speeds, traffic volumes, bicycle activity, collisions, and roadway operations to evaluate the project's effectiveness.

What happens if the current design does not work as intended?

- Staff has emphasized that the project will be evaluated and monitored rather than simply installed and left unchanged. The City can consider modifications, adjustments, or other operational changes based on data and actual conditions. Councilmember Liu has emphasized that being technically allowable does not necessarily mean a design cannot be improved and that the goal should remain safety for drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, students, and residents.

What is the City's position on e-bike safety?

- Irvine Police Department has identified e-bike safety as an important public-safety issue. IPD will monitor e-bike activity and enforce applicable traffic laws, while IUSD and IPD provide e-bike safety education to students. Residents have requested additional proactive education so students understand traffic laws and safe riding practices before violations or collisions occur.

What did the City say about the project's engineering standards?

- Public Works stated that the roadway and bicycle facility meet applicable engineering standards. The painted vehicle lanes are approximately 11 feet wide, exceeding the City's stated 10-foot minimum for bicycle facilities installed on existing roadways, and OCFA reviewed and approved the design. The City will continue to evaluate whether additional operational or safety improvements are warranted.

What did the City say about the project's cost?

- City staff indicated during the community meeting that the project cost approximately \$2.6 million. However, City records reviewed to date do not establish that \$2.6 million represents the standalone cost of the Orchard Hills Class IV bikeway. The work was implemented in conjunction with street rehabilitation and other work through the City's CIP/street rehabilitation process, so a detailed project-level cost breakdown would be useful to distinguish costs for resurfacing, concrete separators, delineators, striping, signage, design, engineering, and construction.

What are the City's next steps?

- Staff will investigate the resident notification process, complete installation of the permanent delineators, evaluate additional signage and visibility improvements, implement street sweeping and landscaping maintenance, monitor traffic conditions after schools reopen, coordinate with IPD, IUSD, TUSD, and Public Works, collect traffic and safety data, and hold a follow-up community meeting after the first weeks of school to discuss operational improvements and next steps.