



Traffic Median Conversion Additional Information

General information:

- Traditionally planted medians are maintained by City of Madison Engineering using the allotted annual Operating budget for new and replacement plantings, watering, hand weeding, trash removal, and mulch
- Engineering is working on a variety of short growing, drought and salt tolerant, low mow vegetation plants grown from seed to replace frequently mowed turf grass in newly constructed and existing turf medians. Examples: Williamson St at Blount, Gammon between beltline and Mineral Point, Fish Hatchery Rd, Packers Ave by the airport
- Turf medians are mowed by City of Madison Parks. Water, herbicides and fertilizer are not used in turf medians

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why not plant the medians being converted to concrete with a native plant/ low mow alternative?

A: The medians being converted to concrete are not suitable for that at less than 6' wide, because maintaining any type vegetation in narrow medians is exceeding difficult (and hazardous) for Parks staff to mow. Even the low mow mixes which Engineering has been working on in various locations throughout the City since about 2017 requires mowing a min of 1x per year. Prescribed burns are not an option in medians due to traffic safety (smoke and driver visibility for example).

Additionally, the conversion to this style of low mow vegetation has been hit and miss in the existing turf medians we have tried to retrofit. We are trying a very aggressive approach with one of the conversions this year on Packers Ave by the airport to see if we can get more success. We have had better success in new medians planted this way from scratch.

Q: Why not plant the medians being converted to turf with a native plant/ low mow alternative?

A: The planted medians we are converting to turf are generally in medians that have a large turf presence already so it wouldn't make sense to convert just patches of the medians to low mow when the majority of the median is already turf.

Q: Why not have volunteers adopt the medians set to be converted to turf or concrete through Engineering's Adopt-a-Median program?

A: None of the median planting beds being converted to turf or concrete are available for adoption. They are all in high traffic locations that are not allowed for volunteer work due to safety concerns. Most of the medians in question require closing a lane during off peak hours with full traffic control (arrow boards, orange barrels) to allow maintenance.

There are many other medians in other residential areas in the city that are in need of volunteers. Please visit City Engineering's Adopt –A- Median website for more information.

Q: There is so much hardscape/ Impervious surface already and concrete would increase runoff

A: The changes that are being made are distributed across the City. The changes in any one area is very small on a watershed basis. Additionally the change from a mounded planting bed to a turf grass is relatively minor from a runoff standpoint. Certainly concrete runs off more than mounded planting beds but taken on a whole the change is very minor.

Q: These median conversions are supposed to save money in the budget, but doesn't it cost more to remove the existing planting beds and replace with turf or concrete?

A: There are certainly capital costs to making a change of this type. Those costs are for practical purposes a one-time cost. The reductions in the operating budget (which is an ongoing cost) are requiring City Engineering make these physical changes. Engineering prefers a green solutions, however budget cuts, increasing maintenance costs and difficulty in confirming Contractors to complete this work are directing this change.