



# CITY OF IOWA CITY COUNCIL ACTION REPORT

December 9, 2025

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Resolution establishing the design concept as necessary to begin engineering design documents for the Burlington Street Bridge Replacement Project.

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Prepared By: Justin Harland - Senior Engineer  
Reviewed By: Jason Havel - City Engineer  
Ron Knoche - Public Works Director  
Geoff Fruin - City Manager  
Liz Craig - Asst. City Attorney

Fiscal Impact: None  
Staff Recommendation: Approval

Attachments: [Resolution](#)  
[Exhibit A - Location Map](#)

## **Executive Summary:**

This agenda item approves the design concept for the Burlington Street Bridge Replacement Project. Specifically, staff is asking for confirmation of the design concept related to the bridge type, Burlington Street intersection improvements with adjacent streets, grade separated pedestrian crossings at the Burlington Street/Riverside Drive/Highway 1 and 6/Grand Avenue intersection, pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the Burlington Street bridge, Burlington Street dam safety improvements, roadway improvements to S Grand Avenue, and two-way traffic on Grand Avenue, Byington Road and Melrose Avenue.

## **Background / Analysis:**

Burlington Street (also identified as Highway 1) is a principal arterial roadway crossing the Iowa River near downtown Iowa City. Currently, Burlington Street/Highway 1 utilizes two bridges to cross the Iowa River, one carrying westbound traffic and the other carrying eastbound traffic. The westbound bridge is owned and maintained by the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), while the eastbound bridge is owned by the City of Iowa City. The average annual daily traffic (AADT) is approximately 18,900 and the bridges accommodate buses, bicycles and pedestrians while providing means of multi-modal use. Burlington Street provides principal access to downtown Iowa City and The University of Iowa Campus, and the Burlington Street bridges are one of five arterial street crossings of the Iowa River in Iowa City. Burlington Street provides access to major employment and education centers including University of Iowa employees and students. The original Burlington Street Bridge (now carrying eastbound traffic) was constructed in 1915, with the second bridge constructed in 1969.

The original bridge was then rehabilitated in 1986, which included deck and structural repairs. The existing eastbound concrete bridge is 342 feet in length, with the longest span of 114 feet, and is 38 feet wide. In 2021 the City performed a bridge inspection, and the resulting bridge condition was listed as “Poor” and serviceability as “Structurally Deficient”. Major defects including concrete cracking, spalling, and exposure of steel reinforcing were identified.

HDR, Inc., from Cedar Rapids, was selected as a consultant to provide planning study phase services to determine a preferred option to replace the bridges. HDR Inc., City staff, and stakeholders have developed a preferred design concept to replace the Burlington Street Bridge over the Iowa River with a single bridge and to reconstruct portions of Grand Avenue, Byington Avenue and Melrose Avenue to accommodate two-way traffic. Information was gathered from stakeholders and the public regarding the needs and wants of the project.

Representatives from the City of Iowa City, University of Iowa, and Iowa DOT formed a technical advisory committee which took the gathered information and narrowed the focus into key project areas. Various alternatives for each project area were presented by HDR, Inc. and the technical advisory committee then selected one alternative for each area to determine the preferred design concept. On November 3, 2025, HDR, Inc. presented at the City Council work session regarding design concept options.

The preferred design concept consists of a multi-lane, multi-modal, traditional bridge that includes separated facilities for bicycles and pedestrians. Grade separated pedestrian crossings prioritize safety at the intersection of Riverside Drive (Highway 1 and 6)/Burlington Street/Grand Avenue and the geometry of the intersection is modified such that site distances are maximized and turning movements are more efficient. Two-way traffic on Grand Avenue, Byington Road and Melrose Avenue near the Boyd Law Building allows east-west traffic to travel more efficiently. The Burlington Street dam is anticipated to be modified for safety to address drowning hazards and options for further dam modification may include a fish passage and/or a recreational element.

**Project Timeline:**

Preliminary Design: Winter 2025 – Spring 2027

Final Design: Spring 2027 – Fall 2028

Bid Project: Fall 2028

Construction Start: Spring 2029 (multi-year construction anticipated)